



# CVUUF News

## Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

A Welcoming Community to all persons regardless of their race, nationality, or sexual orientation.

## Upcoming Sunday Services

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This newsletter is published online monthly by members of the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Download your copy at <http://www.cvuuf.org>.

Deadline for articles or photos is the next to last Sunday of each month at 6pm. Submissions are to be directed to: [newsletter@cvuuf.org](mailto:newsletter@cvuuf.org) and may be edited at the sole discretion of the editor, Liza Diniakos.

Other ways to

## SHARE

information:

### News & Notes

Email: [newsandnotes@cvuuf.org](mailto:newsandnotes@cvuuf.org)

### Weekly e-Announcements

Fill out form at: <http://cvuuf.org/news/announcereq>

### Online Calendar

Fill out form at: <http://cvuuf.org/calendar/request>

### Facebook

Email: [minister@cvuuf.org](mailto:minister@cvuuf.org)



The theme for December is transcendence. The source for December is our first source: Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. Main reading: *Prairie Soul, Finding Grace in the Earth beneath My Feet* by Jeffrey A. Lockwood

### December 7 — The Work of Loving the World — Rev. Lora

Brandis — "My work is loving the world," writes the poet Mary Oliver. It is easy to love the world of the poet: "the phoebe, the delphinium, the sheep in the pasture, and the pasture." It is difficult to love the world when it is torn apart by injustice, especially when we are unable to come to consensus as to what justice looks like. Our work is to love the world, no matter what.

December 14 — Mystery and Wonder — Rev. Lora Brandis — The gift of this time of year is to be reminded to gaze at our lives through the eyes of a child. We are reminded of mystery and wonder and the potential for joy in the smallest moments. Remaining open, we allow ourselves to be immersed in the darkness of the shortest days of the year and with faith we wait for the light to reappear.

### December 21 — Love Came Down at Christmas — Rev. Lora

Brandis — The story of Christ's nativity makes sense on a mythological level. Joining the story of one lowly-born in a manger among the animals with the stories of other gods and heroes celebrated at the time of the Winter Solstice makes mythological sense. In the nineteenth century poet Christina Rossetti wrote, "Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine," capturing the essence of our deep yearning for the transcendent.

December 24, 7pm — Christmas in Story & Song — Our Christmas Eve intergenerational service will feature stories and songs of the season with music from the choir, additional musicians "and lots of congregational singing."

December 28, 10am — Join congregation member Christina Houlberg as she leads our annual memorial service. **There will be only one service today**, which will be intergenerational. All are welcome as we celebrate and honor those people in our congregation and in our lives who have passed away. **NOTE: Please note the time change.**

**CVUUF Sundays on CD:** Recordings of most Sunday services are available on audio CD. They may be purchased for a \$3 donation, made at time of order. All proceeds go to the Library Fund. Order yours at the Library bookcase in Social Hall and do remember to pick up the CDs you've ordered! Sunday recordings can also be heard at <http://www.cvuuf.org>. Some can even be downloaded to your iPod.



# Muusings from Reverend Lora

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*"And I know this is going to be shocking to some people, but at some point, we've got to figure out how we love the hell, literally, out of people and systems and circumstances. We've got to love this thing forward." -Reverend Willis Johnson of Wellspring Church in Ferguson, MO*

## **A Prayer for Ferguson by Rev. Lora Brandis**

Dear Spirit of Life and Love, that which teaches us that all beings are connected:

Teach us now how to move forward in love. Teach us now how we can love the hell out of this world.

Help us to not take sides. Help us to understand the rage of those who for generations have feared police. Help us to understand those who choose to risk their lives as police.

Let love guide our thoughts, our words and our deeds as our country confronts the awful legacy of slavery, racism and oppression. Let compassion open our ears to the stranger, the other, the one whose life is so different from ours that we cannot begin to imagine ourselves standing in their shoes. Let love open our ears to the stories of those who live in fear of the police and to the stories of those who serve as police men and women.

Let love be our guide as we take responsibility for our part of the conversation. Help us to see where we are ignorant of the role that race plays in our own lives. Teach us to acknowledge our own limitations and prejudices. Let love open our hearts to the reality of our brothers and sisters that struggle on a daily basis far from the safety of our own guarded lives. Let compassion open our minds to new ways of listening to the cries for justice.

Dear Spirit of Life and Love, that which teaches us that all beings are connected:

We promise now to move forward in love. To admit when we fall short. To pay attention. To show up. We promise now to love the hell out of people, and systems and circumstances. We promise now to love the hell out of the world.

May it be so and Amen.

I asked that the above prayer be read during the worship service November 30th while I was out of town for the Thanksgiving holiday. In the aftermath of the decision that charges will not be brought against Officer Darren Wilson in the death of Michael Brown, I have been dismayed by the response of many whom I have come to believe would respond in love. I'm not talking about the looters and the arsons. I am talking about people of faith - our people of faith, the "love" people. My prayer is that whether or not you agree with the grand jury's decision, that you can at least begin to understand the complexities of race, power and gun culture. A 12-year-old African American boy was shot and killed by police in Cleveland Saturday November 22nd after pulling a BB gun from his waistband. I pray to the Spirit of Life and Love that teaches me that all beings are connected and I ask, "how will this end and when will this end?"

*Lora*

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*Rev. Lora has one day off a week, which is Monday. She schedules appointments in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. To reach her, please email her at [minister@cvuuf.org](mailto:minister@cvuuf.org) or call her cell phone 805.410.3808. Due to the volume of email she receives, it may take her several days to respond to an email. Please feel free to call if you have a matter that needs immediate attention.*

# President's Message



Dear Friends,

At our monthly Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, November 11, our Minister, Rev Lora Brandis and our Director of Religious Education, Justine Fischer, announced that each of them will be leaving us in 2015 – Lora, as of Feb 22, and Justine as of June 10. Two days later, Lora sent out an all-member email message communicating the news and the personal reasons behind their decisions. She also shared the news from the pulpit on the following Sunday.

Three weeks later, as I write this column, I'm experiencing many emotions. Lora and Justine are significant people in my life and for my family. I love them dearly. I am going to miss them. Many of our members have shared with me that they are feeling a similar sadness.

At the same time, I am filled with gratitude and joy. I am glad so many people are responding with support for these incredible women who have transformed our lives and our community and given us so much. They deserve our support and appreciation. Our time together is worthy of great celebration. Many members share that feeling as well.

I don't know how to adequately express the depth of my thanks to Lora and Justine, but I will thank them anyway, despite how insufficient the words may be. I hope you will too. I expect they both might hope we will express our gratitude by doing what is already happening. What I see taking place is our members standing together with love and commitment, embracing our values, walking the walk. I've been overwhelmed by all the people who have approached me to say "how can I help?" and "I am ready to serve." I've never been more proud of this congregation, or more confident about our future, than I am now at this time of impending change. Our congregation is strong.

Lora and Justine will be leaving us in good shape. Each of them is working tirelessly to ensure the well-being of the Fellowship and a healthy, effective transition. The Board and Council are engaged in the process and working well as a team. The UUA and Pacific Southwest District are providing excellent support to help ensure the continuity and continuation of the great things happening here.

Several events are coming up that I hope you'll mark on your calendar. On December 7, we'll hold a Town Hall between the two services to address the transition process and timelines. January 11 is the date of our Mid-Year Fellowship Meeting, starting at 10:45, with reports from Minister, Treasurer, and President. And please do not miss our farewell celebration for Lora on February 22. That day, we'll hold one worship service at 9:15 and then will have a party.

Also, be sure to show up on Sundays as often as you can! There will be lots more opportunities to hear Lora speak and experience her devoted service as our wonderful Minister.

In Faith,

**Willie,** [president@cvuuf.org](mailto:president@cvuuf.org)

## Mid-Year Meeting Sunday, January 11

Your attendance is requested.  
There will be only one service on the 11th. Please come to the service at 9:15am and plan to stay for this important meeting.  
Childcare will be provided.



Justine Fischer,  
Director of  
Religious  
Education  
(DRE)

# News From Religious Education

## DECEMBER RE

Pre K/K, 1-4th grade and 5th-8th grade meet during the first service and YRUU (high school) meets during the second service. Child Space is available for our smallest ones at both services.

Each month we will focus on a theme and a source of the Unitarian Universalist Faith. This month, our theme is beloved community. We will also be looking at: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life."

## MIXTECO INDIGINA COMMUNIDAD ORGANIZATION PROYECTO (MICOP)

Join us in sharing arts and crafts with our Mixteco neighbors. Monthly meetings (dates below) are held at the following locations:

**Haydock Intermediate School**  
647 Hill St.  
Oxnard, CA 93033

**Rio Elementary School**  
1140 Kenny St.  
Oxnard, CA 93036  
(in the unincorporated area  
of Nyeland/El Rio)

**Saturday, December 13, 2014, 1-6pm**  
Fiesta Navideña

**Saturday, January 31, 2015, 1-6pm**  
**Saturday, February 28, 2015, 1-6pm**  
**Saturday, March 28, 2015, 1-6pm**  
**Saturday, April 25, 2015, 1-6pm**  
**Saturday, May 30, 2015, 1-6pm**

## SPIRITUAL NURTURERS NEEDED

Our Religious Education Program relies on the time and talent of our congregation. We are still in need of two nurturers for the year. We need one more nurturer in grades 1-4 and another in grades 5-8. If you would like to know more contact Justine.

*For information regarding Religious Education,  
I can most easily be reached at [dre@cvuuf.org](mailto:dre@cvuuf.org).*

*Yours in faith,  
Justine*



## December Birthdays

Andrew  
Carlson,  
Katherine  
Chavez,  
Mina Dake  
and Tyler  
Rosen.

## Adult RE

### THE LONG STRANGE TRIP

View and discuss our final film from "The Long Strange Trip," a film series detailing the history of Unitarian and Universalist thought from the beginning of the Christian era to what we know today as Unitarian Universalism. The film is approximately one hour in length and is Close-captioned. A discussion will be facilitated after the film.

**Part VI: Wednesday December 3rd 7pm**  
*Unitarian Universalism*

Feel free to drop in for this final session, it is not necessary to register. Come and join in the discussion and find out about how the history of Unitarian Universalism informs your own personal faith history. Contact Rev. Lora with questions.

# News From Our Outreach Director



*We always look for and welcome your participation in our many outreach programs. If your passion is the environment, economic inequality, good healthy food, taking a stand for immigrant justice, or merely spending time with wonderful dedicated people, please join us.*

**Climate Action Team (CAT)** — Wednesday, December 10th is the next meeting in the Board Room. Among the issues CAT is exploring is fracking. It should be a very interesting, informative meeting and a good time to pop in and see what is happening with this new, dynamic group.

**Community Forum** — Saturday, December 6, we will be screening the documentary “Ode To My Mother” (see page 6). Area resident, activist and filmmaker Ferial Masry will be at the event to discuss her film and extraordinary mother.

**Feeding Hands** — On the 1st Tuesday of each month (this month is December 3rd), dinner is provided to those in need from our local community. Your help is always welcome as a cook, server or companion to the diners. This is especially helpful in the winter months. Any and all who want to be involved are greatly appreciated. Contact Anne Ewell.

**Mindful Eating** — Taking a break for the holidays, our first meeting for 2015 will be on Sunday, January 25th at 5:00pm in Fellowship Hall. Mark your calendars now! We will do a recipe exchange of our favorite recipes of 2014 (pay attention over the holidays). Bring the recipe to share with others and we will begin a Mindful Eating Book of Tips and Recipes. It will be the start of our 2015.

## AUCTION 2014

Another Huge Success!  
Sales Nearly \$21,000!

Thanks to everyone who donated, who volunteered and who attended and bid on items!

### Special thanks to:

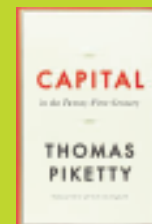
**Auction committee:** Jo Ann Van Reenan, April Fernald, Christina Houlberg, Jenny Schipae, Penny Smith, Candy Gantka, Noreen Powers, and Ellen Learned.

Thanks to auctioneer, Pamela Lopez and emcee, Willie Lubka. Thanks to Terry Hinricher for the loan of computer equipment, Scott McGrath for overseeing inputting sales.

There are too many others to mention. All in all, it was a great time and many of you have fellowship events and meals in homes of members to look forward to throughout the year.

## ESCALATING INEQUALITY STUDY GROUP

January 26, 2015,  
7:00 - 8:30pm



Escalating Inequality is the 2014 (CSAI) Congregational Study/Action Issue. We are using "Capital in the 21st Century" by T. Piketty, for study and discussion. Contact: Michael Teasdale.





## Community Forum

Saturday, December 6, 2014, 7:30pm

A Very Special Screening and Discussion

### ODE TO MY MOTHER



A fascinating true story of a most extraordinary Saudi woman as told through the eyes of her children and grandchildren. Heartwarming and inspiring, the film will be introduced and discussed by its producer Ferial Masry of Thousand Oaks. From award-winning director Georges N. Chamchoum, ODE TO MY MOTHER follows the life of Tahra Abdul Hafiz Al-Siba'i (1933-2011), an acclaimed Saudi Arabian artist, author, poet and mother whose personal and family triumphs are shared in this documentary !

Friday, January 9, 2015, 7:30pm

### WHEN LIVING ALONE IS NOT AN OPTION

What would happen today if you, your spouse or family member suddenly became unable to live alone due to a fall or illness? What kinds of facilities are available? What level of care is provided at each? What is the cost? Who is the decision maker?

Kathy Terry, Field Services Coordinator of the Long Term Care Services of Ventura County, will present an evening of information about this very important issue. A Q&A discussion will follow her talk.

Saturday, January 17, 2014, 8pm

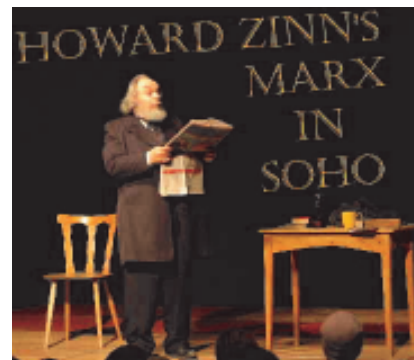
A Special Live Theatrical Event

Jerry Levy as Karl Marx in

### Howard Zinn's MARX IN SOHO

Historian and activist, Howard Zinn is most well known for his alternative portrait of American history. Here Zinn proves himself a talented playwright, presenting a play that is both enlightening and entertaining!

We gratefully acknowledge The Howard Zinn Revocable Trust for their kind permission for this presentation of Howard Zinn's "Marx in Soho".



Community Forums are free, but donations are appreciated!

Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship,  
3327 Old Conejo Road, Newbury Park  
<http://forum.cvuuf.org>



**Thanks to these businesses that donated to the 2014 CVUUF auction...!** CVUUF earned approximately \$1,800 from these donors. Thanks to everyone who solicited these donations.

Great Harvest  
 Union Bank  
 Fresh and Easy  
 Trader Joes  
 Wood Ranch  
 Peet's Coffee  
 Beano Vino  
 Pacific Fresh  
 Sea Casa  
 Old School Sandwiches  
 Ali Baba (Newbury Park and Simi Valley)  
 Viva La Pasta  
 Country Harvest  
 Brent's Deli  
 Local Table Restaurant  
 Natural Cafe in Santa Barbara  
 Green Thumb  
 Shaggy Chic

Top Nails  
 Thousand Oaks Beauty Collection,  
 Hope Choppers  
 Fancy Nails  
 Mullin Auto Museum  
 Golf N Stuff  
 High Street Art  
 Rubicon Theater  
 Gilbert and Sullivan at Hillcrest Theater  
 Sky High Sports  
 New West Symphony  
 Island Packers  
 Santa Barbara Zoo  
 Hopper Boat Rental  
 Simi Valley Cultural Center  
 Cabrillo Music Theater  
 deBenneville Pines

# TOWN HALL MEETING

December 7, 2014

10:15am

The Board of Trustees of the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship invites you to join us for a Town Hall meeting on Sunday, December 7.

As you probably know, our Minister, Rev. Lora Brandis, will be leaving on Feb 22, 2015, and our Director of Religious Education, Justine Fischer, will be leaving on June 10, 2015. The agenda for this town hall meeting is to review the process, timelines, and goals for the upcoming transitions for our congregation, and to provide a forum for the board to hear input from members about the transition plan.

The meeting will take place in the Sanctuary at 10:15 am Sunday Dec. 7, shortly after the first service ends. I hope to see you there.

In Faith,

Willie Lubka, Board President



## UUs Take On Cyber Monday...

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) has expanded its inventory of ethnically-sourced goods in a rebranded online store **THE GOOD BUY**.

Find seasonal items like holiday cards. (Check out the new designs for 2014!) The Good Buys also sells gift cards as well as sustainable food and products.

Profits are put to good use by UUSC in work we can be proud of – responding to natural disasters through their local contacts with aid to people in the hinterland; not typically reached by large agencies like the Red Cross. And more recently UUSC & UUA are tackling the crucial issue of Climate Change at the global level hoping to work with the UN.

Try it out - [www.thegoodbuy.com](http://www.thegoodbuy.com).





# December 2014



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> 6:30pm» Finance Committee	<b>2</b> 6pm» Feeding Hands 7pm» Facilitator Chalice Circle 7pm» New UU class	<b>3</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 6pm» OA Meeting 7pm» Adult RE: Long Strange Trip 7:15pm» Transitions Group 7:30pm» Meditation Group	<b>4</b> 9:45am» Jonquil Group 7:30pm» Choir Rehearsal	<b>5</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours	<b>6</b> 7:30pm» Community Forum
<b>7</b> 9:15am» <b>Worship Service</b> 10:15am» Town Hall Meeting 11am» <b>Worship Service</b> 12:15pm» Membership Committee Meeting 2pm» Gaming Afternoon 5pm» Newcomer AA Meeting	<b>8</b> 7pm» Women's Evening Group 7:15pm» Opal Covenant Group 7:30pm» Drop-in Book Club	<b>9</b> 9:45am» Gardenia Group 7pm» CVUUF Board of Trustees Meeting 7:15pm» Chalice Circle 2Tu	<b>10</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 6pm» OA Meeting 7pm» Chalice Circle 2W 7:30pm» Climate Action Team 7:30pm» Meditation Group	<b>11</b> 9:45am» Sapphire Group 7:30pm» Choir Rehearsal	<b>12</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours	<b>13</b> 2:30pm» Emerald Covenant group 7pm» Movie Group
<b>14</b> 9:15am» <b>Worship Service</b> 10am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 10:25am» Children's Choir rehearsal 11am» <b>Worship Service</b> 12:15pm» Dharma Workshop 5pm» Newcomer AA Meeting	<b>15</b> 7pm» Chalice Circle 3M	<b>16</b> 7:15pm» Chalice Circle 3Tu 7pm» Music Ministry Meeting	<b>17</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 12:30pm» Chalice Circle 3W 6pm» OA Meeting 7:30pm» Meditation Group	<b>18</b> 7pm» Jonquil group 7pm» CVUUF Council Meeting 7:30pm» Choir Rehearsal	<b>19</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 9:15am» <b>Worship Service</b> 10:25am» Children's Choir rehearsal 11am» <b>Worship Service</b> 5pm» Movie Group 3 5pm» Newcomer AA Meeting 6pm» NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	<b>22</b> 7pm» Women's Evening Group	<b>23</b> 9:45am» Gardenia Group 7pm» Chalice Circle 4Tu	<b>24</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 6pm» OA Meeting 7pm» Christmas Eve Service	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 10am» <b>Worship Service</b> 5pm» Newcomer AA Meeting	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 9am» CVUUF Office Administrator hours 6pm» OA Meeting			

# Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

## COVENANT OF GOOD RELATIONS

In order to assist us in fulfilling our mission to nurture spiritually courageous people who transform the world through justice and compassion, we the members and friends of the Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship enter into this Covenant of Good Relations.

We, the members and friends of this congregation, value:

- Opening our hearts and minds to those who have traveled journeys unlike ours and whose strengths and challenges may be different from ours.
- A welcoming space for all to speak their truth respectfully.
- The importance of deep listening and respect for each other.
- Relationships with others of all ages, and the gifts that each generation brings to our community.
- The democratic process, through which we give voice to concerns and offer our time and energy to arrive at solutions.

In the wider community, we honor our responsibilities for upholding spiritual ideals, engaging in civil discourse with those of other religious traditions, and promoting our UU values.

In my interactions with others in this congregation, I will:

- Speak honestly and directly to the person(s) with whom I have a concern, using thoughtful, compassionate language.
- Forgive the errors and shortcomings of myself and others as we contribute to our shared ministry and express gratitude for the many gifts we bring.
- Assume good intentions in those with whom I disagree and examine my own part in the disagreement.
- Listen deeply to, and actively seek resolution with those concerned before engaging the Conflict Resolution Committee, Committee on Ministry, the Council or the Board of Trustees in conflict mediation.
- Expect divergent beliefs and opinions and persist in respectful dialogue—especially in times of uncertainty—remaining open to new understandings while doing my part to sustain this Covenant.
- Respect the minister and staff's professionalism, time and privacy.
- Assume responsibility for understanding the church structure and governance model.
- Assume responsibility for keeping informed of church business.

Through this Covenant of Good Relations, it is our intention to foster healthy and productive relations within our church community as we work together to achieve our mission.



## Conejo Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

3327 Old Conejo Road  
Newbury Park CA 91320 ([map](#))  
805 492-8751  
[www.cvuuf.org](http://www.cvuuf.org)

### Staff

Rev. Lora Brandis, Minister, [minister@cvuuf.org](mailto:minister@cvuuf.org)  
Justine Fischer, Director of Religious Education, [dre@cvuuf.org](mailto:dre@cvuuf.org)  
Pam Van Uden, Religious Education Administrator  
Greg Whitmore, Choir Director, [choirdirector@cvuuf.org](mailto:choirdirector@cvuuf.org)  
Jessica Lesko, Administrator, [admin@cvuuf.org](mailto:admin@cvuuf.org)  
Eliseo Zavala, Custodian

Rev. Dr. Betty Stapleford, Minister Emerita

### Board of Trustees 2014-2015

Willie Lubka, Board President, [president@cvuuf.org](mailto:president@cvuuf.org)  
David Barker, Vice President  
Michael Teasdale, Secretary  
Terry Hinricher, Treasurer  
Laure McKinnon, Trustee At Large  
Karina Leppik, Trustee At Large  
Don Vernardos, Trustee At Large



#### additional UU resource links:

[Unitarian Universalist Association \(UUA\)](#)

The UUA serves 1,000+ congregations in the US and the world.

[Pacific Southwest District \(PSWD\)](#)

PSWD serves 50 Pacific Southwest congregations in California, Arizona and Nevada.

*Sunday Service is held at 9:15 & 11:00 am, with Coffee Hour following each service. Children's Religious Education is held during the 9:15am service. Childcare is provided and YRUU (our high school RE program) meets during the 11:00am service.*

*Visitors are always welcome!*