



Mt Diablo UU Beacon

Transforming Ourselves and Our World

Volume 73, No. 1

January 2026

SERVICE TIME — 10:30 A.M.

SUNDAY MEDITATION — 9:00 A.M. ON ZOOM

ALL SERVICES ARE LIVESTREAMED!

- <https://mduuc.org/service-stream/>
- <https://youtube.com/@MDUUC>

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR PODCAST!

Search for "MDUUC Beacon Light" on Spotify

JOIN US ON BLUE SKY
[@mduuc.bsky.social](https://mduuc.bsky.social)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4

Rituals For A New Year. As this 2026 dawns, how do we summon all the resolve, intention and luck that we can? Join Rev. Leslie for an interactive service which includes ritual and reflection, restoration and recalibrating. This is a wonderful chance to remember what we CAN do even in the face of all beyond our power. AND we will have music from the UU Ukes!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

Courage, My Friend. What does courage look like in 2026? What are the resources of our faith tradition when it comes to venturing into roiling waters? Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi and Rodney Lemery for a conversation about how to greet this new year with honor and in the frame of our UU values.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

Do You Still Have A Dream? - More than six decades ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of a dream that he had. Nearer to his death, he spoke of the dynamics that would make that dream harder to realize. As we enter into this 2026 when our optimism towards the human enterprise has been challenged, how do we reengage with meaning and purpose and from the values which also undergirded the work of this great, martyred civil rights leaders? Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi and Linda Russell for this service.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

Seeds of Our Tradition - Join us for a brief focusing service before our congregational meeting. Join the board and your worship team to recognize important milestones in the last year of our congregation. We will welcome, mourn, honor and SING!

- CONGREGATIONAL FORUM -

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026 AT 12:30 PM

Come hear important updates from committee members, the board, and ministers. Join in the Sanctuary or online.

- CONGREGATIONAL MEETING -

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2026 AT 11:15 AM.

Please arrive early by 10:15 a.m. to check-in. We will have a short service followed by a congregational meeting, during which we will vote and discuss important church matters. The service will end around 11:10, and there will be a short pause to end the live-stream, bring the Zoom tech online, and register online attendees.

If you are attending virtually, please use this link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nOb3HVBNTW6cYes7YQijmg

There is no need to register if you are attending in person.

Updated meeting materials and the virtual forum video will be available in the password protected member area,

<https://mduuc.org/member-area/>

The password to the member area will be emailed to members.

If you need assistance, please email admin@mduuc.org.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS WILL INCLUDE:

- Congregational adoption of a commitment to eliminate the use of fossil fuels on our campus by 2035.
- Revision of the by-laws to reduce the size of the Board from 9 to 8 members (exclusive of the treasurer).

WEDNESDAY EVENING PROGRAMS

January 7 & January 21

VESPERS, 5PM, Sanctuary and Zoom. Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Jo Gelinas and others for this brief mid-week gathering focused on recentering and calming with a theme in mind. This is also a good place to hold your grief at what is happening in the world.

COMMUNITY DINNER, 6PM, Bortin Hall. All are welcome to join this simple meal with conversation. Please register online to help us honor a headcount for preparation.

<https://mduuc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/category/82674>

\$10 suggested donation to help cover costs, but please give what you are able to, and it's completely optional—it should never be a barrier to attending.

MINISTERS' CONVERSATIONS, 7PM, Sanctuary & Zoom.

These times require us to hold onto our values even tighter AND also requires that we do so in new ways which can feel uncomfortable. Join us for a free-ranging conversation about what it means to honor our values in ways that are steady and changeable, time-honored and wholly new. In addition to discussion, we will also be using ritual, story and shared experiences to remind ourselves of key skills for these times. Come help us build the ship as we float along!!!!

Leslie's Logos

When I first moved to California, the patterns of rain perplexed me. First, it only rained in one season of the year and was, even then, a place as dry as any place I had ever lived before. And I was left in wonderment about how when the rains came, somehow the world changed. The hills, so tawny, would, after what seemed like the lightest of sprinkles, become a rich resplendent green. And then was the matter of earthworms which you saw no other time, yet which somehow found a way to survive in the hard, cracked earth to come wriggling forward into the streets after those first rains.

How could that be, where are the seeds of that rebirth?

As we close this grueling and growing saga that has been 2025, that is the question. I am asking myself once more. My faith is inspired by the strength of the Earth which I know holds seeds that I can't see or know and creatures which are dormant who will emerge again in an ecstatic dance. Somehow, under conditions mysterious enough to seem sacred, what has been forced underground will give rise to new life.

In the same way, I feel as if the rich ground of our community which is loamy with the composts of past activities once beloved and now no longer active, is holding the seeds of new hopes and promises for a richer community life. As we move into this 2026, many of us have found that grounding soil essential to keep us engaged and also to be aware of the charming little signs of new life which are springing up around us. We are seeing new leadership, new ways of acting together, singing new songs and understanding new ideas about how we protect a wide spectrum of the human family.

As 2026 dawns and as the balance of light shifts once again towards the longer days, I know we will be grateful for all the seed banking that has been done, all the heart-hosting that has been accomplished. I close with gratitude for all each of you has done to be part of the rich Earth that holds our ideals and hopes as this year closes.

In faith and perseverance,



Leslie

Leslie serves as the community's Lead Minister. She shares her thoughts on Substack and hopes you will join her on BlueSky where she is leslietakahashi@bsky.social. Her email is not a team player so feel free to follow up in another way.

Schedule an appointment with Revl Leslie at <https://calendly.com/revlesliemeet>



Marena McGregor, DRE

As we step into a new season of learning and connection, we are excited to share several opportunities for families and community members to engage, support one another, and deepen our UU values.



This January, our elementary Religious Education classes will begin an exciting new curriculum called Journeys of Deeper Joy. Through an imaginative role-playing game, children will embark on journeys in the world of Covenantia, a place where cooperation, curiosity, and care guide every adventure.

Blending storytelling, reflection, and community-building, Journeys of Deeper Joy invites children to explore what it truly means to live out our Unitarian Universalist values, learning not just with their minds, but with their hearts and relationships as well. We can't wait to see the creativity, empathy, and insight this curriculum inspires.

Save the dates for a week full of music, movement, and joy! Chalice Music Summer Camp will run June 8 through June 12, ending with a special performance on June 12. This is a wonderful opportunity for children and youth to build confidence, creativity, and community through music.

Camp Options:

- **Morning Session (9am–12pm): Ages 3–6**
Suggested donation: \$150 per child
- **Afternoon Session (1pm–4pm): Rising 2nd–8th graders**
Suggested donation: \$150 per child
- **Camp Counselor Track: Rising 9th–12th graders**
A meaningful leadership opportunity for teens who want to grow skills, mentor younger campers, and be part of the magic behind the scenes. Email Marena@mduuc.org to apply.

Registration is now open! Please spread the word and invite friends!

Our youth group is fundraising, and you can help by contributing to coffee hour food donations. Donations can include:

- Home-baked goods to be served on Sunday
- Non-perishable, individually wrapped snacks
- Gift cards to purchase bagels, donuts, or other treats

Every contribution helps support youth programming and leadership development. To donate or ask questions, please email Marena@mduuc.org.

Thank you for being part of a community that nurtures joy, creativity, and care across generations. We look forward to continued learning, singing, and growing together!

Sincerely—Marena

Marena serves as the Director of Religious Education and is best reached at marena@mduuc.org

Rev. Rodney Lemery Associate Minister

When I reflect on what it means to work for justice, I remember that it calls us to act to mitigate suffering both immediately and keep our eye trained on the systemic origins of the suffering itself. In our congregation, I have seen how we live out this calling. Often, we begin with a small act of charity and, as time passes, see it grow into relationships that transform our community and us.

I think of the times we have gathered hygiene kits for Trinity Center or shared our Sunday offering with Child Advocates of Contra Costa County (CASA). In those moments, we are meeting real, urgent needs. The unhoused person gets a fresh pair of socks and a meal. A child in the foster care system is connected to an advocate who will stand by their side in court. I am reminded in these situations that sometimes, dignity cannot wait for the world to actually change.

Still, I have learned that charity alone can keep us apart. It can create a barrier between the giver and the receiver. It lets us stay comfortable, watching others' pain instead of being truly empathetic neighbors who find a bit of ourselves in the stranger's story.

What truly makes a difference is building relationships. I have seen this in our work with HOPE Solutions. We started by collecting cash and holiday gift donations and preparing holiday meals for this incredible housing advocacy group. Soon after these efforts were underway, our relationship evolved into real conversations. Now, we are even imagining what it would look like to open our campus for housing in our county with their support. We moved from asking, 'What can we give?' to asking, 'What can we create together?'

Charity can be seen as an invitation, not a conclusion. When we give, we open ourselves to meeting people who are different from us. These meetings challenge our assumptions and show us our shared humanity. From there, we can address the deeper injustices that made charity necessary in the first place. We need both the food pantry and advocacy for housing justice. Our hearts must move into compassion, and our minds need to be prepared to do the hard work of changing systems.

Justice asks us to show up in the moment and to stay for the long haul, to offer what we have, and to build relationships that last. This is how we move from charity to true solidarity, from simply helping to working for liberation, from good intentions to the beloved community we dream about.

However you find your way into our important justice work, I am excited to walk this path toward justice with you as we start the new year!

Blessings to you and your family, whether chosen or by birth!

With respect and hope—Rev. Rodney

Rev. Rodney serves as the Associate Minister. Schedule appointments at
<https://calendar.app.google/Ja3STbGbF6TrY28S9>



Aiden McMahon, Intern Minister

Happy New Year, Friends!

Slowly but surely the daylight grows longer and the weather grows warmer. I'm looking forward to a few things in the new year, including a working trip to New Mexico at the end of the month, Winter Nights, and the resurgence of outdoor events. Rev. Rodney and I put together a great training video for Winter Nights/Faith Without Walls, so if ministering to our unhoused neighbors is a passion you carry, be on the lookout for that resource. My hope is to be regularly preparing and distributing food to our neighbors in need soon.

Due to the holidays, I've decided to skip Meanderings for January, but I hope to have another session in February. Watch the calendar for time and location on the first Saturday. I'm taking recommendations for local parks and green spaces, so let me know your favorites! I'm excited for what the rest of this year might bring, both ministerially, and in my own personal exploration of this beautiful part of the country which I'm fortunate (however briefly) to call home.

Grace and Peace—Aiden

Aiden serves as the Intern Minister and is best reached at aiden@mduuc.org.



Thanks From The Community

"Thank you for your contribution to Sogorea Te' Land Trust! You are supporting our work of Rematriation, returning Indigenous land to Indigenous people."

—Sogorea Te Land Trust

"Thank you for your gift of \$938.57 made on 04/30/2025. Your support is vital as we dedicate ourselves to our vision of a community working together to address the traumatizing effects of homelessness and poverty by removing barriers to stable housing through compassionate services, education, shelter and advocacy. Because of you, we remain rooted in hope that our vision will become our reality!"

—Pam McGrath, Trinity Center

"As we reflect on this past year, please know how deeply grateful we are for your support. Your generosity (\$483.61 contributed on 9/9/2025) helps ensure that children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system receive consistent advocacy, educational guidance, and the dependable adult presence every child needs and deserves."

—Child Advocates of Contra Costa County
(formerly known as CASA)

"Because of your generosity and compassion, this year's Spirit of Giving program reached more people than ever before. Together, we served 982 individuals—the most in our program's history—including 261 families, 507 children, and 136 seniors. Each number represents a person who felt seen, supported, and cared for during the holidays because of you."

—Sandibel Arnold, HOPE Solutions
(formerly Contra Costa Interfaith Housing)



A Message From Your Board of Trustees

Happy New Year from your Board of Trustees!

We truly hope your holidays have been safe and happy and the new year greets you with promise and optimism.

We are midway through the church year and we have been busy! MDUUC has a lot going on. As we move into 2026, we leave the “year in review” to you as you consider what 2025 was like in your life.

In our community, we said goodbye to too many of our beloveds, including our longest member, Doris (Deb) Baltzo. Each remembrance brings the sadness of loss and the opportunity to share their lives with family and friends. We learn much more about who they were beyond church, over the course of their lives. In those moments, we laugh, we cry, we lament, together, in community. Most of all, we remember. Deep appreciation for those who are able to help with these ceremonies. The families, our ministers and the staff deeply appreciate it.

Our year in review;

- The Board said good bye to Mark David Watanabe, our wonderful 2023-2024 President, then 2024-2025 Co-President. Mark moved on to serve as a co-facilitator for one of the Community Circles during the summer, and has now joined the ranks of youth advisor, before his anticipated move to Portland, Oregon when he retires.
- We welcomed four new Board members – Elizabeth Dietsch (Treasurer); Mary Kelly Persyn, Andy Smith and Patricia Craven.
- After a long search, with several bumps along the way, we welcomed our fantastic new Music Director, Jyvonne Haskins.
- We said good-bye to Rose Reidel, last year’s Intern Minister and we welcomed our new Intern Minister, Aiden McMahon, who hit the CA ground running after a cross country trip from the East coast.
- Our community has welcomed many new members this year, truly unique for most churches these days.
- We have established relationships with many organizations beyond MDUUC that align with our values and work to protect the rights of all.
- We have re-affirmed ourselves as a sanctuary space and actively offer mutual aid in the form of food for our community pantry, rides to those who need it, and many other ways in which we support one another.
- And we began our visioning process for our journey ahead from re-naming the church to electrifying our campus to considering how we can open our doors wider and provide additional support to members and friends. Please join us in the coming months as we continue to Dream Together.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all that we have done this year but it is important to understand what we do at MDUUC goes a long way to providing safety, support and hope, to our members and friends and beyond.

In the upcoming year, please consider how you can contribute to creating the community you want...and the one you need.

Your Board wishes you all a new year of meaning, connection and love at the center.

In Faith and Gratitude,

Linda Russell, President

2025-2026 MDUUC Board of Trustees

Dreams Abound!

November visioning sessions plants seeds.

A mighty gathering of minds and hearts attended our November 22 Let’s Dream Together session. Here are some of the provocative proposals which emerged. Here are some of the dreams shared. In them, we:

- Design a multi-purpose campus that supports spiritual grounding and growth, fosters all generations, preserves and enriches our physical spaces and heritages.
- Come into right relationship with people and all beings; create a safe, beautiful, welcoming and stable sanctuary by eliminating fossil fuels, developing humane and sustainable solutions and modeling for others.
- Create a name that becomes an emblem that speaks to the beauty of our welcoming community and embodies our aspirations and plurality.
- Possess an abundance of flexible resources to support physical needs and activities which enhance spiritual growth. Our donors give joyously knowing they are perpetuating UU values. We risk audacious, bold asks while also being appreciative and sensitive to individual circumstances.
- Help address the housing crisis in Contra Costa County that is grounded in empathy and generosity in ways that discuss, acknowledge and mitigate important risks (based on facts not fear.)
- Engage and support our community and congregation through volunteerism as a way of improving health and well-being, supporting our ministers and staff, deepening connections and transforming ourselves and our world.

Want to learn more? Attend one of the January forums and watch for a second chance to dream in February.



Feeling stress, anyone? If you answered yes, then consider marking your calendar for a new gathering. Embodied practices are ways that we can help rid our bodies of the stress and trauma of these times. Join the ministers for this new monthly gathering occurring on most 2nd Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The next gathering will be held on Jan. 14. Due to the nature of this programming, it will be in-person only.

We Are Mosaic!

Join us for "We are Mosaic," where participants will explore antiracist and anti-oppression thought and action while learning practical tools to dismantle oppressive systems within ourselves and our communities. Through connection, reflection, and collective learning, we'll work together to build the beloved community that honors our multi-faceted identities and fosters true belonging and liberation.

Upcoming gatherings: Jan. 10, 9:30–11:30 a.m., hybrid and Jan. 22, 7–9 p.m., online only. Link to join online is on the calendar.



Create A Vision for Your 2026! Sunday, January 4 at 12:15 p.m.

Come and join Rev. Leslie Takahashi for a second hour gathering in the Bortin Hall or online on the first Sunday of 2026 starting at 12:15 pm when we will have an opportunity to capture some of our hopes and aspirations for the new year. This is an exercise in hope and creativity. We will construct individual vision boards and begin to set out some collective ideas for what we want in 2026. Bring scissors, magazines and ideas (though you can come without any of these and also participate in person.) Those at home, make sure to have these items handy before joining us online. The link join on zoom can be found on the calendar and here: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81541029999>

Membership Book Signing

Have you been thinking about joining? Been around for a bit visiting and wondering what the next steps might be? Interested in participating and having a voice in some of the exciting developments going on? The first Sunday of each month, we offer an opportunity for people to sign the membership book—this is a simple act which captures your desire to shape the future of this congregation.

Look for a minister or board member outside the Sanctuary doors at 11:30 a.m., 15 mins. after service ends on Sunday, January 4.

Pastoral Visitors

Pastoral visitors assist our ministers with pastoral care in two capacities. First, they are matched one-on-one with members who could use a listening ear. And second, they provide on-site listening support on Sunday mornings (yep, that is them behind the water column during the Offertory.) If you are a member and interested in serving in this capacity, please email Rev. Leslie Takahashi at leslie@mduuc.org.

MOMENTS WITH A MINISTER-

COME FOR A CASUAL CONNECTION AND MEET MEMBERS & FRIENDS WHO LIVE NEAR YOU

January Moments With A Minister (Coffee & Conversations)

Come share a beverage, coffee-expansive, and have some good conversation with members and friends of the MDUUC community who live near you!

- January 6 at 4 p.m., Walnut Creek, The Heritage Downtown
- January 14 at 4–5 p.m., Concord, Gratitude Cafe
- January 20 at 10–11 a.m., Rossmoor, Rossmoor Clubhouse
- January 27 at 4–5 p.m., Benicia, One House Bakery

Register To Join The Family Music Program

Join our Family Music Program for a fun and enriching experience for families to come together to sing, dance, play instruments, and share the joy of music.

Whether you're a seasoned musician or just love to sing in the shower, there's a place for you here. Come perform in our Sunday services and participate in our delightful multigenerational holiday pageants. This is a wonderful way to connect with others, celebrate our community, and create lasting memories.

All ages are welcome! Register on Church Center or online:
<https://mduuc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3055350>

Winter Season Community Circle Kick-off Sunday on January 4

Are you looking to deepen your connections? Our Community Circles are small, supportive groups that meet regularly to share, reflect, and grow in spirit. Whether you're new or a longtime member, there's a place for you. Each Community Circle lasts 6 weeks and space is Limited!

Before registering, please check your calendar to make sure you can attend all 6 sessions.

Visit <https://mduuc.org/connect/community-circle/> to register, learn more or to join the wait-list.

- Wednesday Evenings, from Jan. 21–Feb. 25, 7–9PM
- Tuesday Afternoons, from Jan. 27–Mar. 3, 1–3PM
- Thursday Evenings, from Feb. 5–Mar. 12, 7–9PM
- Friday Afternoons, from Jan. 30–Mar. 6, 1–3PM
- Thursday AM at Rossmoor, from Feb. 12–Mar. 19, 10AM–noon
- Saturday Mornings, from Feb. 14–Mar. 21, 10:30 a.m.–noon.
- Virtual Tuesday Mornings, from Feb. 3–Mar. 17, 6:30–7:30PM (Skipping Feb. 17)

Enrolling another person besides yourself?

Have questions or need to make a change to your enrollment?
Please contact ccadmin@mduuc.org for assistance, thank you!

HATS OFF!

Honors, Accolades, and Thanks!

- To the Men's Breakfast, celebrating its 30th Anniversary this month. Started in January 1995 by Les Polgar (using a successful pattern from the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, NJ) the MDUUC Men's Breakfast has met on the first Saturday of each month for 360 months – by Zoom during Covid. The group is open to all men of the church, and volunteers provide the rotating leadership, refreshments and topics of interest for conversation.
- To the Chalice Choir members and soloists for bringing so much meaning and beauty to Doris "DEB" Baltzo's memorial service. And for turning right around and joining in on the Christmas Pageant service the very next day to bring more joy to our community.
- To all the wonderful young vocalists and instrumentalists who shared their talents with us at our Christmas services. It's an honor to witness your talents, and shoutout to the parents for encouraging and building this next generation of musicians!
- To the Chalice Choir section leaders and lay leaders for leading the charge in communications among our members and supporting our connections.
- To all the song-leaders! Special callout to Saudia Highsmith who performed her first ever solo during our special music moment in our Dec. 21st service.
- To the Solstice Service musical team - Betsy Livengood and Jo Gelinas - thank you so much for your willingness to put your spiritual practice of music making to use during our solstice service the evening of Dec. 21st.
- Gratitude to Scott Schrader for all the operational support with our choir rehearsals! I appreciate your help with everything!
- To Neysa Matt - thank you so much for always being willing to jump in on a harmony line!
- To the HOUSE BAND, for bringing such a jazzy ensemble moments to our Dec. 7th service. Shoutout to Laura Zucker who saved her voice to deliver that lovely and super tricky melody line for the special music that day.
- For all who brought cookies and other treats to our Solstice and Christmas Eve services
- To Jeff Hearn for his transportation assistance
- To Nancyj Moran for her work with our poinsettias
- To Norm Meites for his work with buildings and grounds
- For our community circle facilitators extraordinaire
- For all who helped with our pageant
- For Tom Taylor serving as an usher for Solstice Service and for our Christmas Eve ushers
- For our intrepid coffee makers Anne Bandy, Linda Russell, Jaynese Davis and Mary Schrieber Dan Barnard for his long participation on the Personnel Committee.

- Chris Stieger for her hospitality to someone needing a respite from the street.
- For the Eslick-Persyn family and Kelly Handler for their roles in the Christmas Eve service.
- For Mary Schrieber, Linda Russell, Chris Stieger and Penny Hackett-Evans and Tom Evans for their assistance with hospitality AND CLEANUP on Christmas eve.
- To the Chalice Choir for their amazing Christmas Eve gifts!
- To our amazing ushers and our new addition, Matthew Brown!
- For Tom Taylor and Doug Tamo for their help with the temporary heating system in the Sanctuary.
- A HUGE thank you to everyone who completed a holiday message to one or more incarcerated UU people across this nation. With your efforts, we sent 200 letters of encouragement and holiday greetings!
- To everyone who adopted an individual or family from our justice partner HOPE Solutions' gift tree program. We were able to provide much-needed holiday joy to 40 people/families!

We encourage gratitude and appreciation throughout MDUUC. Send "short and sweet" admissions to thanks@mduuc.org

MDUUC Art Gallery

Now Featuring: SierraLynne White



Photo credit: Fire Rose,
"I Know This Rose Will Open."—Mary Grigolia

SierraLynne has painted and made all kinds of art most of her life and this us her first showing of her work. She says: "Making art is a spiritual practice whereby I daily seek and appreciate

Sacred Beauty which is found EVERYWHERE when one looks deeply. I'm inspired by the marvelous colors, patterns, flow and intricate mystery of all nature. I believe art shows us that: Everything has rhythm and dances. Everything is in continuous colorful motion - always vibrating and radiating the joyous hues of Being. For me, making art is a prayer of praise and thanks to the awesome beauty and mystery of Creation." Yes, her pieces are available for sale. If interested contact SierraLynne directly by phone, email or in person.

Guest At Your Table 2025 - 2026

Support our partners with UUSC's longest-running program for congregations. For half a century and counting, UUSC has worked with faith communities across the country to bring our partners' stories and experiences to your family table. The long-running Guest at Your Table program is a chance to learn about our partners' work and support our shared efforts to advance human rights.



Just In Time Volunteering

Get involved! Start your 2026 right by volunteering.

This community may be led by our amazing Board and ministers and staff, yet it is powered by volunteers. A regular volunteer slot gives a meaningful structure to a week and also gives a feeling of stability in our often chaotic world.

How to volunteer? Check out the Just In Time section in Friday's "This Week at MDUUC" email.

And here are some top ideas and you can volunteer for any of them by emailing justintime@mduuc.org:

- **Help make coffee.** You love it and your friends do too. Despite rumors to the contrary this is NOT made by magic elves. If the staff don't have to do it, they can help do other welcoming preparations on Sunday mornings.
- **Help on the tech deck.** We are revising our tech volunteer program this month and would love to have your talents. We will train!
- **Be an usher.** We are having another usher training in January to help make our
- **Become a pastoral visitor.** Rev. Leslie is taking applications for this loving ministry which extends the care of this community to others. Message "pastoral care" to leslie@mduuc.org
- **Count cash.** We operate a financially responsible campus which means that we require two people to count cash. If you miss a world of bills and coins, this might be for you. This is also a good task for people available weekdays.
- **Assist with mailings.** Help fold the monthly Beacon Newsletter and other mailings. We need people who are available during weekdays.

Gifts of time power our amazing community. If you can give community, send a message to justintime@mduuc.org.

Restorative Practices

In these challenging times, finding peace and mindfulness is more important than ever as is remembering the inner resources we have which we can develop to anchor ourselves.

- **2nd and 4th Friday Virtual AM Mediation, 8 a.m.**
Start your day with calm and clarity. Join Rev. Leslie online for a short, 30-minute session to ease into your day.
- **Saturday Mindfulness Meditation, hybrid, at 9:00 a.m.**
- **Sunday Virtual Meditation, 9:00 a.m.**
Email yoga@mduuc.org to be added on to the mailing list.
- **Virtual Meditations - Visit [HERE](#) for recordings.**

Did you know that we have virtual meditations on our website at
<https://mduuc.org/virtual-meditation/>

Search for "Beacon Light" on Spotify or subscribe here:
<https://open.spotify.com/show/4iQZnnkS3HIXBa94JRuMin?si=808541c48b2b451f>

Looking for Usable Screens!

Did you get new electronics for the holidays? We might be able to use what you are replacing. We are looking for larger TV screens and computers and tablets which we can use in programming as well as cell phones which we can reequip for people in need.

Multicultural Game Night and Puzzle Exchange January 11 at 5PM in Bortin Hall

Let's revive a once-beloved community tradition! On Sunday, January 11 at 5 p.m. we will gather for a night of board games, puzzles and fun snacks. Grab your favorite board games and come on!

And if you like you can bring a snack that reflects an aspect of your culture however you define that. Like to make pierogies? Sushi? Scones? Know a great source for halo-halo? Bread pudding? Ginger snaps? Willing to try those latkes gluten-free? Is your culture rainbow cookies or vegan lentil pasta? Bring it on! Able to come and can't bring anything, then bring us the gift of yourself.

Do you have a puzzle you have already worked and are looking for another to occupy these cooler and still-longer evenings? Bring a puzzle and take a puzzle. (And we are looking for an engaging 500 piece one for people to do during coffee hour because we learned during our Harvest Festival this year that this is fun to do in community.)

Dances of Universal Peace

Sunday, January 25 at 2 p.m., Sanctuary

Join us on every 4th Sunday for an interfaith, multi-cultural, spiritual practice with singing, moving, prayers to promote inner peace. Led by SierraLynne & Bill Wentz with friends. No partner or experience needed. All abilities are welcome!

Not Getting Our Emails?

Not getting our emails? Check your spam folder.

Want to continue getting them, mark them as not spam or take the time to open them—chockful of good ways to connect in these alienating days.

Please Consider Donating to the Minister's Discretionary Fund

Please consider supporting the Minister's Discretionary Fund (MDF), which helps members and friends facing urgent needs to pay for gas to travel for work, to heat their home, including those who are experiencing homelessness. By donating directly to the MDF or choose the option from the Giving page found on our website.

Share The Plate - Hope Solutions Sunday, January 11

Founded in 1997, by a coalition of local faith communities, to provide emergency support to homeless individuals, Hope Solutions has grown to the premier organization in Contra Costa County, providing permanent supportive housing and vital services to over 2,200 of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Living Our Values: Actions You Can Take

The potential for justice exists in all spaces we cultivate together, including the virtual ones! You can visit our Living Our Values page to participate in Justice efforts at our local, state, and national levels. This is a great way to live out our UU values , especially when we want to remain safely distanced and engaged.

Visit: <https://mduuc.org/living-our-values/>

Faith Without Walls

Faith Without Walls is our ministry to those who experiencing houselessness. If you are interested in learning more or being trained to be part of our showers program, or washing towels, please contact one of our ministers.

Tuesday and Thursday Interfaith Vigils at Concord Immigration Court

Join Revs. Rodney, Ranwa, Leslie, and others as we provide the ministry of presence for folks lined up to enter the immigration court in Concord.

*MDUUC ministers will be present every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m., with the exception of holidays when courts are closed. You are invited to sign up to let us know you are joining. Our interfaith partners will remain on-site until noon. Steps to stay connected for vigils:

1. Register to join and help us coordinate - [HERE](#)
2. Sign up for specific Dates/Times [HERE](#)
3. Download the Signal App - [HERE](#)
4. Let Rev. Leslie know you are joining. leslie@mduuc.org

An Important Way To Get Involved

If you are looking for an important act that you can do to support immigrants in these VERY difficult times, this program is for you!!!

Do you LIKE supporting families? Will you HELP us welcome newly arrived immigrants and asylum seekers?

Learn about how you can reduce fear and offer safety, comfort, and clarity by providing a friendly face to help navigate the legal system in Contra Costa County and the Central Valley.

Join us in making a difference for our newcomer neighbors! For more information contact IM4HI Accompaniment Manager, Kelly Younger at kkyounger@im4humanintegrity.org.

Faith In Action East Bay

Faith in Action East Bay is creating a fund for families where the main breadwinner has been deported. Here is a link to contribute: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-immigrant-families-in-east-bay>. This is a great way to practice mutual aid.

Report ICE Sightings

Help keep our community informed. Submit a report through the form, contributing to a more aware and prepared community. No account required and with real-time reports. Report ICE Sightings here: <https://juntosseguros.com/>



Wednesday Virtual 12 Steps For UUs

Any time of stress can awaken addictive behavior and these coping strategies can become their own morass. The threat of addiction is higher during difficult times. Many among us struggle with the traditional theistic language of 12 step programs and find it a great entry or a good supplement to engage with a UU specific approach to the 12 steps. Join us on Wednesdays from noon-1p.m. The link to join is also on the calendar.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/98830218453>

Educate Yourself To Prepare For Trans Justice

Our faith has been a leader in religious advocacy for trans people and in light of attacks, we need to do more. Visit this document for comprehensive list and links to UU Actions & Resources to Support Trans Justice & Safety [tinyurl.com/UU-trans-action]. Here you'd find resources for:

- Organizations to Support/Follow
- Reputable & Worthy Sources of News on Trans Justice
- UU Resources
- Resources for Trans/Nonbinary UUs
- Resources for Understanding & Responding to Anti-Trans Legislation & Rhetoric
- General Resources on Trans Identity, Allyship, etc.



Nominating Committee

Self-Nominate or Nominate Others!
**We're Looking
For A Few Good
Members**



Each year the MDUUC Nominating Committee works diligently to identify members who are interested in getting involved and serving our church community through positions on the Board of Trustees, Legacy Committee, or Nominating Committee.

What do these jobs entail?

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of MDUUC. Trustees are active in the life of the congregation and ensure that the church's activities and assets support our mission and values. They safeguard the fiscal health of the church and take actions on church business. 3-year terms, may serve for 6 consecutive years.

The Legacy Committee manages Endowment investments and solicits new membership to the Legacy Circle. Their activities vary greatly and run the spectrum from reviewing investment statements, planning presentations, hosting a party, and drafting communications. 3-year terms, may serve for 2 consecutive terms.

The Nominating Committee identifies lay leaders for service on the Board of Trustees, the Legacy Committee, and the Nominating Committee. They reach out to the larger congregation to gather recommendations for potential candidates and engage in robust discussion to determine a slate of nominees to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. 2-year terms, may serve for 2 consecutive terms.

Please self-nominate or nominate another member for the 2026-27 term. You can use our online nomination form or reach out to a member of the Nominating Committee - Rose Barreto, Juan Contreras, Jaynese Davis, Catherine Der, Gabriel Escobar, Rosie Reed, and Joe Schellenberg.



Scan the QR code or use this link:
<https://forms.gle/mQBPZtRJW4D6iixm8>

Support The Community Pantry

Community Pantry Needs - Our pantry needs some additional supplies. Can you help? We are especially in need of pasta, small containers of cooking oil, and shelf-stable milk. Drop the items on campus in Bortin Hall.

Future Pickling Parties are being planned to help stock the community pantry on campus.

MDUUC Could Be Your Spiritual Home!

Can you imagine a faith community where doubt doesn't disqualify you; where questions spark celebration rather than condemnation, and where Love stretches wide enough to embrace every soul walking through our door? I believe what you are imagining is Mount Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church!

We are a proud congregational member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a national organization of congregations that uplifts our larger faith movement. We champion curiosity rather than demanding conformity. While your individual spiritual journey might wind through Buddhist meditation halls, Christian sanctuaries, scientific laboratories or you have never considered a religious home. We believe wisdom emerges from countless origins, and each unique path adds richness to a more complete understanding of some of life's incredible mysteries.

Membership at MDUUC asks nothing of your personal beliefs, yet requests everything of your commitment to building community and social change. Formal membership deepens this connection and opens new possibilities. Some of the benefits to membership here at MDUUC include: speaking and voting at congregational meetings, representing our congregation at national gatherings, and serving on our Nominating Committee or Board of Trustees.

Beyond these practical benefits, membership transforms individual paths into shared purpose. Right now, religious freedom faces unprecedented attacks from the current administration. Formally joining a religious community like ours becomes both an act of gratitude and a form of defiance. Members declare, "I won't let fear silence progressive voices."

Our faith tradition doesn't simply discuss equity; we live it boldly. When immigrant families need sanctuary and support through the asylum process, we open our doors. When unhoused folks need food or hot showers, we provide both. As climate change threatens our planet's future, we take action with protests, postcards, and civil disobedience to educate others about this crisis. I do not believe this is political theater; I feel this is UU prayer in action. It is our sacred work made manifest.

My hope is that you consider formally joining us on this journey to craft a more compassionate world that we want our children to inherit.

Every 1st Sunday of the month is Membership Sunday. When you attend worship with us, you can be sure to hear about the positive and life-affirming impact joining our congregation has had on people's lives. You will also have the opportunity to sign our membership book, which has been in existence since our inception in 1951.

Ongoing Programming

For the most accurate and up-to-date information on meeting times and dates, please refer to our calendar at <https://mduuc.org/mduuc-calendar/>. While the program descriptions provide a helpful overview of our ongoing offerings, the calendar is your go-to source for event locations, Zoom links, and registration details for events that require it. To stay informed about any changes or new opportunities, we also encourage you to join our mailing list.

Elder Journey

Elder Journey is a spirited conversation about life issues and the perspectives of older folks. Please join Rev. Leslie and the Elder Journey Community on Wednesdays from 10:30–11:30 a.m. The group meets virtually and will resume meeting hybrid on the 2nd Wednesdays in Spring. *See calendar for updates.

Vespers

Vespers is a mid-week recharge for the spirit and a chance to connect to the community. You can join via Zoom or in-person on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, at 5 p.m., of the month. This is a great place to check in with your spirit and some friendly community members.

Ministers' Conversations

Our ministers' conversations Join via Zoom or in-person on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, at 7 p.m., of the month.

Virtual Yoga

Mondays at 7:00 p.m. (virtual). The session begins with gentle integrated yoga asanas and stretches, breath work exercises, relaxation techniques, and opportunities to set neural pathways for happiness that include laughter yoga. A 20-minute guided relaxation meditation follows. *See calendar for dates.

Tuesday and Thursday Virtual Lunch Groups

A friendly drop in virtual group that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Friday AM Mini-Meditation Boost

End your week with a guided meditation and an opportunity to state an intention for your self. Join Rev. Leslie most Fridays from 8-8:30 am for this chance to destress and connect.

Saturday Mindfulness Meditation Group

Join us on most Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m., on campus and online. Email Rose Riedel at rose@mduuc.org to be added to the group list. *See calendar for dates.

Sunday Virtual Mediation

Join Sharon Lawrence online on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. Email yoga@mduuc.org to join the mailing list.

MDUUC Choir

The MDUUC Choir is a chance to connect with others, deepen your faith, and be part of something truly special. Everyone is welcome to join, no auditions are required. *See calendar for dates.

Black, Indigenous and People of Color Caucus

3rd Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. in the Oak Room and on Zoom (hybrid). Members and friends of MDUUC who identify as people of color are invited to join this gathering where we will create a sacred space of sharing and power. We meet monthly with alternating times—please email leslie@mduuc.org to be apprised of our scheduled meeting times. Get in touch and learn more!

Exploring Whiteness Together

4th Wednesday of every month from 7:00 p.m. on zoom. Members and friends who identify as white are invited to this gathering to create a sacred space where we can engage in what decentering whiteness means especially in a culture where whiteness is almost always the center. Through guided discussions and personal reflections, participants will explore their experiences with racism, learn about the impact of microaggressions and allyship, to develop actionable steps to become effective advocates for racial justice. Join us in this transformative journey to dismantle systemic racism and build a more inclusive community.

MDUUC Bike Group

The MDUUC Bike Group holds a ride on the third Saturday of each month—all levels of ability are welcome. We meet at the church at 10:00 a.m. and carpool or ride to our starting location. Contact Jim Hughell at bike@mduuc.org to join the email list to receive and communicate plans.

Open Women's Group

1st Thursday of every month, online from 10:30 a.m. to noon. In November, we will meet with Rev. Leslie Takahashi. All are welcome. Please email admin@mduuc.org to be added to our mailing list.

Wild and Wonderful Women's Spiritual Arts Group

2nd Wednesdays from 3–5 p.m. in the Owl room. MDUUC women to explore their spiritual lives through creative practices like writing, painting, movement, voice, ritual, and storytelling. Contact wild-and-wonderful@mduuc.org with questions or to join the group!

Men's Breakfast

2nd Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. in the Owl Room or on Zoom. This is a group for those who are male-identified to gather for conversation and to share life experiences.

YA, Young Adult Group at MDUUC

YA is comprised of adults ages 24–35. This group provides an opportunity for people to gather, meet and do fun things together.

Xillennial Group (Ages 30s–40s)

This group provides opportunities to connect and gather. Please email xillennial-leads@mduuc.org to join the list.

Community Garden Group

Do you have interest in gardening but don't have a space of your own? Want to be involved in growing fresh food for our neighbors experiencing food insecurity? Any excess food grown will be part of the Faith Without Walls program. Contact garden@mduuc.org to find out more.

Buildings and Grounds Work Party*

1st Saturday of the month, from 9 a.m.–noon. Join our to help beautify our campus while connecting with members and getting a few tasks done that cannot be done by one person alone! If you can, bring and share snacks to refuel! Contact admin@mduuc.org with questions. *Weather permitting. We will need help in February to prepare for spring.

Wednesday Virtual 12 Step for UUs

Join virtually on Wednesdays at 12 p.m. as we share our experience, strength, and hope with one another. No matter what addiction you have, you are welcome to join us as we engage in recovery as Unitarian Universalists.

Grief Group

This is a monthly, drop-in group for those who have suffered a loss can continue to gather support. Join on the 1st Friday of the month from noon–1 p.m. available in-person and virtual.

Memory Matters Group

4th Saturdays at 3:00–4:00 p.m. in the Oak Room and on Zoom (hybrid). This friendly, drop-in group is for those experiencing loss of memory or new difficulties with familiar tasks to come together to share in memory strengthening exercises, experiences and for support.

Health and Hope Group

*1st Saturdays at 4 p.m. Health and Hope is a group for people who have a difficult diagnosis. Please consider joining Rev. Leslie if you could use a space to talk about the challenges of living with a life-altering condition.

Virtual Monthly Caregiver Support Group

Care-giving for a loved one can be challenging. Our drop-in virtual, monthly support group meets the 1st Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Transitions Group

Join the group on the 3rd Saturday at 11 a.m. in-person and on Zoom. Transitions and Loss is a group for people undergoing life transitions. This group works for people who are going through a change of relationship, retiring or other job status change, federal workers experiencing stress or those in the later stages of grief who are rebuilding and reassessing. Join Rev. Leslie for this monthly conversation on the third Saturday of the month from 11–12. Please note, we are trying to arrange child care for this group.

Parent Group

The Parent Group meets on the 1st Sundays from 12–1:30 pm. Childcare will be available.

Parents and Toddlers Group

The Parents and Toddlers Group meets on the 3rd Sundays from 9–10:30 am. Childcare will be available.

MSYG, Middle School Youth Group

MSYG meets on Sundays 12–1:30 pm.

YRUU, High School Youth Group

YRUU meets on Sundays, from 12:00–1:30 p.m.

Emerging Adults (Ages 18-24)

MDUUC's Emerging Adults gather to learn new life skills, make new connections, enjoy good company, nurture their spirits and have fun! This group supports each other as they navigate life transitions from post high school into adulthood. Whether it's a new skill, game night, or a delicious meal, the emerging adult group is the place to be!



Save The Date: Saturday, Feb. 7, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Join the First Saturday Work Party in February to prepare for Spring! Our Grounds Chair Bruce Pennington, who has a background as an arborist, has detected that runoff from winter rains is affecting the oaks on the edge of our property. We need people with shovels to join us from 9–12 on Saturday, February 7. We will have other projects as well to prepare for Spring. This once monthly gathering is essential for the maintenance of our grounds especially and happens on the first Sunday of most months. To learn more or to be added to the list for alerts, email the Congregational Administrator, Jen Marsh at jenm@mduuc.org.

Do You Have A Skill Or An Area Of Knowledge To Share?

One of the joys of MDUUC is to learn about the many talents people can offer. Learning together is also a great way to connect with new people. If you have an idea for an adult class you would like to offer, email Rev. Leslie Takahashi at leslie@mduuc.org and put "ADULT" in the email subject line.

Did You Know?

MDUUC has a space for scattering the cremains of beloved companion animals in the Robert De Vight Legacy Garden. If you would like to have a minister participate in helping you with the scattering, please contact Rev. Leslie Takahashi.

Board of Trustees

Linda Russell, President
Andrew Oswald, Vice President
Mark Chase, Secretary
Elizabeth Dietsch, Treasurer

Trustees

Andy Smith, Kevin Hsieh, Jim Lincoln,
Mary Kelly Persyn, Patricia Craven

February Beacon Deadline

Wednesday, January 21 at 10:00 a.m.
Please send submissions to publications@mduuc.org.

All submissions are subject to editing for space and approval.



Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
55 Eckley Lane
Walnut Creek CA 94596

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MDUUC Ministers and Staff

Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Lead Minister, leslie@mduuc.org
Rev. Rodney Lemery, Associate Minister, rodney@mduuc.org
Jyvonne Haskin Music Director, jyvonne@mduuc.org
Marena McGregor, Director of Religious Education, marena@mduuc.org
Jen Marsh Prink, Congregational Administrator, jenm@mduuc.org
Aiden McMahon, Intern Minister, aiden@mduuc.org
Brett Carson, Accompanist, brettcarson@mduuc.org
Ging Lee, Communications Assistant, ging@mduuc.org
Eric Chapot, Facilities Staff, eric@mduuc.org
Rev. Dr. David Sammons, Minister Emeritus
Rev. Ranwa Hammamy, Affiliated Minister
Rev. Meg Richardson, Affiliated Minister
Board of Trustees - board@mduuc.org

Main Office Phone: (925) 934-3135
Website: <https://www.mduuc.org>

Bluesky: mduuc.bsky.social
Podcast on Spotify - Beacon Light

LIVE MUSIC

Community Concert Series Presents:

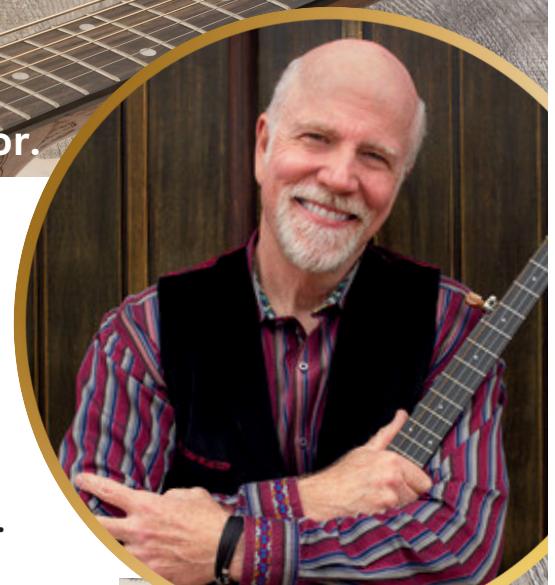
SATURDAY | JANUARY 17, 2026 | 8 PM
BORTIN HALL AT MDUUC
55 ECKLEY LANE, WALNUT CREEK

Tickets: \$35.

Sliding scale tickets will be available at the door.



**ADVANCE TICKETS
SOLD ON EVENTBRITE**



Masks are encouraged, but not required.

Light refreshments will be available.

Doors will open at 7:30pm

Please join us for folk music legend, John McCutcheon, who will entertain us with his wonderful stories, his thoughtful, funny and poignant lyrics and his array of instruments.