



Mt Diablo UU Beacon

Transforming Ourselves and Our World

Volume 72, No. 11

December 2025

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

A Year to Remember. How do we say good-bye to a year such as 2025? How do we glean what can be taken from it? How do we leave what should be left in its fold? How do we carry forward seeds to plant anew in 2026? Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi who apparently has a lot of questions....

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

Holiday Pageant. This year's pageant invites you to the wedding of... Kris Kringle Jr. and Solstice Evergreen! Join us for a hilarious and heartwarming original production exploring love, interdependence, and climate justice—all woven into a playful, festive story told in true MDUUC fashion. With community performers of all ages, this is a joyful service you won't want to miss!

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

The Light We Make and the Light We Find. Please join us as the longest night settles around us and the Hanukkah candles flicker against the dark. We hope you can make it for a service that will have you reflecting on a sacred tension: When do we kindle our own flames, and when do we trust the light will return on its own? Join Rev. Rodney Lemery for this service.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 - 6:00 P.M.

The Longest Night: A Solstice Service. Join us for a very special Solstice service, rooted in the turning of the earth and also taking time to recognize the fate of our neighbors who will feel the weight of this night.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - 5:00 P.M.

The Camel's Eye: A Do-It-Ourselves Pageant. Join us for this family-friendly service about questing for wisdom on an uncertain journey. Come and participate in this joyous celebration. Bring a snack to share and stay for a time of cheer!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - 8:00 P.M.

The Star On The Far Horizon: A celebration of choir, carols and stories. As we gather this Christmas Eve, let us fill our hearts with anticipation.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28

Keep It All The Year. Charles Dickens' famous tale marks the transformation of its main character by his promise "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year long." For those of us not quite ready to let the holidays go, what lessons might we carry with us through the coming year?

Congregational Forum is on January 18, 12:30P.M.
Congregational Meeting is on January 25, 10:30A.M.

Save The Dates. Details on Page 4.



Spiritual Housecleaning for Year's End. As we prepare to end this 2025 and enter 2026, we cannot read the future. We do know that we will be well-served to have our spiritual house in order. Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Jo Gelinas, Aiden MacMahon and others for this sampler of practices to calm the spirit and enliven the heart.

Suggested donation \$20 (however this amount should not be a barrier for coming.) The donation can be made in person or online by choosing "One Time Gift" from the Give Form <https://mduuc.churchcenter.com/giving>

1st & 3rd WEDNESDAY EVENING PROGRAMS

VESPERS, December 3 at 5 p.m. in the Sanctuary and online

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

Please join us for our last Vespers service of 2025. On December 3, join us for this service: "How do we embrace the generosity of our days?"

TAIZE, December 17 at 5 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Come to our UU Taize on and give yourself the gift of a peaceful hour among friends. The service will include meditative chant singing, spoken prayer, and time for quiet reflection.

COMMUNITY DINNER, at 6 p.m. in Bortin Hall

All are welcome to join this simple meal with conversation. Please register online to help us honor a headcount for preparation.

Register for Community Dinners here or on the calendar:

<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, at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary and online.

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

2025—a year to remember, indeed.

As we end this year, I am making room in my heart for gratitude. I say that because for all the times this year when we have seen humanity at its worst, we have also seen it at its best again and again and again. People living out their values, rising up in resistance to corruption and greed, practicing the sin of innovation again and again. So many in this congregation have shown such dedication to creating a community with Love at the center, reaffirming our commitments to equity and pluralism, recognizing interdependence and doing the work of justice.

The generosity of the community brings gratitude. I'm grateful for the ways that people supported one another in so many different ways: by giving to the Minister's Discretionary Fund so that people could continue to have shelter and food, by giving time to ensure an abundance of caring companionship, and by giving the talents which make this such an interesting community.

And what witnessing occurred! How many signs were made, markers exhausted, steps marched, calls made, groceries bought for our community food pantry? And not just "one and done": people showed up week after week after week, demanding that the democratic principles so inherent to our faith be protected.

I am grateful for those to have stepped forward to help make this congregation work. Though we still need more volunteers, this year we saw more people than we've seen since pre-Covid times stepping forward to make regular commitments and fuel this community. Special gratitude for our Board, led by Linda Russell. Despite myriad daily challenges, we still have launched a process keeping us focused on the future.

Finally, I want to end by saying how grateful I am to be able to serve this congregation with other capable ministers, including Rev. Rodney Lemery, two amazing interns, and our affiliated ministers. We are also fortunate to have Jen Marsh, Marena McGregor, Ging Lee and the abundant talents of the rest of the staff step up to meet the unique challenges of this year. And 2025 brought us Jyvonne Haskin!

We could end this year focusing on what has not gone as we would wish or we can end this year aware of all the seeds which have been planted. I believe with all my heart that we will see some of them sprout in 2026.

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

Season's Greetings!



The holiday season is upon us, and we are thrilled to offer a month full of warmth, creativity, community, and celebration for all ages. Whether you love singing, crafting, storytelling, or simply being together, there is something for everyone in our December lineup. Mark your calendars and join us as we celebrate connection, joy, and the spirit of the season!

Sunday, December 14 : Annual Holiday Pageant @ 10:30am

A multi-generational holiday service like you've never seen before!

This year's pageant invites you to the wedding of... Kris Kringle Jr. and Solstice Evergreen! Join us for a hilarious and heartwarming original production exploring love, interdependence, and climate justice—all woven into a playful, festive story told in true MDUUC fashion. With community performers of all ages, this is a joyful service you won't want to miss!

We also need cookie and treat volunteers to help make the celebration even sweeter. If you can bring cookies for after the service, please contact Marena@mduuc.org.

Sunday, December 14: Carols & Crafts @ 12pm

Kick off the season with one of our most beloved December traditions. Join us for an afternoon of holiday crafts and joyful caroling. Bring your creativity, your singing voice, and your festive spirit! All ages welcome!

Got a craft you love? Want to host a table and share it with others? We would love to have you! Email Marena@mduuc.org if you can lead a craft station.

Wednesday, December 24: Family Christmas Eve Service @ 5pm

Gather with us for our family-friendly Christmas Eve service, filled with music, story, candlelight, and wonder. This gentle and joyful service is designed for children, families, and anyone who loves the warmth of Christmas tradition held in community.

We look forward to celebrating the season with you—through song, story, creativity, and companionship. Come as you are, bring your loved ones, and help us make this December bright for our whole MDUUC family.

Sincerely—Marena

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



Help bring extra holiday cheer by bringing treats, cookies, and baked goods to our services!

Rev. Rodney Lemery Associate Minister

This holiday has crept up on me. The recent weeks have been full of long nights and short, chilly days. I am reminded that this month is stitched together with so many holidays, each with its own stories and rituals. The Solstice reminds me that the light will return, even when it feels impossibly far away. Hanukkah speaks to me of faith that endures, even when the world feels heavy and hopeless. Christmas, for so many, is a gentle nudge that hope can show up in the most surprising places. Kwanzaa invites our Black siblings to gather and remember the strength that comes from community. Even with all of these ritualistic reminders, I also know that this season can stir up worry.

I feel it myself. I have concerns about everything on my to-do list; time is running out. I wonder about money for presents and commitments. I wonder whether we can find peace in a world that feels so full of violence and hate. These questions and anticipations linger, yet I find myself meeting them with hope and fortitude when I spend time with this congregation. I see our values of equity and justice come alive in real, everyday ways. When I witness our willingness to show up for community events like the Trans Day of Remembrance in Todos Santos Plaza with our partner Rainbow Community Center, I see our ability to slow down and create spaces for grief and to make promises to keep protecting the living. I think of the new faces delivering food with Indivisible Resistors, making sure immigrant families have enough to eat. Every family fed reminds me that while I may not be able to afford to feed those in need in Contra Costa County, together, many in our midst can! I think of the folks who show up, week after week, to sing at vigils for immigrants waiting for court in Concord. Each vigil is a reminder that we can create our own peace together even in turbulent times.

Our faith is not just something we talk about on Sundays or in meetings. It is something we try to live out, even when we are not sure it will be enough. We do not act because we know for sure what will happen. Our actions in these times are a result of a Unitarian Universalist faith that tells us what we do matters, even if we do not see the results, and I would argue even when it costs us something. Again and again, we choose to walk in faith, not fear. None of us can know if one meal, one vigil, or one song will change the world, but we show up anyway, trusting that our actions matter.

As the cold settles into my bones and the sun disappears before this winter season, I feel warmed by the generosity and love lifted into our County by this congregation. These trying times are when we need each other the most. The life of our congregation becomes a kind of medicine for loneliness and fear. When we show up for worship, or lend a hand in justice work, or join in a social action, we are doing more than just keeping busy. We are practicing what it means to be faithful Unitarian Universalists in the world. It is our way of saying that we believe in one another and in our shared ability to make a difference, even when the world feels heavy and the shadows fall around us.

With respect and hope—Rev. Rodney

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

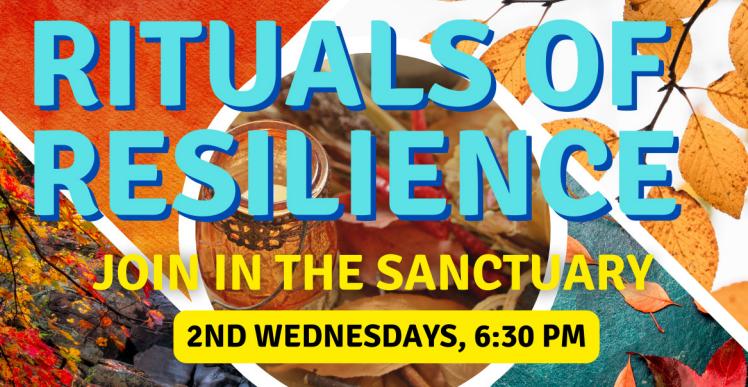


A Special Message From The Treasurer

This is a season of gratitude and as we end this 2025, I am grateful for our congregation and its community. In these hard and unpredictable times, MDUUC has been a steady presence and a place of respite and sanctuary for us all. As a new Board member, I am learning how much we do to care for people behind the scenes and that makes me even more grateful.

This is also a season of giving and one in which we are being asked to be very intentional about where we put our money. I want to ask you to consider giving to our beloved community right here. Why? Because we are reliant on your gifts and have almost no other sources of funds. Because our congregation also faces rising costs in this time of inflation. Most of all, though, because our community holds our values and helps us all keep the hope and focus to live them. An investment here is an investment in the world we wish our children and their children and the world's children to inherit. As the child of a dedicated member, now gone, and as a parent of two dynamic young adults, I ask you to consider an end of year gift to this beloved community. —Elizabeth Dietsch

**Rituals of Resilience,
December 10 at 6:30 p.m., Sanctuary**



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. **Please note that due to the nature of this programming, it will be in-person only.**

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 a board member outside the Sanctuary doors at 11:30 a.m. or 15 minutes after service ends on Sunday, December 7.



A Message From Your Board of Trustees

Greetings, Members and Friends!

First, we would like to extend much appreciation for all the Bid4Love contributions! Those of you who attended the November Forum heard from Sharon Solstice that we took in, up to the time of the Forum, approximately \$52,000, with the Big Ask (for air conditioning for the Gilmartin Building) bringing in approximately \$18,000. A special thank you to Suzanne Lofquist who will contribute more to help close the gap of the funds needed for that project. At a time when many are experiencing financial challenges, we truly appreciate people showing up, bringing fellowship to Bortin Hall, and contributing to make this a very successful event. This is what connection looks like - coming together to create an event that benefits the larger community.

Please thank the members of the Bid4Love team for making this event happen! The full list of those who helped is in the Hats Off section in this edition of the Beacon. It is a long list of outstanding volunteers!

At MDUUC, we talk a lot about mutual aid, but do we actually stop to think of what that means and how valuable it is? Mutual aid is defined as: "an organizational model where voluntary, collaborative exchanges of resources and services for common benefit take place amongst community members to overcome social, economic, and political barriers to meeting common needs." (Wikipedia)

We don't just "pool" our resources. We **ARE** the resources — from providing rides to people who want to come to church, or go to a doctor's appointment, or the grocery store, picking up medicine for someone who is not able to get out, bringing food for the MDUUC pantry or delivering holiday meals and so many more ways we can support each other.

Mutual aid is radical hospitality. These are the lessons regularly taught at MDUUC, throughout the service and expressed in the wider community, when we show up. The holidays offer many ways to give but generosity is a year-round endeavor. Please check out the weekly emails with many ways to contribute.

As we move deeper into this year, consider how you can engage in ways that reflect your values. As we consider a new name for MDUUC, let's think about how our values are reflected in the name we call ourselves.

Safe and healthy holidays!

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 modelling 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.

CONGREGATIONAL FORUM

Upcoming Meeting: Sunday, Jan. 18 at 12:30 p.m.

Come and hear important updates from committee members, the board, and ministers. Our Congregational Forum is held online via Zoom and in person in the Sanctuary.

Save The Dates: February 15, March 15 and tentatively scheduled for April 19.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25.

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).

COMMUNITY CONCERT SERIES PRESENTS JOHN MCCUTCHEON FOLK MUSIC LEGEND.



LIVE MUSIC
AT MDUUC!

\$35 TICKETS, ONLINE
SLIDING SCALE AT THE DOOR

SAT. JAN. 17 AT 8PM

Folk music legend will awe us with his musicality, stories, and creativity.

John McCutcheon is a folk music legend. He brings an array of guitars, banjo, hammer dulcimer and more to draw us together in the magic of the night's music.

Lights, snacks and coffee, tea will be available.

Doors open at 7:30pm.

Sliding scale tickets will be available at the door. Scan the QR code for advance tickets!



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. More information will be shared in the Friday weekly newsletter, stay tuned!

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

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.

In Memoriam

Celebration of Life for Deb Baltzo
Saturday, December 13 at 11 a.m.
Sanctuary
If you could, please bring a dessert.

JOIN THE MDUUC HOUSE BAND!

Hey Musicians! Are you interested in sharing your talents with your MDUUC community and furthering your spiritual practice of music making? The MDUUC House Band is looking for you to join us for rehearsals on December 14, from 12-1 p.m. in the Sanctuary. To RSVP, please email bandleader Brett Carson and music director Jyvonne Haskin at band@mduuc.org to let us know your instrument and provide some insight into your experience and music background (e.g. sight reading, lessons, current engagement, etc.). Singers, drummers, guitarists, bassists, violinists, cellists, flautists, you name it—we can't wait to hear from you!

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>

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

HATS OFF!

Honors, Accolades, Thanks!

- To Sharon Solstice for leading the fantastic Bid4Love Team below:

----TOP 4 Bid4Love Heroes!

- Jaynese Davis for everything that goes in mouths
- Rose Barreto & Crystal Loutzenheiser for leading the decor
- Jen Marsh for admin, ideas, coordination & Zoom host
- Emily Harris for data entry and anything else needed

----Bid4Love Volunteers night of:

- Jo Gelinas and Charlie Cobb with registration
- Jeff Hearns & Neysa Matt as counters
- Scott Schrader, Jyonne Haskins & DJ for music
- Mike Holmes and Pete Davis with ticket sales
- Bill Wostenberg for bartending
- Melissa Allen & Elisabeth Andreason with raffle sales
- To our decorators: Rose Barreto, Crystal Loutzenheiser, Catherine Der, Vickie Lopez, Kathryn Wellington, Emily Harris, Jaynese Davis, and Sharon Solstice
- To Jaynese's catering team: Randy Stansberry, Mary Schreiber, and Zendra Zehner

- To Mary Shrieber for lending us her electric knife sharpener. We have amazing sharp knives!
- To Janet Joy for being a speaker with the Open Women's Group in a very appreciated presentation
- To Randy Stansberry and Dave Fitzgerald who keep art displays continuously showing in the Bortin Hall hallway art gallery for all to enjoy
- To Mary Allan for her leadership in keeping the Community Circle groups organized each season
- To Rosie Reid for helping with RE while Marena was out
- For the wonderful songleading support from Sheli Cryderman, Sally Edgerton, Carol Fidler, and Mora Mattingly!! Thank you for lending your voices to amplify our music program!
- Thank you to the Chalice Choir for the collective beauty you've added to our November services - and for being so welcoming to our guest choir directors!! And thank you in advance for all the prep you're doing for our December music making!
- Big thanks to the MDUUC Band for some stellar music on several Sundays in November - shout out to Laura Zucker, Neysa Matt, Joanne Cosmos Finn, and Steve Hirsh and Bill Wentz!! You're killing it, thank youuu!!
- Thank you Scott Schrader for sharing your music leadership skills and getting the choir warmed up in rehearsal this past week!

*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 is 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.

Dances of Universal Peace

Sunday, December 28 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!

Please Consider Donating to the Minister's Discretionary Fund

As the holidays approach, please consider supporting the Minister's Discretionary Fund, which helps members and friends facing urgent needs, including homelessness while safeguarding yourself from scam.

[Donate Here](#) or choose the option from the Giving page found on our website.

Blood Drive - December 16 Promo



Give Joy, Get Joy During This Special Time of Year

This holiday season, your generosity inspires us to give back. [Donate Dec. 14-Jan. 4](#), and we'll thank you with a **\$15 Rewards gift card** PLUS a **special surprise gift!** Both are redeemable online via Donor Rewards. Opt-in required.

Blood Drive will be held on December 16 from 10–2 p.m. Goal: 36 appointments, 21 donors and 26 lifesaving units. [Schedule an appointment here.](#)

Just In Time Volunteering

Mutual aid is how we will thrive.

If you care about this community, consider dedicating some of your volunteer time. Contact justintime@mduuc.org with any questions or to signup!

Holiday helpers wanted! First week of December

- Setup the Christmas Tree with lights
- Decorate the Sanctuary
- Before December 5, help get candles ready for services

Cookies and baked goods wanted for all of our holiday events! Treats make our events extra special and sweet!

Help with Carols & Crafts held on Dec. 14

- An all-ages activity packed event could use baked goods, cookies, treats and finger-foods! This is also Justice Sunday!
- Help lead activities. Contact marena@mduuc.org.

We need ushers for our holiday services

- Winter Solstice on Sunday, Dec. 21 at 6PM.
- Dec. 24 at 5 PM & 8PM

Do you have 30 minutes before joining Sunday service?

- Our coffee hour is a vital time for community. Email sundaycoffee@mduuc.org to join.
- Help setup tables and chairs

Help us keep all involved

- Be part of our welcoming team. Can you help greet people? Answer questions?
- Offer rides to those who otherwise can't participate
- We love our events but need support—many hands makes light work!
- Help setup before events and breakdown tables and chairs afterwards
- Help with kitchen clean-up

Do you play an instrument? Like to lead songs?

- Jyvonne Haskin our amazing music director is rebuilding our database and we want to include your gifts.

Want to support our children and youth?

- Donate soup, compostable utensils and bowls, and baked goods to support the Youth fund. Soup is served on days when we have a Congregational forum. Upcoming forum on Jan 18 at 12:30PM.
- Help with cleanup after the lunch fundraiser
- Lead activities (contact Marena@mduuc.org)

Pastoral Visitors needed. Are you a good listener (or want to learn to be one?) In these times, we need more people to offer this valuable ministry. Please email Rev. Leslie Takahashi for an application at leslie@mduuc.org.

Are you nostalgic for actual money? If so, perhaps you can get your fix as part of our once a month cash counting team.

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

2025 Calendar of MDUUC Holiday Events

Breath & Spirit, Centering for the Holidays

Saturday, Dec. 6, 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

A half-day meditation retreat

[Register Here](#)

Walnut Creek Jazz Band Holiday Concert

Saturday, Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.

An evening of holiday music & vocal jazz favorites

[Get Tickets Here](#) or at the door

Sunday, December 14

Holiday Pageant at 10:30 a.m.

Crafts & Tree Trimming after service

Caroling at 2:00 p.m.

Winter Solstice Service

Saturday, Dec. 21, 6:00 p.m.

A half-day meditation retreat

Holiday Can Tree

Bring cans to build a tree to support the Contra Costa County food bank!

Collecting canned food throughout the holidays!

Christmas Eve Services

Family Service @ 5:00 p.m.

Evening Service @ 8:00 p.m.

Holiday Helpers Wanted!

We invite you to mark your calendars to join us for an upcoming event and if you could, we could use your help at our services!

- Could you be an usher?
- Prepare our candles for services
 - Help decorate our Sanctuary
- Would you be able to bring treats?
- Could you drive others to join us in person for our services but otherwise cannot come?

Share The Plate - Shelter, Inc. Sunday, December 14

Trinity Center is a doorway to opportunity, providing essential safety net services and a pathway forward for vulnerable populations. We advocate for those who are seeking housing, financial stability and wellness. Join us in our mission to uphold the values of dignity, respect, inclusion, equity and vibrancy of life for all.

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.

SOUL OF MY SOUL December 10, 7–9PM, Bortin Hall



Two films will be presented: "Mary Under Occupation," a documentary by Jules Hart of a play's process of creation, and "Maryam, A Woman of Bethlehem," a film of that play created and directed by Dr. Victoria Rue and Hind Abu Shkhadim.

Following the showing, Dr. Rue will participate in a Q&A. The Palestinian Organization Soul of My Soul presents the event.

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 kyoungers@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.

Hope Solutions Holiday Dinner, Dec. 9

We will be preparing and serving the holiday meal for the clients at Hope Solutions Bella Monte Apartments this year, just like we have for the past MANY years. Please consider volunteering to help prepare the meal at MDUUC on Dec. 9 from 3-6PM and serve this great community at Bella Monte from 6-9PM. [Fill out this form to volunteer.](#)

Worthy Now Letters & Cards

Please stop by the Justice table in Bortin Hall after services to complete a holiday hope for a UU incarcerated in one of the many prisons in this country! Our partners at Church of the Larger Fellowship—Worthy Now have asked us to complete 200 holiday hope letters this year. [Volunteer here!](#)

Holiday Canned Food Drive (Can Tree)

Bring one, two, or several canned food items into Bortin Hall over the next 4 weeks. On December 11, our community will engage in the act of building a canned tree after service! All food will be donated to the Contra Costa Food Bank afterwards.

Volunteer for any of these Justice activities by filling out this form: <https://mduuc.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1093419>

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

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>

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 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Elder Journey meets virtually and is hybrid (in person or virtual) on the 2nd Wednesdays.

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

3rd Wednesday of every month 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 and to be added to our contact list. *Weather permitting.

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!



Join the first Sunday Work Party to help protect them from root rot. 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, November 1st. We will have other projects as well. 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 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
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Elizabeth Dietsch, Treasurer

Trustees

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

January Beacon Deadline

Wednesday, December 17, 2025
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
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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