Sundays in April
The reflection theme for April is Awakening

“The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.”
— Eden Philpotts

Sunday, April 3
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“Nothing Less Than Joy”
March 31 is Transgender Day of Visibility, and with all the recent political attacks against trans lives, it is more critical than ever that we affirm loudly and proudly that people of all genders and gender expressions are beautiful and sacred. We will not settle for anything less than joy.

Sunday, April 10
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“Beneath Vine & Fig Tree”
“And every one 'neath their vine and fig tree
Shall live in peace and unafraid.”
This is the Passover vision—of a liberated world, where everyone feels at home and at peace. How can we be inspired by this vision of peace in a war-torn world? (The Jewish holiday of Passover is April 15-23.)

Sunday, April 17
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“It’s a Hard Road to Hallelujah”
Easter is here—Springtime, renewal, bunnies and eggs, birds and flowers . . . but these arrive after winters of loss, hibernation, and self-reflection. How do we resurrect a Hallelujah?

Sunday, April 24
Rev. Julia Hamilton
“Kinship”
Come celebrate Earth Day with us! How do we move beyond a simple appreciation of the Earth's beauty and into a deeper awareness of our kinship with the planet?
We Pledge to Each Other

Let us be grateful when we are able to give
For many do not have that privilege;
Let us be grateful for those who share their gifts with us,
for we are enriched by their giving;
And let us be grateful, even for our needs,
So that we may learn from the generosity of others.

This spring we are putting our focus on generosity and financial gifts. As we ramp back up in-person services and programs, we are reminded why we give to this congregation: we give to each other.

We pledge for our commitment to each other. We give to the people who are here with us in body and spirit: to congregants and leaders, staff, and ministers. We give to those who have not yet found us, to those for whom our gifts will open a door where they might find home. We give to those in our larger community: those who have been touched by the ripple effects of our acts of generosity.

We are inviting the congregation to rekindle the fire of generosity to each other, and to review your pledge of support to our congregation. We are asking that everyone, regardless of stewardship circle month, renew and recommit their pledge by Sunday, May 15.

We have a goal of increasing our pledge income in the 2022-2023 church year. In theory this means an increase in individual pledge gifts. In practice, this means tuning into the spirit of giving that has carried this congregation through these tumultuous times and pledging to each other as generously as we are able.

We are launching our new pledge year with an invitation to think through the ways this community has given to you. What does USSB make possible in your life? In each other’s life? In the world?

Over the next several weeks you will hear stories of generosity in this congregation as part of our We Pledge to Each Other: Stories of Generosity series. We hope that you will find inspiration in all the ways our community gives.

In mid-April you will be receiving a pledge packet in the mail with information on pledging, we ask that you begin to think now about ways you are enriched by this congregation. This is an opportunity to alight anew our spirit of generosity. An opportunity to give to the people that make the Unitarian Society a beacon of love and justice in the world. An opportunity to give to each other.

April Outreach Offering
Santa Barbara Alternatives to Violence Project

The Alternatives to Violence Project began 50 years ago after the Attica Prison uprising, when a group of inmates reached out to Quaker volunteers to help design a program that would give them nonviolence skills. Since then, it has become an international movement whose guiding philosophy is that there is a power for peace and good in everyone, and that this power has the ability to transform violence. AVP builds on a spiritual base of caring for self and others, in prisons and in the wider community.

The Santa Barbara AVP is a multi-cultural volunteer organization that teaches conflict management skills to teens referred by the Santa Barbara Unified School District. Experiential workshops introduce skills and resources to deal with the environment in positive healthy ways, empowering individuals to liberate themselves from the burden of violence. During the pandemic, AVP transitioned to outdoor workshops and also kept in touch with workshop graduates, helping them access resources like food, housing, and jobs. Since 2018, SBAVP graduates have been involved in substantially fewer fights, violence, office referrals, and truancy.

To learn more about the Santa Barbara Alternatives to Violence Project, including how you volunteer, please visit www.sbvap.org or speak with Donnis Galvan.
Like many of you, I have had days when I'm pulled toward hopelessness by the ongoing pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the fate of our own democracy, the climate crisis, and on and on. But I cannot stay down. I cannot wallow in hopelessness. There is too much good work to do in the world. And some of that good work is being done here at USSB by some of our youngest congregants.

When the war in Ukraine broke out, CRE teacher Christina Boardman wanted to be of use. And she wanted the kids to feel they could be of use too. For two Sundays in March, Christina led our kindergarten through fourth grade class in making and selling chocolate truffles during coffee hour. The chocolatey efforts of these kiddos resulted in a $600 donation to UNICEF’s emergency fund for the children of Ukraine.

How could I feel hopeless after that?

In our Coming of Age group, the youth began work on their social justice project to raise money to send art supplies to 100 children living in the Posada del Migrante Shelter in Calexico, Mexico for Children’s Day. They immediately started planning for a coffee hour bake sale, asking if they could stay late one Sunday to finish the sign. They created a GoFundMe campaign that, at this writing, has raised $1,145. You can still donate here: https://gofund.me/cfe0242e.

These eighth and ninth graders asked good questions and wanted to make sure the money they raised would be well spent to serve the children and their families of Posada del Migrante. Theirs is an interfaith fundraising campaign as they partner with the youth of Trinity Episcopal Church in what we hope will be the first of more interfaith youth social justice efforts.

How can I feel hopeless when surrounded by such positive action, such work from the heart?

If you need hope in these difficult times, talk to me about how you can spend time with children and youth at USSB. They will give you reason to hope.

In Faith,
Charla Bregante
Director of Religious Education
charla@ussb.org

Below: The CRE coffee hour truffle sale raised $600 for children of Ukraine.
Right: Coming of Age youth have raised more than $1,100 for the Posada del Migrante shelter with a bake sale and a successful GoFundMe.
Endowment Bylaw Revision for Vote at Annual Meeting

Over this last year, the endowment board and your USSB board of trustees has been working together to propose an endowment bylaw revision for congregational vote at the annual meeting. Both boards have voted unanimously and are in favor of the revision.

What is it?

Both the endowment board and the board of trustees are proposing to amend the current endowment bylaw 3.3.1 which prohibits the endowment from guaranteeing any loans to the Unitarian Society.

This bylaw change will not allow the endowment to lend monies to USSB; rather it will allow the endowment to guarantee a bank’s loan to the Society. Measures are built in to the revised bylaw to protect endowment funds under any potential guarantees, and endowment fund monies will not be loaned.

A guarantor is different than a co-signer. The co-signer, simply by signing on to the debt, is liable for the debt without the creditor needing to take any additional actions. A guarantor, however, is only liable for the debt after the lender has exhausted all other options of collections from the original borrower.

Why

The congregation currently owns two residential homes, which it leases to tenants. One of the homes, our parsonage, has been mortgaged through a commercial loan since 2009. Over the years, these homes have gained significant equity ($3m in value) far beyond the amount of the loan ($800k).

Occasionally, a typical homeowner may refinance their home and take cash out to pay for major repairs to their home property or refinance to a lower interest rate. Having equity available to a homeowner makes large improvements outside of a normal household budget possible. And the ability to easily refinance when interest rates reduce allows homeowners to save on interest payments.

Due to increasingly restrictive bank regulations, USSB has not been able to easily refinance existing bank loans on the properties, nor has USSB been able to access the significant equity in these homes without a guarantee from endowment.

This bylaw change will allow USSB to be financially strategic, quickly taking advantage of lower interest rates as they arise, and pulling out equity as needed for large maintenance items.

When

The boards are asking for a congregational approval by the membership at its June 5 annual meeting.

An official notice to the membership will be distributed mid-April and both boards are following the bylaw requirements for bylaw revision as set out in our bylaws.

More detail about the bylaw revision will be forthcoming and please mark your calendars for these spring town hall meetings:

Town Hall Meeting on Endowment Bylaw Change
Wednesday, April 27 at 5:30 pm on Zoom only
https://uuma.zoom.us/j/96468141013

Town Hall Meeting on Endowment Bylaw Change and 2022-2023 Proposed Budget
Sunday, May 22 at 11:30 am in Parish Hall and on Zoom
https://uuma.zoom.us/j/96003638223

Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 5 11:30 in Parish Hall & Online
https://uuma.zoom.us/j/96003638223
New in Adult RE
A 10-week Climate Grief & Action Workshop

Wednesdays, April 13 to June 15, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM
In-person or on Zoom

USSB is partnering with the Good Grief Network to offer a ten-week workshop series providing social and emotional support to members and friends who feel overwhelmed by the climate crisis and are looking for a way forward. Join facilitators Dean LaCoe and Lorraine Woodman in Parish Hall where a light dinner will be provided (childcare is available upon advance request), or join from home via Zoom.

To register, go to https://form.jotform.com/220712956397161.
Contact Dean LaCoe at deanlacoe@gmail.com for more information.
Sunday services in-person and online at 10:00 AM

We also livestream on Zoom and Facebook!

Watch online or use your phone to dial in and hear the service live.

To listen to the service on your phone, call 1-669-900-6833 and then enter the Sunday services meeting ID: 960 036 8223#

You may call in starting five minutes before the service begins.

Zoom and Facebook links are sent out in the Friday email, in a special Sunday morning email, and are always available on our website, at www.ussb.org/worship/zoom.

Contact our office at ussb@ussb.org if you’d like to be added to our email list.

Can’t be with us when we’re live Sunday morning? We archive every service video on our YouTube channel and on our website at www.ussb.org/worship/archive.