SUNDAY SERVICES
9:00 A.M. MEDIATION
9:15 & 11:15 a.m. Two Service’s
Worship and Children’s Programs

Sunday, December 3:
At Home In Acceptance. Families come in many shapes and sizes and are often know sculpted rather than inherited. In this season in which we are often drawn by media and tradition to embrace one model of family, how can others provide inspiration. Acceptance of what is is a key part of being grateful for what we have. Part of Rev. Leslie Takahashi’s periodic series on DIY series on contemporary UU virtues!

Sunday, December 10:
“The Gift of Presence.” It is being discovered that loneliness is one of the great afflictions of our time. During the holiday season when loneliness can become particularly acute, Rev. Anderson will call us to reject the cult of individualism and embrace life-sustaining theologies of interconnectedness.

Sunday, December 17: ONE SERVICE AT 10:15 a.m.
When The Stars Shine Brightest. Joining our amazing children’s choir for this service celebrating these darkest days of the year. An inspiring and uplifting multigenerational celebration of this season.
Evening Solstice Service 6:30 p.m. A special service for the returning of the light. Join Revs. Neal Anderson and Leslie Takahashi as well as members of our worship council for this very special service appropriate for people of all ages wishing to honor the turning of the year and herald the returning of the sun.

Sunday, December 24: ONE SERVICE AT 10:15 a.m.
“Simple Gifts” During the holidays there is so much emphasis on the giving and receiving of material gifts. But what are the spiritual gifts that can help sustain and nourish us, during the long winter months and during times of change and uncertainty? Intern Minister, Natalie Malter will explore the “simple gifts” of mindfulness, gratitude, and joy.

Sunday, December 31:
Letting Go and Opening to Possibility. This passing year, 2017, was one that brought many challenges and opportunities for growth. How do we restore our spirits and let go of those places where we may have fallen short of our marks? Join Rev. Leslie Takahashi for this meditative service releasing the old and preparing room for the new.

A Message from Our Treasurer, Consider a Year End Donation!

Here comes your UU holiday bell ringer: ringing a bell and rattling a begging cup!

We have a lot to celebrate with respect to our finances in 2017. We closed our fiscal year in June with a substantial surplus that added $118,000 to operating cash reserves, and $46,000 to our Endowment. This surplus and a successful pledge drive enabled us to pass a budget to fund our strategic priorities, primarily by recruiting inspirational new leaders, Neal and Indigo, and going a long way towards improving the compensation of our hardworking staff.

We just completed our major fundraiser for the year, Serve-U, which raised $48,000, meeting our budget goal. But while we celebrate these achievements, I must draw attention to the increased financial commitments that we have made. Salary expenses have increased by 30% to pay for our new staff and improved compensation. We renovated our office space, and repaired leaking gas and water lines (no doubt you have noticed the holes in our parking lot, which required cash as well as asphalt to fill!). We retired $35,000 of our notes to meet noteholder needs. We are replacing and improving audio and video equipment. All these expenditures greatly benefit our church and programs, but draw heavily on our resources.

Pledge collections have improved by 7% over last year, but are lagging our budget commitment by nearly 8%.

So out comes the begging cup: When you make your giving list for the holidays, please include MDUUC. Fulfill as much of your pledge as you can, or make an extra gift to our operating fund such as a “13th month” pledge payment, or by donating to the endowment fund, ministers’ discretionary fund, or other designated fund. This year there are also tax reasons for making your donations to MDUUC (and other charities) before yearend. The changes in tax law being rushed through Congress will reduce the tax benefits for charitable donations in 2018. This is especially the case for those of us who may be able to donate appreciated stock.

Please contact me or other members of our church Finance Committee if you have questions about how you can give: boardtreasurer@mduuc.org.

David Stanley
MDUUC Treasurer
We Are On Our Way to “Making it So”

This year, MDUUC members approved a bold strategy for our church, with targeted vision for the year 2020 in six focus areas. And we are together moving from vision to action! Here’s a brief report on tangible progress in each area – each worth CELEBRATING that we are indeed ‘making it so’!

Communications – By now, you’ve hopefully noticed the great work completed on the re-design of our church website and bulletin board between Bortin Hall and the Sanctuary. Next month we test a new Web-based Beacon format, and our first Communications Advisors are working with (Social Justice and Financial Stewardship) councils, to support more effective communications so YOU can stay abreast of goings-on, and we as a church community can spread the MDUUC word regionally.

Becoming More Family-Friendly – Great turnout at our multigenerational service, boosted by the Blessing of the Animals and Children’s Choir. Look for a freshened Coming of Age program soon!

Worship & Spiritual Growth – Restorative Practices program begins soon, with workshops and classes to help calm, soothe and restore people’s well-being in stressful times.

Becoming Exuberantly Multicultural – Excellent showing for ‘Black Holes & Beloved Community’ service, reflecting member commitment to staying engaged and supportive of each other through tough conversation. Beloved Conversations alumni movies have evolved into ‘Beloved Commitments’ movie nights, and Linda Russell is organizing our next Beloved Conversations Workshop – two great ways to engage, reflect and support each other in brave dialogue on racial injustice. And don’t miss LGBTQ & FRIENDS’ inaugural ‘Make it So Social’ game night Dec. 2nd!

Create a Culture of Stewardship – “Text to Donate” starts soon and we’re already planning a 2018 Pledge theme around nourishing care, the ‘give’ that will responsibly invest in maintaining our sacred space, works and community, as we move together in healthy growth.

Values Into Action – At our October Congregational Meeting, members approved authorizing the Board to accept requests from DACA recipients in danger of deportation for emergency physical sanctuary at our church. Forums will be scheduled to continue the dialogue on offering physical sanctuary to other immigrants – not just DACA recipients – at risk.

Your Board of Trustees is committed to achieving the bold 2020 vision you’ve embraced. Our job is to guide MDUUC’s path through the lens of our church mission, as we represent YOU. What we accomplish, we accomplish together – and we invite you to let us know what matters most to you, and how we’re doing! See you at coffee hour and always available via e-mail at board@mduuc.org.

Leslie’s Logos

December 2017

Dear Members and Friends,

My colleague, the Rev. Elizabeth Nyugen writes: “Spirit, I would really rather not learn this. Didn’t think I needed to.

I thought someone else could do it. Thought a leader was coming to do it. Thought the young people could do it. Or the elders could do it. Or the professionals.”

Her reading is one I have been thinking of a great deal this year. And we used it in the service the first Sunday in November. 2017 seems to have been a year in which many of us were confronted with things we would rather not have learned: about the many forms of virulence hate can find, about our own difficulties confronting the ways we may unintentionally harm others, about the fragility of the world we are leaving our young people, about our own areas for growth.

For me, when given the chance to grow, I am often initially reluctant and then I plunge ahead. Yet rest and reintegration of all these new things takes time and energy. So as the days grow shorter and the winter stars more brilliant, I am celebrating the deep quiet of this season, trying to make room for reassessment and recovery in my life. And I don’t know many folks who aren’t feeling a need for some version of that.

This season can be so frenzied. I, for one, will be boycotting the shops and hitting the trails on the Friday after Thanksgiving; boycotting the malls and doing whatever shopping I need to do at local stores and at our own Craft faire and at other craft festivals. I will be looking to have experiences with people I love. All these timeless strategies have been around and this year they seem particularly powerful.

So as this year ends—celebrate where you have grown and stretched, where you have tried on something new, where you have welcomed in the stranger to our life or to your mind or heart. And be sure that these quieter days bring times of rest and healing for you and yours. Let the year end with a celebration of the good and a chance to rest in readiness for 2018.

As Elizabeth Nygen writes:

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As Elizabeth Nygen writes:

“Help me to learn it. Please.
And then help me to live what I have learned.
And do right by the gift of being taught.”

With Gratitude, Leslie

Rev. Leslie Takahashi serves as the Lead Minister of the congregation. She can be reached at leslie@mduuc.org
**Update on ServU 2017**

TO OUR donors, bidders, buyers, volunteers, and guests, you made the ServU event truly amazing. Thank you all! Besides enjoying a fun evening of warm fellowship, we raised more than $47,000. WOW!

PAYMENTS: Check the Auction site on the MDUUC website to access your invoice and make your payment. Payments can be made via check. Any Additional bidding will result in an amended invoice.

HOSTING AN EVENT? Please take photos and share them at fundraising@mduuc.org.

To show our thanks to some of the members of our congregation, we wanted to thank the volunteers for their helping hands:

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**A Message From Intern Minister Natalie Malter**

Dear Members and Friends of MDUUC,

What a wonderful beginning to my internship! Thank you all so much for your generous welcome over the past few months. It is an inspiration to learn from such a thriving congregation that so deeply embodies its commitments to spiritual growth and social justice at home and in the wider world.

As we move into the month of December, continuing to grapple with the uncertainty and pain so alive in the world today, I hear the famous words of the eighteenth century revolutionary Thomas Paine in my ears: "These are the times that try men's souls." While the gendered language is outdated today, I am struck by the continued resonance of this sentiment.

There is much today that is soul trying. Whether it’s the stress of the holiday season or the constant news cycle with stories of violence, our souls are both tried and tired.

So what can we do for ourselves in times such as these? While the holiday season can focus so heavily on the exchanging of material gifts, I feel as though the greatest gifts we can give now are those of presence and compassion. Although there is so much in this wild world that is frustratingly beyond our control, we can control how deeply we love each other and ourselves. As you move through this season, remember to be gentle with your spirit, to breathe deeply, and when possible to seek joy in the small and unexpected moments of connection and warmth amidst the cold of winter.
Restorative Practices

In this time of much anxiety and stress, we wish to offer restorative practices for the healing and wellness of your mind, body, and spirit.

December 2nd

10:00 – “A Light Conversation About Death” led by Linda Russell in the Children’s Chapel addressing how you want to go, what you want to happen after you’re gone, and how to break the news to your family.

1:00 – “A 3 ½ Mile Family Hike” led by Peter Morse at Acalanes Ridge Open Space with great views and some ups and downs on compacted dirt fire trails and paths. Bring water and all-weather clothes. For directions and to sign up contact Peter Morse at peterrmorse@gmail.com or 916 662 5634.

December 9th

9:30 – “Breath and Spirit” led by Rev. Leslie and Intern Minster Natalie Malter in Bortin Hall also featuring restorative practices with Jen Marsh-Prink and Jo Gelinas

December 13th

5:30 – “Thin Moments” as originally introduced by David Usher led by Inge and Bill Yarborough in the Children’s Chapel, where you can share a special experience that transcend ordinary reality, such as knowing something is about to happen or sensing the presence of a deceased loved one.

7:30 – “Evening Song” led by Jo Gelinas in the church sanctuary for an evening of sacred songs

December 18th

7:00 – “Evening Labyrinth Walk” led by Sally Edgerton meeting at the church labyrinth followed by hot chocolate and cookies indoors

December 29th

7:30 – “Centering Prayers in the Unitarian Universalist Tradition” led by Rev. Leslie Takahashi in the church sanctuary

Interested in UU History & Beliefs?

Are you interested in learning more about UU history and beliefs? Do you want to explore your own spirituality and learn about social justice? Check out the Unitarian Universalist Association’s inSpirit Bookstore! While the bookstore is located at our denominational headquarters in Boston, you don’t have to buy a plane ticket to browse the many titles they have available for online order on their website. inSpirit offers books for all ages as well as nice fair trade crafts, a perfect place to go for upcoming holiday gift purchases! Visit their website at:

http://www.uuabookstore.org/Assets/ClientPages/About.aspx to learn more.

Ministers’ Discretionary Fund

Help Members of Our Congregation and the Minister’s Discretionary Fund. Each December, the Christmas Eve services take a collection for the Ministers’ Discretionary Fund which provides assistance to members and friends in need. Throughout the year, these funds are used primarily to help with basic needs such as food and shelter and utilities when members and friends of our congregation run into difficulty. These funds may also benefit youth or young adults from families unable to fund experiences for them. If you cannot be with us, please put a check in the plate and label it Ministers’ Discretionary.

At this time of year, Rev. Leslie Takahashi also collects gift cards which can be distributed to families who could use a little extra holiday cheer. Cards of any amount are welcome and especially helpful are Safeway, Target and Starbucks. Please put them in an envelope in the collection marked holiday giving.

STOP! Don’t read this hard copy - read the Beacon online!

Just send an email to publications@mduuc.org and ask to be taken off the mailed Beacon list. If you choose to continue to receive a hard copy, please send $15 to cover the cost of mailing. You can put it in the plate with a note, or drop or mail a check to the office.

Online you will receive the Beacon in color. To access it go to MDUUC.org/news/newsletter.

Try it - you’ll like it. If you must have a hard copy, why not print it out on your computer?
MAKE IT SO SOCIAL  
Dec 2 - Potluck & Game Night

“MAKE IT SO SOCIAL” is the name of the new, ROCKIN’ quarterly social group for ALL adults. It was created by the LGBTQ & FRIENDS Social Justice Committee as a celebration moving toward MDUUC’s “Make It So 2020” goals to create an exuberantly, multi-cultural and identity diverse community where everyone feels welcome and included. Every quarter there will be a potluck and an activity.

The first one will be a Potluck & Game Night on Sat, Dec 2nd from 5 p.m. - 9 p.m. in Bortin Hall. We invite you to bring your friends to come kickback (now that you and the relatives have finished your last bite of turkey leftovers!) and play some games and make new friends! BRING A HEARTY SIDE DISH to share for 6-8 people and if you have a favorite game to share, bring that along too (or play with ours). Non-alcoholic beverages will be provided.

Suggested donation $5. Donations receive raffle tickets for some awesome prizes raffled throughout the night! No one turned away for lack of funds. Seating is limited, so RSVP online at: http://potluckgamenight.evenbrite.com or sign up at the LGBTQ & FRIENDS Social Justice table in Bortin Hall. We appreciate receiving your RSVP by Nov 24th so we can order the correct number of game tables to accommodate all players. Childcare provided for MDUUC kids, only. Contact childcare@mduuuc.org

Looking forward to YOU being part of this successful launch of "MAKE IT SO SOCIAL".

Craft Faire is on December 3rd!

It's that time again, time to plan for the Annual Craft Faire at MDDUC! The Craft Faire will be held on Sunday, Dec 3rd from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in Bortin Hall. If you would like to participate please speak to Indigo Lewis. Please let us know if you need a full or half table, and if you have any freestanding objects. As in recent years, there is no entry fee for vendors. We ask that 25% of your sales be donated to our youth group (tax receipts will be provided upon request).

Breath & Spirit

Home for the Holidays. How do we find home within ourselves? How do we reaffirm our own basic goodness and wholeness. At this holiday time when we are often confronted with the gap between what we wish were true and what is actually true, we will gather for a time of meditation, quiet, reflection and restorative practice. Give yourself the gift of quiet and contemplation in this busy holiday season. Led by Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Jo Gelinas and the restorative practices working group. Saturday, December 9th from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Suggested donation $25.

Here We Come A-Carolling

Christmas caroling sponsored by the Caring Committee will be held on Sunday, December 10. Meet at 12:30 p.m. in the church parking lot for carpooling. Singing will be at a local board and care facility and to a few home bound congregants. Scott Schrader will be directing the singing and songbooks will be provided. Join the fun of singing together and bringing good cheer to others.

Child Dedication

We will be offering a Child Welcoming at the 5 and 7 p.m. service’s on Christmas Eve. If you would like to participate, please contact Indigo Lewis, Director of Religious Education, by December 15. Child Welcoming is a special ceremony which recognizes that our community pledges to be part of the support of a child as they grow.
December Open Women's Group Luncheon

The Open Women’s Group meets on Thursday, Dec 7 in Bortin Hall. This month’s program entitled, “Christmas Memories: Stories by Truman Capote, Willy Russell, and Dylan Thomas” will be performed by Judith and Daniel Hoppe. The Hoppes both have been teaching and performing professionally and in local theatre for many years, both here in the Bay Area and before coming here. Judith most recently appeared in “Love, Loss and What She Wore” at Rossmoor and at MDUUC. Daniel has recently taught improv courses at Rossmoor. We’re looking forward to this holiday performance. Please arrive promptly at 10:30 and bring food to share with 6-8 people. All women are welcome.

John McCutcheon at Devil Mountain Coffee House Saturday, January 6

One of our most respected and loved folksingers, John McCutcheon is also a virtuoso fiddler, and guitarist and master of a dozen different traditional instruments, most notably the rare and beautiful hammered dulcimer.

His songwriting has been hailed globally by critics and singers alike, and his 35 recordings have garnered every imaginable honor, including six Grammy nominations.

Much of his work, continues to focus on writing politically and socially conscious songs for adult audiences. In his performances, McCutcheon often introduces his music with a story, and has also become known as a storyteller.

"John McCutcheon is not only one of the best musicians in the USA, but also a great singer, songwriter, and song leader. And not just incidentally, he is committed to helping hardworking people everywhere to organize and push this world in a better direction." Pete Seeger

$30 suggested donation ($5 for children 6-15, under 6 are free) Cash or check only at the door (No one turned away for lack of ability to pay. Sliding scale tickets available only at the door.) Show: 8:00 p.m. Doors: 7:30 p.m.

Please note: These concerts have sold out in the past. Advanced tickets are strongly advised.

Books to Help Rethink Christmas

As we move into the winter holidays, it’s not uncommon for parents to feel a little anxious. It’s easy for the season’s busyess to overwhelm with an ever-growing number of holiday tasks to be completed and multiple expectations to navigate. If you would like to take a step back and focus on what would make the season special for your family, the books Unplug the Christmas Machine and The Hundred Dollar Holiday both offer some good advice and ideas about having a simpler Christmas. Together they answer questions ranging from “How can I reduce the stress of preparing for Christmas?” to “How can I make our celebration more spiritual and less materialistic?” and "How can I help my children see that Christmas is more than just presents?"

One step towards a slower and simpler holiday season is to define for you and your family the why and the what YOU are celebrating this season. This easy exercise from Unplug the Christmas Machine gives us the opportunity to lift up the values that we hold most significant for the holidays, and perhaps those we can let go of. This year my focus is on spending enjoyable time with my immediate family since we are not all under the same roof this year and as a result have opted out of reuniting with relatives. I invite you to consider what could be your number one reason for the season?

Rank these Christmas values by assigning the numbers "1" as the highest to "10" as the lowest to each of these value statements.

___ Christmas is a time to be a peacemaker, in my family and in the world at large.
___ Christmas is a time to spend enjoyable time with my immediate family.
___ Christmas is a time to reunite with my relatives.
___ Christmas is a time to create a festive, beautiful home environment.
___ Christmas is a time to show my love and generosity through gifts.
___ Christmas is a time to remember the poor, lonely, and needy.
___ Christmas is a time to be active in my church community.
___ Christmas is a time to celebrate with friends.
___ Christmas is a time to relax and be renewed.

Yours in Peace,
Indigo

Amazon Links to Buy These Books!

Unplug the Christmas Machine: tinyurl.com/y8h52e8h
Hundred Dollar Holiday: tinyurl.com/ydha6mpa
HATs OFF . . . . . . . . THANKS

★ To Trudi Frazel and Bill Yarborough for their work on updating the Worship Associate Manual!

★ To Jo Gelinas for her music and leadership in weekly Vespers and Evening Song services!

★ To those who helped with the Harvest Fest: Zach McShane, Dave Hovey, Becky Iben and Johanna McShane.

★ To Elsie Mills and Nancy Falk for their help with Apple Pie Night!

★ For ServU childcare, thanks to Andrew Oswald.

★ To Kevin Hsieh, Elsie Mills and Jana Contreras for their help with children’s choir sandwich fundraiser.

HATs OFF! Honors, Accolades, Thanks! We encourage gratitude and appreciation throughout MDUUC. Send “short and sweet” admissions to thanks@mduuc.org.

THE HUNGRY-U
By Maria Rieger
History Committee

The MDUUC History Committee was busy at work again last month inventorying items and archiving important church information. Seen in the photo are committee members Maria Rieger, Rowena McGregor, Marge Chapel, Carolyn Campbell, and Doris Baltzo.

Their goal is to have the historical information on the church completely accessible and archivally saved. All church goers are invited to attend our monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of the month now meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Our next meeting will be December 12.

Legacy Message

Many thanks to all of you who returned the form enclosed with your last statements to let us know if you are including MDUUC in your estate plan. If you haven’t gotten around to it yet, this is your gentle reminder to get it back to us this month. Please! We would love to acknowledge you and include you in our Legacy Circle. And if you’d prefer to remain anonymous, we will honor that too; it just helps us to know and follow up if you are not around.

On another note: this is THE month to get in your last tax 2017 deductions - in case you would like to ”beef up” our endowment.


Beloved Commitments
By Rowena McGregor

Creating a Beloved Community is defined by how we treat each other, and all those who come through our doors. We often wonder why visitors, especially people of color, come to our Sunday Services once, and don’t return. There are several reasons why this happens.

When you greet a visitor with ”where are you from” or what do you do” it makes the person uncomfortable and defensive. These two questions have race and class implications. It is much better to say “Welcome” and How did you find us?” You can then help them with beverages, etc. Tell them you hope they will come back again.

Let them know that there is a Visitor Orientation to learn more about our Services at 10:45 AM in the Redwood Room. You can always refer or take them to the table with the multi colored umbrella for more information.

Hopefully, these suggestions will help all of us to think of ways to build the Beloved Community we want to be.
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist church
55 Eckly Lane
Walnut Creek CA 94596

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

STAFF
Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Lead Minister
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January Beacon Deadline: The next Beacon deadline is December 20 at 10:00. Go to www.mducc.org, and go to the Members Site and fill out a publicity form

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Holiday Service Times

December 17     Winter Solstice at 7:00 p.m.
One Service at 10:15 a.m.

December 24     Christmas Eve Services
Please bring cookies to share so that we can enjoy a little fellowship. If you can be a cookie wrangler for this event, please contact intern minister Natalie Malter.

10:15 a.m. Regular Service
5:00 p.m. Children’s Service
7:00 p.m. Carols, Candles and Stories
8:30 p.m. Carols, Candles and Stories

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• Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/mduu/ and like our page!
• You can also follow Rev. Leslie Takahashi on Twitter
twitter.com/leslietakahashi @LeslieTakahashi.
• The Friday email can be viewed at www.mduuc.org/news/newsletter/weekly-announcements/