



NUUSLETTER

of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula

October Theme: Cultivating Relationship

Sunday Service begins at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom online meeting app

October 3

"The Care and Feeding of Friends"

Susan Panttaja & W.A. Ann Jacobson

The pandemic has been a trying time for friendships! Yet it has provided an opportunity, too, to take stock of what we miss – and what we don't miss – about friendships and other relationships that we may have taken for granted. No matter what our social needs are, or how comfortable we are with self-disclosure, friendships can be very important for our wellbeing and our sense of community. How might we be more intentional about tending these important relationships?

October 10

"Listen In"

Rev. Li Knivi & W.A. Sue Ellen Stringer

One of the most important relationships we can cultivate is with ourselves. Today we will explore listening deeply to ourselves and responding to whatever is there with accepting, gentle curiosity--whether or not it's what we want or expect to hear. (Spoiler alert: this is much easier said than done.)

October 17

"Wholly Family"

Ann Jacobson & Karen Brown

We are all part of this church family, and we're part of many other families too. This service will celebrate and honor many kinds of relationships, what makes them survive and what makes them thrive. Join in a celebration of diversity and unity as we hear from others in our congregation and think about what connects us all.

Religious Exploration

is available via Zoom each Sunday
for children (pre K – 11) at 10 a.m., for teens
(12 – 18) at 12 p.m. and young adults (18-35)
1 p.m.

October 24

"How Do We Culture Our Religion?"

Rev. Tet Gallardo, Laura Nagel, & W.A. Kathleen Craig

We all come from many different family cultures, ethnic cultures, and work cultures. Yet sometimes UUs are not sensitive to this great diversity. The UU Church of the Philippines recently submitted a proposed amendment to add "cultures as communities of practice" to the current six sources of Unitarian Universalism. Today we will examine our relationships to one another through the lens of culture.

October 31

"Where Do We Come From?"

Susan Panttaja & W.A. Ray Krise

In many cultures, this time of year marks a thinning of the veil, a time when our ancestors who have died are nearer than usual. For many of us, the legacy of our ancestry is a mixed bag of traits and history that is handed down for generations, even if it is never talked about. What are the benefits of facing the parts of our past (genealogical and cultural) that haunt us? And how might we pass on the best of our legacy to those who come after?

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See the calendar at
www.uucmp.org



Sabbatical Minister's Message Susan Panttaja

"We are a sanctuary of love: providing emotional, spiritual, and intellectual support; offering comfort and challenge that emboldens us to continue our work in the world." So begins the vision statement of this church.

I am struck by the word "sanctuary." I know that, after 18 months of pandemic isolation, many of you are missing worship in UUCMP's beautiful sanctuary. Yet the sanctuary in the vision statement is not a physical place; rather, it is an intangible space that you create together, through your care for one another and your aspirations toward Beloved Community.

During these times, I truly appreciate the sanctuary of love you have maintained here at UUCMP. With patience and care, this community continues to thrive remotely, until we can all safely be together again. That time will come, once the ventilation system is upgraded and the children among us have the opportunity to be vaccinated. This month, we will invite you to fill out a survey about returning to in-person worship. Meanwhile, we will keep the vision of sanctuary alive in established ways and new ones, too.

Virtual worship continues via Zoom, thanks to the tremendous efforts of many people. If you could use some help accessing our virtual services, please let me know! As last week's Connections Fair demonstrated, many committees, chalice circles, and inter-

est groups continue to meet, too, and welcome new members. And many of you stay in touch by phone, mail, or e-mail. I am grateful for your consistent support of one another!

Now that a new building use policy and safety protocols are in place, there will be more opportunities for members to meet in the church building. (See *page 10 for the building use policy*.) Already, committees and other small groups are welcome to meet at the church. In October, you are also invited to attend **Open House events** at the church. Please stop by to get reacquainted with the building and grounds, and visit with other members and me (following safety protocols, of course). Whether you feel comfortable staying for half an hour or just a few minutes, I hope I'll see you here! See page 9 for details.

Meanwhile, opportunities are in the works for small groups to gather for worship in some form. Watch the *November NUUsletter* for details.

Even in these times of deferred dreams, there are so many ways to maintain the relationships at the heart of this religious community, and to keep our vision alive. Let us continue to create this sanctuary of love for each other, for the community, and for the world.

Yours in faith,
Susan



Li Kynvi (they/them/their) has worked for 25 years as a music therapist and licensed mental health counselor, the last 14 full-time in hospice. They have 2 complicated children and met Susan Panttaja as a student at Starr King School for the Ministry. Li is currently a congregational intern at the First Parish Church of Groton, Massachusetts.



Rev. Tet Gallardo, 2016-2017 Balázs Scholar at Starr King School for the Ministry, is the current President and Executive Minister of the UU Church of the Philippines. She has worked for 40 NGOs and has served as a consultant in the government and business sectors. These days, she works with about 2,000 UU farmers to put in place climate actions that support food security and church life.

Life Enrichment

The Fall Life Enrichment catalog will be published soon. If you have questions, please get in touch with Carol Greenstreet, LE committee chair.

People of Color Group

Do you identify as a person of color? Join us for conversation and camaraderie! The UUCMP POC (People of Color) Group provides a framework of support and acknowledgment for members and friends of UUCMP who have lived experience as people of color. At our meetings, we will gather as an intentional, accepting fellowship of POC UU's to explore and reflect on our individual experiences, intersectionality, and UUism.



The UUCMP POC Group meets at 7 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month, and at noon on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of every month. Feel free to drop in and join us at any of these times! Meetings will be virtual at <https://tinyurl.com/uwf8rdjf> until in-person meetings at the church resume.

Men's Breakfast Group

Saturday, October 9, at 8:30 a.m.



All men are invited to the monthly Men's Breakfast Group via Zoom. We encourage you to settle in at your computer or phone with a cup of coffee and/or breakfast food and join our conversation.

If you have questions, please contact Douglas McLain dmclain@hotmail.com

Our Zoom Meeting ID is: 161 3331 8951.
Passcode: 490Agua!!! You can join via phone (call 669 254 5252) or via computer - simply click on this link: <https://nps-edu.zoomgov.com/j/16133318951>

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

ANNOUNCEMENTS for SUNDAYS in the Order of Service or Welcome and Announcements from the pulpit are due by 9 a.m. on Wednesdays. ARTICLES for THE WEEKLY NEWS email are due by noon, Tuesdays. Newsletter articles are due the 16th of each month.

SCHEDULED EVENTS

Adult Community Choir meets Thursdays, 7 - 9 p.m. via Zoom.

Anti-Racism Book & Film Discussion Group Tuesday, October 5, 7 p.m. via Zoom. See page 8.

Board of Trustees meets Wednesday, October 20, 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Buddhist Sangha is every Wednesday at 7 p.m. via Zoom. See page 8.

I-HELP for Men and I-HELP for Women is supported now by financial donations to UUCMP. We will still continue to provide monthly meals. If you can help, please consider sending a check to the church or clicking the DONATE button on the UUCMP website and indicating that the donation is for I-HELP.

Membership Committee meets Wednesday, October 27, 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Men's Breakfast Group meets Saturday, October 9, 8:30 a.m. via Zoom. See article to the left.

Music Committee meets Wednesday, October 6, 5 p.m. via Zoom.

NUUsletter deadline for the November issue is Saturday, October 16.

People of Color (POC) group meets Saturdays October 2 and 16 at noon, and Mondays October 4 and 18 at 7 p.m. at <https://tinyurl.com/uwf8rdjf> See article to the left.

Program Council meets Tuesday, October 5, 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. For questions contact Lauren Keenan programcouncil@uucmp.org

Sing Along will meet on Wednesday, October 13, 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Social Justice meets Sunday, October 3, 12 p.m. via Zoom.

Stewardship meets at 1 p.m. Wednesday, October 6, via Zoom.

Women's Discussion Group meets October 14 and 28, 2 p.m. via Zoom. See page 6.

Zumba meets Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m. via Zoom.

President's Corner — Bud Smith



Images



handling all the nuts and bolts of running a large organization, and our choir members rehearsing "religiously" for our Sunday services.

Thanks go to our Reopening Task Force which has been working hard to develop protocols that will allow groups to begin to meet safely in our church and that will pave the way for our eventual return to in-person worship.

As we move ever so slowly and carefully toward a re-opening, three images occur to me. Right now, as the church sits relatively peacefully up there on the hill, I'm reminded of a duck swimming quietly across a pond. What you don't see is the duck's webbed feet paddling furiously underwater to propel it along. In our case



we have our many committees still meeting regularly and reporting to the Program Council, our Life Enrichment Programs and Affinity Groups continuing to gather via Zoom, our Worship Associates working hard planning our services, Erin Forstein and Elizabeth Granado still coming up with wonderful Religious Exploration activities for our children, Ray Krise and Karina Briseno in the Administrative Office

And as we anticipate seeing each other again in person at the church, I'm imagining a scene that we've all seen when a soldier coming home from a long assignment overseas is met at the airport by his/her spouse and children, all running excitedly toward each other. I expect that our embrace of the church will be equally delirious. Although our "embrace" of each other may need to be at a three-foot distance . . .

Lastly, when I imagine us together again and thankfully and joyfully worshipping with each other, I'm reminded of all those time-lapse videos of flower seeds germinating and bursting forth from the ground, petals dramatically and gloriously springing open. All that stored up happy energy finally able to express itself.



Hallelujah!

Hallelujah, indeed!

Bud

OFFICE HOURS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UUCMP office is open for limited hours: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. However, you can email the office or leave a telephone voicemail message at any time and we will get back to you as quickly as we can. Thank you for your patience. — Ray Krise

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION



My Mother's Pie

My mom sent me a message on Facebook Messenger a few weeks ago:

"We would like to drop something by in about a half hour, around 5. Not planning on staying. We made seven apple pies today and have one for you guys."

She and my step-dad then came over with a freshly baked apple pie, warm from her oven, the made-from-scratch crust the perfect shade of "baked," flaking off ever so slightly as she handed it to me. The aroma of the homegrown apples and cinnamon entered through my nose as I inhaled, to fill me with an internal hug. It was like my mother's soul was enveloping mine. I could see, smell, taste, touch, and even hear the love that pie contained. My soul was perfectly content in that moment of time.

I sent her a message later, telling her I couldn't resist, and had a piece. "Your pie tastes like love. 100% love!" I said. "Oh, thank you," she replied. "It was made with love. I love you all."

I have such fond memories of making pie with my mother, and I learned how to make them just like she does, though hers will always be superior to mine. There are tricks to mixing the ingredients, as you don't want the crust to be too tough. Apple cider vinegar (ACV) helps with this, and adding a couple of tablespoons of ACV in place of some of the ice water makes for a super flaky and delicious crust. The hand held pastry blender is always preferable to anything modern and electric, and a good liberal dusting of flour on the giant work surface cloth helps for it to roll out smoothly, and not to stick.

My mother has also taught my children how to make pies, as her pie making skills really are far beyond mine. I know when to step back and let the master teach. One day, perhaps, I will be the master. Until then, I am comfortable in the knowledge that my mother bakes love into a real and tangible thing that can be held, tasted, and felt from the inside out. But for now, I have pictures of her making pie with Estel-la's help.



I try not to eat sugar anymore, but I did the day my mother brought over her pie. It would have felt wrong not to. If ever there was a time to indulge in a few extra carbs, it was the day my mother brought over a freshly baked warm apple pie.

Erin Forstein
Director of Religious Exploration



October Shared Plate Recipient *Medecins Sans Frontieres* *Doctors Without Borders*

Founded in France in 1971 and awarded the Nobel Prize in 1999, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) provides medical assistance around the world to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare. Its teams are made up of tens of thousands of health professionals and logistic and administrative staff - most of them hired locally in their areas of focus. Actions are guided by medical ethics and the principles of impartiality, independence, and neutrality.

MSF works in Central and South America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Much of its efforts are in support of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and MSF has significant operations in the refugee camps in Greece.



MSF provided emergency medical and mental healthcare in New York and New Jersey following hurricane Sandy in 2012. Teams responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in several

states across the US, working with vulnerable groups in New York and Puerto Rico, in nursing homes in Michigan and Texas, with farm-workers in Florida, and with Native American communities in Arizona and New Mexico. Responding to changing needs, MSF closed the last of its US operations in October of 2020.

Over 80% of funds are used on MSF missions, with less than 5% on management and general administrative costs. As



volunteers, members understand the risks and dangers of the missions they carry out and make no claim for themselves for any form or compensation other than that which the association might be able to afford.

Please donate generously to this worthy organization.

WOMEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula

We welcome all women to our twice monthly meetings—the second and fourth Thursdays from 2-3:30 p.m. We expect to continue meeting via Zoom until the church building fully reopens. We plan to hold the following discussions in October:

On October 14th, Star Reiersen will lead our discussion of “Grief.”

On October 28th, Nancy Baker Jacobs will lead our discussion of “The Bravest and/or Craziest Thing You’ve Ever Done.”

Watch for the emailed notices for these events. They will contain the Zoom link and password.

—Nancy Baker Jacobs, Facilitator

Musical Offerings

When I am not working as your music director, I may be found teaching music theory at a local community college. This seemingly dry topic is actually steeped with lots of nuance, character, context, and many more subjective layers of how we relate to and understand music than may have been initially thought. One might even go so far as to say that music theory is all about understanding relationships of notes, sounds, and human experiences.



I love how analyzing sound offers us a way to take one initial reaction with an experience and then manipulate our relationship to the sound to find a new relationship to it. For example, imagine you are experiencing time in a rainforest.

There is a breeze
Rustle of leaves
Birds chirp
Water flows

All at once you experience a literal symphony (a harmonious interweave of sound in space). However, if that relationship to sound has not



been cultivated to believe that this is music, or that this is a valid way to be in the world and a framework of explaining sound, then the opportunity to deepen relationship with this soundscape may be stymied or pigeon holed into a limiting category. For example, understanding that set of sounds as “nature” or “not music” is not inherently wrong. Similarly, understanding that set of sounds as “music” is not necessary for a person to have a relationship with that sound. However, to have the cognitive flexibility to accept, and even explore a viewpoint that may be so radically different from your initial perception of a sound: herein lies the magic spark that makes music theory

Sing Along with Shawn

2nd Wednesdays
5:30-7 PM



continually fascinating to me.

If you are interested in exploring sounds, exploring musical and human relationships and just having fun, come join us for a variety of musical experiences this month.

All Meetings via Zoom

ID: 828-761-1715
Password: music
All Are Welcome :-)



— Camille Hatton

Join Our Church!

Even in these pandemic times - *especially*, in these times - our church seeks to be a caring community and a welcoming place. We strive to deepen our religious lives and support the spiritual growth of all who join together here, working to build a better world beginning with ourselves.

If you find you resonate with our principles and you are at least 16 years of age, then we invite you to sign our membership book.



Joining the church entitles you to vote at congregational meetings, at which we adopt budgets, elect officers, and direct the course of church programming. Above and beyond that, membership is a personal and public expression of your support of this religious community, the ideals it stands for, and the work it does.

If you are interested in becoming an “official” member of UUCMP, contact the Membership Committee chair Maren Martin (membership@uucmp.org).

Please join us!

Life Enrichment Programs Affinity Groups

No groups will meet face-to-face in October. Some will meet via Zoom.

Anti-Racism Book and Film Discussion First Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m. via Zoom

Men’s Breakfast Group meets second Saturdays 8:30 a.m. via Zoom Contact: Doug McLain See page 3.

Women’s Discussion Group Second and fourth Thursdays, 2 – 3:30 p.m. via Zoom Contact: Nancy Baker Jacobs. See page 6.

Buddhist Sangha will continue via Zoom on Wednesday evenings, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Contact: Rev. Dennis Hamilton

Friday Night at the Movies will not meet in October. Contact: John Freeman for any questions.

Dances of Universal Peace will not meet in October. Contact: Barbara Bullock-Wilson if you have any questions.

POC (People of Color) Group meets at 7 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month, and at noon on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of every month at <https://tinyurl.com/uwf8rdjf> See page 3.

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF THE MONTEREY PENINSULA

Welcoming all, we worship together with loving
hearts and open minds,
promoting peace, equality, and respect for the Earth.

Questioning, reflecting,
learning, leading . . . we change
ourselves
as we change the world.

WE’RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD WORSHIP ASSOCIATES

We need talented, dedicated UUs who want to contribute to the quality of our worship services. Worship Associates support all Sunday services and sometimes provide leadership at those services as well. If you think you’d like to try your hand at this vital part of church life, please contact the Sabbatical minister.

Grapevine



Martha Saylor, a longtime member of UUCMP, died of gallbladder cancer on September 13. Martha was born on March 26, 1949, in Monterey to George & Julia Crow. She attended Carmel Valley Elementary School, Sunset School & Carmel Middle & High Schools. She participated in 4-H.

After graduating in 1967, she attended the University of California at San Diego and graduated from UC Berkeley in 1971 with a B.A. in Architecture. She worked in architecture and engineering in San Francisco, Salinas, and Monterey. She received her architectural license after internships with Gerald Graebe, Belli, Fox & Kuska, and Alden Barstad.

In 1980, she married Richard Saylor and they lived overseas in Saudi Arabia for several years. When they returned to the Monterey Peninsula, they built their house in Monterey and started an architectural practice and a family. Martha enjoyed hiking and the outdoors, leading walks for the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club. The couple joined the Carmel Valley Gem & Mineral Club and enjoyed rockhounding and lapi-

dary work over the years. She was hard-working, focused, and tried to "make the most of what you yet may spend," per the line from one of the Rubaiyat's quatrains. Martha worked in architecture and engineering for 50 years with a long association with SSB Construction, Inc.

Martha was active in Religious Exploration when her child was young. She was a part of the original Building Design Team (2002 - 2006) which developed the Master Plan for UUCMP's Phases 1, 2, & 3 expansion projects and hired Safwat Malek as our architect. She oversaw the property survey, one of the team's first efforts in developing their plan. After Safwat was hired, Martha's participation dropped.

She leaves behind her husband, Richard L. Saylor and son Basil C. Saylor as well as her brother Thom (Rima) Crow and his children Madeleine & Matteo Crow.

Grapevine is one project of the Caring Network, a group whose mission is to increase and strengthen the sense of community at UUCMP. If you or someone you know is in need of assistance or has something to share, please contact the steering committee at caringnetwork@uucmp.org



Open House Events!

The Open House events will take place on 4 dates and times:

- ◇ Friday, October 15, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
- ◇ Saturday, October 16, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
- ◇ Tuesday, October 19, 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.
- ◇ Sunday, October 31, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. (with treats!)

Have you been missing the UUCMP building, the beautiful grounds, the tall trees? If so, please come to one of the Open House events scheduled for October. You will have a chance to tour the building and grounds, meet your sabbatical minister, and visit with some of your fellow church members. COVID safety protocols will be in place, including mask wearing, social distancing, sanitization, and signing in.

Consider inviting someone to join you – perhaps someone you haven't seen for a while and have been missing.

If you don't see a time here that fits your schedule, please contact me (sabbaticalminister@uucmp.org) to arrange something that works better for you.

— Susan Panttaja

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula Building Use Notice

September 20, 2021

Here is a summary of the policy for use of UUCMP buildings in church-sponsored events, proposed by the UUCMP Reopening Task Force and approved by the UUCMP Board of Trustees:

- Scheduled meetings up to a specified number of people may use designated rooms in the church
- A specific point of contact is responsible for the group's adherence to UUCMP standards
- All participants must wear protective masks covering their mouth and nose while in the building
- All participants shall maintain social distancing of at least 3 feet from other individuals
- The meeting room must be well-ventilated, with air exhausting to the exterior, during the meeting
- The group contact will obtain sign-in/waiver signatures from attendees for retention by the church
- The group contact will ensure sanitary wipe-down of high-contact surfaces, after the meeting



In the spirit of inclusivity, our primary concern in any UUCMP group gathering needs to be protecting the safety of the most vulnerable among us. This is of special concern for those with existing health issues, and for unvaccinated children.

The Reopening Task Force has been working on plans for phased re-opening, considering the possibility of groups of adults who are all vaccinated to choose to meet unmasked. This option, however, has been deferred with the recently increased cases of the Delta variant and the local public health recommendation that groups meeting indoors be masked. The Board of Trustees (BoT) has agreed to allow small groups to meet in our building, masked, and maintaining at least 3 feet of social distance, following the maximum capacity determined for each space. Space reservations should be made through the church office, and all attendees will be asked to sign in to allow for contact tracing. Until the planned ventilation system is installed, we will have box fans that can be used at windows/doors to exhaust air to the exterior from different rooms. Fans should be blowing out of windows or opened doors, with other windows/doors left open to draw fresh air in. Spaces will have a 3-hour idle period between uses to allow dissipation of lingering airborne virus.

Susan Panttaja, our Sabbatical Minister, is working with Media Director Timothy Barrett, Director of Religious Exploration Erin Forstein, Music Director Camille Hatton, volunteer Fred Hamilton, and our Worship Associates to develop plans for resuming face-to-face services. We appreciate the input received from 88 congregants who completed the survey about re-opening. The results, including many individual comments, are being used to inform our planning. A follow-on survey of congregational preferences will be forthcoming in October.

Key issues associated with returning to in-person worship include improving ventilation in the sanctuary, guidelines for singing, and protecting our unvaccinated children. The BoT has approved the installation of an upgraded air ventilation system (HVAC), and contracts have been awarded; installation will depend on delivery of equipment now on order, targeting late October 2021. Even considering universal masking and upgraded HVAC capacity, prospects for choral activity (by either choir or congregation) remain under review. UUA and CDC guidelines are being closely considered. Similarly, RE leadership is considering various options for Sunday programming until vaccines are available to children under 12. Whenever we begin offering services in the sanctuary, we will also be providing opportunities for virtual participation. We will also implement a system to manage the number of people attending in person, to preserve social distancing.

We appreciate everyone's patience with this planning process. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to be together virtually on Sundays while we are waiting to be together in person.

Time Keeps on Ticking!

Can you believe that we are still in a form of lock down? At the same time, UUCMP continues to support us all with great Sunday services, committees keeping up their many efforts, frequent communication from the staff.

The Stewardship Committee is just beginning to plan for the Operating Fund Drive for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022. Can you believe it?

Look for an announcement next month about our theme for the next fiscal year fundraising. You helped us reach our goals for the current year's virtual Operating Fund drive. You have kept us going with your continuing support of your time on com-

mittees and in special groups and your financial gifts.

Thanks for your amazing generosity. We are a caring community and thrive because of the joint effort of all of us. It is something to be proud of. Be on the lookout for more info to come about our plans for next year.

With heartfelt thanks and appreciation, especially to the many of you who were stewards last time!

The Stewardship Committee

Konny Murray, Chair

Carol Collin, Gretchen Hausmann, Steve Johnson, Judy Lind, Harry Nagel, Jo Ann Novoson

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Helping Families in Distress: COPA assists Castroville residents applying for rent relief. In Monterey County, rental assistance is also available to families living in rooms or garages.

First published in *Voices of Monterey Bay*, September 3, 2021 | By Luis Arreguín



Tere Simancas and Luis Arreguín help people fill out housing assistance applications outside Our Lady of Refuge in Castroville
Photo by Adriana Molina

Every Wednesday for the last month, members of COPA Castroville have been gathering outside Our Lady of Refuge Catholic church for a noble cause. They are helping community members apply for the rental assistance program authorized by the U.S. government that provides relief for the economic struggles families have experienced because of COVID-19.

But it takes more than just setting up tables and computers and getting together every Wednesday afternoon to help farmworkers in distress.

Once Congress approved legislation to provide economic stimulus for families, some organizations like COPA organized community members demanding an eviction moratorium and the allocation of federal funds to help

SOCIAL JUSTICE

families struggling to pay rent. The problem for Castroville, and other small rural communities in the area, is that rental assistance was approved only for tenants with formal leases. And when it comes to Castroville, the picture of rentals is completely different.

In this North Monterey County town, many tenants live in garages, studios or rooms rented from homeowners who share their houses to get some economic relief themselves. Those agreements between tenants and homeowners are largely verbal and many landlords did not have any intention of signing documents to prove they were renting their properties. In effect, such tenants in this — and other areas where farmworkers live — would not be able to apply for rental assistance.



Photo by Adriana Molina

COPA, which stands for Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action, held meetings with its different core teams at different locations throughout California and paid attention to the voices demanding help. As a result, rental assistance regulations were modified to include people living in rooms and garages whether or not they had a lease. Once we learned this great news, we immediately started to plan a way to get this assistance to the people in Castroville.

Mary Rojo, Ady Santana, Isabel Manzo, Tere Simancas, Lidia Serrato, Adriana Molina and I met with Father Pedro Espinoza of Our Lady of Refuge to discuss how the church could get involved in getting the message out to as many people as possible. Espinoza announced at every Mass that COPA would be helping families file the application for rental assistance outside the church each Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. Sometimes, the group would finish around 8 p.m.

We are still providing this support on a weekly basis. As of Sept. 1, about 140 applications have been submitted.

This process at the local level started with a Civic Academy on Zoom one day after a Sunday mass, with Lidia Serrato and Tere Simancas describing the rental assistance program. After sharing stories, regional leaders of COPA such as Arturo Aguila oriented potential applicants on the documents they needed to bring to the church. The Civic Academy on Zoom was a bilingual event at which people affected by COVID-19 narrated how they struggled to keep their jobs and to keep food on the table when they lost their jobs or were temporarily laid off.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Photo by Adriana Molina

After the Civic Academy, Mary Rojo and Lupita Zamudio prepared flyers to be distributed after Mass at Our Lady of Refuge, and every Wednesday Tere Simancas, Lidia Serrato and I fired up our laptops to input as many applications as possible through the United Way website. Isabel, Ady, Lupita and Mary supported their group by taking pictures of each document, using Adobe Scan to get PDF files which were then submitted to the team in charge of uploading those documents along with the application to the official website.

The work has been completed with an on-site review by an agency in charge of verifying documents and authorizing the disbursement of the funds. Lenin Ramos from Mujeres en Accion and Ana Ibarra from Hartnell College have attended some of these events in Castroville to conduct a thorough review of the applications and guarantee their approval. Some other visitors, such as United Way representatives as well as a candidate running for Monterey County supervisor, have visited the booth.

We in COPA Castroville think that we have passed our first test as a new organization and that our journey to become community leaders has just started. The community will have the last word.

For more information about the rental assistance program in Monterey County, visit <https://www.unitedwaymcca.org/county-rent-and-utility>.

Luis Arreguín grew up in Querétaro, Mexico, where he worked as a college instructor and a journalist. He immigrated to the United States in 2000. He currently is an adjunct math instructor at Monterey Peninsula College and a US Citizenship teacher for North Monterey County Unified School District.

**Unitarian Universalist Church
of the Monterey Peninsula
490 Aguajito Road
Carmel, CA 93923**

Office Hours

During the COVID-19 pandemic,
the office is open for limited hours: 10 a.m.
to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.
Email to office@uucmp.org

Co-Ministers

the Revs. Elaine and Axel Gehrman
On sabbatical leave through January 31

Sabbatical Minister

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October 2021

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Please send submissions for WEEKLY NEWS, the weekly announcements, to office@uucmp.org by Tuesday noon.

Check the WEEKLY NEWS and website for news throughout the month.

If you have any questions, call the office, 624-7404, or e-mail us at office@uucmp.org