

First Church Berkeley UCC

September 2021 Sustaining Giver Campaign: Long-Haul Living

Greetings First Church Berkeley Community!

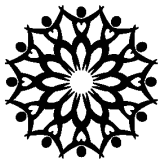
We hope you are thriving, as well as can be expected as the global pandemic morphs into a long-haul endemic. With COVID rates falling across the four counties that surround us, we are excited to report that we are looking forward to gathering back in our sanctuary beginning **Sunday, October 10!** We will continue to have a robust, intimate virtual experience of Sunday morning church for those who will be watching remotely.

In her first sermon message upon return from Sabbatical, Rev. Molly spoke about the joys of consuming ice cream daily. Well, these Covid times have dealt us a lot of different flavors of ice cream. For many people it has been Rocky Road, with twists and turns, pitfalls and obstacles. Others have retreated into the comfort of the familiar, chocolate or strawberry. Others have been a little more adventurous with Hawaiian tropical sherbets or Maine blueberry.

No matter where you have traveled with your ice cream adventures, the First Church community continues to be a sweet and sustaining gift for the long haul of living through these wild times. Here we are part of something larger than ourselves: providing hope, mutual aid, spiritual support, healthy rituals and routines, deep kindness and new friendship for one another, as well as communal strength for responding to the justice demands of a changing world.

If you are a part of our community, even intermittently, please prayerfully consider making a sustaining giving commitment in any amount to First Church Berkeley UCC as we start the new program year. Perhaps you already give money to the plate offering during worship, which all goes right back out the door to local, national and international agencies doing good in our community and throughout the world (in the last 12 months we have donated more than \$94,000 through your generosity!).

But our ministries and staff depend upon reliable giving from supporters--a subscription service, if you will--to do everything we do, from pastoral care, justice work and administrative support to anchoring a physical place that provides sanctuary and oasis for in-person gatherings (coming back soon!). You can even make a one-time gift to our operating expenses if you are not ready for a longer-term commitment.



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If you are already a sustaining giver, THANK YOU for your steady support. Your generosity means less volatility in the present, and an ability to plan our future with joy and farsightedness. We are on track to end 2021 in the black, and have big hopes for 2022!

Two-thirds of our budget goes to paying our exceptional, compassionate staff, and as we live in an area with a high cost of living, we are proposing a 4% cost of living increase for 2022. Additionally, with Rev. Kit's move to the East coast and other staff changes, we are looking at a new staffing structure to vitalize our youth, young adult and emerging ministries. This commitment to our congregation's long-term well-being costs money! We are in it for the long haul, and we hope you will keep us company.

A Commitment Card and instructions for submitting your sustaining giving commitment can be found on the enclosed "Information and Instructions" sheet. The members of Stewardship, Finance & Administration thank you for your sustaining support of the First Congregational Church of Berkeley UCC. We're listed below if you have questions about any aspect of the budget priorities and finances.

Nick Kukulan (Chair), Felicia Bellows, Nancy Campbell, Diana Graham, Bob Helliesen, Amy Hiestand, Nathan Hood, Becky Smith, Charles Taylor, and Moe Wright