



# First Church Berkeley UCC

December 15, 2021

Dear Friends and Members of First Church Berkeley:

Just what would the baby Jesus do with frankincense anyway? As a teacher, Jesus made it clear how we should direct our acts of kindness: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Our gifts to the Christmas offering show our love for God by helping those in need.

This year’s Christmas offering is directed to two nonprofit organizations dedicated to the welfare of those who are not able to enjoy the comforts that many of us take for granted: the **Berkeley Food Pantry** and the **East Bay Sanctuary Covenant**.

Mary S. is a 49-year-old South Berkeley resident in remission from cancer and living with a disability. This past year has delivered some unpleasant surprises—the loss of family contact due to the pandemic and a major increase in her gas-and-electric bill—but one thing she could count on was grocery restocks from the **Berkeley Food Pantry**. The food is nutritious: vegetables, grains and poultry sourced from pricey markets she would normally have to avoid. The **Berkeley Food Pantry** provides emergency groceries to over 2,000 Berkeley and Albany residents in need. In addition to the new delivery service that helps Mary, they continue to operate their pick-up site where families in crisis can go for food. And of course, they are grateful for the donations of peanut butter and cereal collected by First Church members Anne Rowe & Mary Fujii at each Sunday worship. Your monetary offering will further the good work they do.

Andovarah is a 56-year-old woman from Afghanistan. The fear from her abusive ex-husband was compounded with the possibility that the Taliban will target her due to her legal separation from him. Thanks to help from the **East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC)** she received a grant of asylum which puts her on the road to integration. Another client is a lesbian mother of four, living in a rural area of Sacramento County. **EBSC** helped her gain political asylum, apply for a green card, gain legal status for her children, avoid eviction, sue her abuser for child support, meet with a therapist, and engage with other asylees in a supportive environment. Feeling less traumatized, she shared: “I have needed a safe place to meet people like me for my whole life.” **EBSC** provides legal and social services, community organizing, and education to support low-income immigrants and people fleeing violence and persecution. In the past year they filed 306 asylum applications with a 97% approval rate and assisted with paperwork for DACA, naturalization, and work permits.

Please give generously in support of these worthwhile causes. You can donate online at [OnRealm.org](https://OnRealm.org) (log in, click “Giving,” then the blue +Give button, then choose the fund “Christmas Offering”) or at [paypal.me/firstchurchberkeley](https://paypal.me/firstchurchberkeley), or by check to First Church Berkeley with “Christmas Offering” in the memo line. The check can be mailed to First Church Berkeley, 2330 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704, or you can put it in the offering basket at the Christmas Eve service, 4 pm or 9 pm.

Thank you for your generous support.

*Your Justice and Service Ministry: Steve Spielman, chair; Alice Clark, Karlene Roberts, Maureen Prochaska, Phil Adams, Kerrie Hein, Nori Kobayashi, and Hope Hilton*