



February 21, 2023

Dear Members and Friends of First Church Berkeley UCC (aka FCCB!),

We have just finished our 148th Annual Meeting. Next year we will turn a century and a half, when we celebrate the 150th anniversary of our first worship service in late June 2024. Can you imagine it: the feasting, the joy, the feeling of being *home*, in our newly opened community building? Cooking up a storm in the kitchen, adults of all ages laughing around tables in the light-filled large assembly, while our church kids play on the labyrinth just outside on the terrace?

This spring is an intense and wonderful time. The rebar for the new community center is sprouting from the foundation, a hopeful finger pointing up to God. Building continues apace, but what will happen next depends on all of us, including you. Our ***Build. Gather. Grow.*** Capital Campaign will ask something of every one of us who calls FCCB home, or who has ever benefited from our work and our welcome.

But the campaign is not just about raising money. It's about raising our own collective spirit as a community after a long, patient, challenging season—from 2016 when Pilgrim Hall burned down, to 2020 when we were exiled from the church again by COVID. We've spent the last 7 years in reaction mode, trying to mitigate harm from various disasters. But now we are entering a season when we will be truly “home” and more fully equipped to both rest and serve more widely.

I'm asking you to take these next 3 months as **an intentional season of prayer and community connection** on behalf of your church, marking an increase of time and commitment from your usual offering.

I live by these words from Mother Theresa: “I don't have to be successful. I just have to be faithful.” They have gotten me through many intense life moments. In the case of the capital campaign, however, I would like us to be both faithful *\*and\** successful! Will you please **add First Church to your personal prayers** to prosper God's work and play in our little corner of the world?

Will you also **join your spiritual siblings at one of 12 small-group Launch Parties** during the month of March? You can sign up on the website here: <https://fccb.org/capitalcampaign/>, or in person after church on Sundays, or by emailing Julie Greer at [julie.greer@me.com](mailto:julie.greer@me.com).

These parties are informational—with time for dialogue, questions, and deeper social & spiritual connections to one another. We're offering both intimate in-person meetings as well as virtual groups so that you can connect as you feel comfortable. No financial commitments will be asked for or received at these gatherings. You will have a good time meeting with and getting to know others in our church family after a long period of fragmentation and isolation. You will learn more about the campaign, and your attendance

will encourage others to go as well. **If you've been away since before the pandemic and are looking for an explicit invitation to come back to church, this is it!**

And finally, please come to **one or more of the special events** we are planning as a spiritual expression of this moment, including an evening of arts and movement with musical friends, hosted by Derek Tam and Rev. Nicole Naffaa on Thursday, March 30 and a learning hour by our own Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson, diving into her new book about money and faith on Sunday, April 23. And of course, save the date for the All Church Gala at the Brazilian Room in Tilden Park on **Wednesday, May 10!**

Thank you in advance for your commitment to your own spiritual blooming this spring, and the rising of our church after a long winter—and may you feel blessed by your faithful dedication to the work, play, spirit & thriving of our church.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Molly', written over a light blue grid background.

Rev. Molly Baskette  
Lead Minister