



# First Church Berkeley UCC

December 17, 2023

Dear Friends and Members of First Church Berkeley UCC,

Throughout Advent we have been reflecting on the theme, **Glow**. How can we share the spirit of our Advent theme with those in our community who may not have the same opportunities that we have?

One gift that is sure to have an important impact is your donation to the Christmas Offering. Our recipients this year are two local organizations: **Consider The Homeless!** working in Berkeley and **Church World Service Northern California**, with a new Welcome Center in Walnut Creek.

**Consider The Homeless!** is a grassroots community-based organization whose mission is to serve Berkeley's unhoused community with dignity and respect. The all volunteer organization believes that face-to-face and hand-to-hand connection with individuals is the most important aspect of how **Consider The Homeless!** works to resolve the issues confronting people who are currently unhoused. To provide basic sustenance twice a week, volunteers make and deliver nourishing homemade soup and donated ACME bread to over 100 people living in encampments or huddled in a sleeping bag on the sidewalk. And once a week, volunteers deliver 175 bags of non-perishable food items and water. You may have met Paul Kealoha-Blake, one of the volunteers, during worship, at an After Party or at a recent Learning Hour in which he presented. Paul says that one of his most urgent concerns is to support a 77-year-old woman as she looks for shelter; she has been sleeping under tarps at an encampment for three months.

You may have a connection to Church World Service (CWS) through the annual CROP Hunger Walk or through working on a hygiene kit project. The new Walnut Creek Welcome Center of **Church World Service Northern California** serves refugees, immigrants and asylees with a spirit of welcome, collaboration and dignity. Since January, case managers have worked with 1,800 unaccompanied youth, primarily from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The youth receive support with school enrollment, accessing medical and mental health services, connecting them to legal experts and helping the youth to know their rights, so they are protected from exploitation and abuse. **CWS Northern California** has provided legal advice and counsel to 180 Ukrainians and Afghans. Families receive support through their resettlement process in a new community; this year, 300 Ukrainians and 215 Afghans have benefited from this program. At the Nov. 5 Learning Hour, Jason Welle and Jason Belanger from **CWS Northern California** presented information about the new Welcome Center. Please take a look at their website to learn more: <https://cwsnorcal.org>

We accept Jesus' call to serve him by serving others - the hungry, the unhoused, the refugee, the immigrant, the oppressed. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us generously support

**Consider The Homeless!** and **Church World Service Northern California**.

You can donate online at [www.onrealm.org](http://www.onrealm.org) (log in, click **Giving**, then the **blue +Give** button, then choose **Christmas Offering** from the **Fund** dropdown menu) or at [paypal.me/firstchurchberkeley](https://paypal.me/firstchurchberkeley).

You may also write a **check to First Church Berkeley UCC** with **Christmas Offering in the memo line**, and mail to First Church Berkeley UCC, 2330 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704, or you can put it in the offering plate on Christmas Eve.

Thank you for your generous support.

Blessings,

Maureen Prochaska, Chair, writing for your Ministry of Justice and Service

Doris Lynch, Craig Pratt, Susan Shome, and Steve Spielman

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