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This issue's theme:

Photo by Marius Masalar on Unsplash

The meaning of **MUSIC**

September 2021

Issue 7

Redwood Circle

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Redwood City



Food, Shelter, Love, Music: I once was asked what I found essential. Those four words were the first that came to mind.

By the time you read this, I hope we are easing back into our church. Soon, the acoustic resonance of the UUFRC Sanctuary will again make the piano and the choir soar, blending with the voices of the congregation, creating a unified whole. We are grateful for digital communication, but it can't replicate what we hear, and feel, when we are together in our sanctuary.

Music is part of worship, and for many of us, part of daily life. Some of us perform, some of us listen, but most of us find that music has the power to open us, elevate us, fuel us. Some dance to the music, some cook to the music, some paint or write with music playing (and some of us even clean house to a "Funky Housework" playlist. Let me know and I'll send it to you).

This month's issue is about music. Music as part of worship, music as part of life, music as essential.

~John Anning, Guest Editor

Welcome to our seventh Redwood Circle zine. The theme is **MUSIC**, the choice of our guest editor, John Anning, who won the privilege of selecting a theme for this issue as the winner of our Redwood Circle auction item.

In this issue you will learn about the choir's adaptations to Zoom, the origins of Second Sundays, the rich history of songs for social justice, the special musical memories of members, plus much more. On the Back Page, Rev. Brian asks us to reflect on what possibilities the future holds for us given our current reality.

Our next issue will focus on **The Written Word (Reading and Writing)**. We welcome your suggestions for articles in this and future issues. Contact us at zine@uufrc.org

Zine Team Editors: Jeanne De Shazo, Beth Harrison, Susie Idzik, Sally Mentzer, JoAn Vaughan, and our guest editor, John Anning



The Zine Team Sings Their Way into Issue #7 (Clockwise: Beth Harrison, Susie Idzik, Sally Mentzer, JoAn Vaughan, Jeanne DeShazo)

WHAT WE LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC, MUSICALLY-SPEAKING

By Beverly Morgan

Like our choir performances during Covid, this article is a collaboration. Truly it takes a village and some of the “village people” contributed.



Bev Morgan

Bev Morgan:

Not only did we learn how much we rely on each other when we sing, we learned to rise to the occasion, use Zoom, and do what was necessary to bring music to Sunday services. Each week

Dawn sent a Zoom link and new music. Like our in-person rehearsals (but muted), she led us in stretches and vocal warm-ups, rehearsed each of the four parts, then we put it together (all still muted), and she’d lead us in singing show tunes and other favorites when our “workload” was light. We learned how to record ourselves singing our part, and sent recordings to Dawn, who listened to each and put together the vocal choruses you hear. In another rehearsal we recorded the video portion, lip-syncing our parts while Dawn played the music. Both went to **Larry Chinn** and **Rob Davis**, who created amazing videos.

Nothing to it, right? But if you’ve never heard your own voice (singing OR speaking) it’s humbling.

We tried some “maneuvers” within our little squares, passing flowers (for the flower communion) or candle flames (for Christmas Eve) or waving at each other like we were on Brewster before a rehearsal instead of in our own homes.



The Choir rehearses on Zoom

Quentin Lewis, Barbara White, Jen Gill (quoted below) and I each sang Postludes with new lyrics which you heard after the service, rewriting lyrics to existing melodies. For me, creating a melody is tough, but writing rhyming lyrics to an existing song is a piece of cake (i.e., “I’ll Save A Little Square For You” by Jen Gill, “I Miss You Friend” by Larry and me). Full disclosure: I was trying to entice my Zoom-reticent friends to stay for breakout rooms. Don’t know if it worked, but it was fun and I hope you enjoyed them!

Dawn Reyen:

Larry’s and Rob’s video skills were entirely learned during the pandemic, improving steadily. We all hope it’s an obsolete skill soon, although we may add

projections for some future pieces. (Remember the slide show **Thomas Atwood** created for “Starry, Starry Night?”) I had zero knowledge of mixing and editing sound before the pandemic and had no idea my free software could do that. We learned that Larry’s keyboard has amazing instrument sound options.

We discovered that, like in-person singing, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Each singer’s lonely recording blends in, and a beautiful choral piece is born. Some of my favorite special music during Zoom were John Anning’s totally cool songs when he calls up Larry on video asking for accompaniment.



Dawn Reyen

(continued)

WHAT WE LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC, MUSICALLY-SPEAKING (*CONTINUED*)



Larry Chinn

Larry Chinn:

The whole process started the same week Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away when I thought about making a video, something I had never done. I also started making recordings,

something I had always wanted to do. I had a pretty ambitious initial project using about a dozen folks to make “Put a Little Love in Your Heart.” With a general awareness of the way studios make recordings and multi tracking, I layered instrument and vocal tracks. Although everyone sang the whole song, I edited tracks to make it sound like people traded lines, sang duets or background.

Everyone learned recording skills along with getting better sound for music on Zoom. Since coordinating all the instrumentalists took so much effort, I started using different virtual instruments to play all the parts. At the same time we started doing our whimsical postludes. At first I thought about changing a few words on popular songs but then Jen, Bev, Quentin and Barbara started writing whole lyrics opening up the range of possible music.

Jen Gill:

(Note: Jen told us that she has a “magic shower” because that’s where she comes up with those clever lyrics!)

The magic shower still works! It’s the power of running water that enhances the creative process.

Larry was so PATIENT helping me overlay harmonies on top of my melodies, and it was so fun to hear the result. I’ve been writing silly poems since I was 8, and it’s finally been useful. I love the English language, putting words together to create things that rhyme, are timely, relevant and humorous for the most part. I learned collaboration is good for the soul and how unbelievably talented UUFRC is. It has been an amazing journey.



Jen Gill



Photo by Clark Young on Unsplash

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED: SONGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Marianna Raymond



Marianna Raymond

I first became aware of social injustice in the 60s while in college. As an idealistic 17-year old, I marched in Baltimore along with other students to protest Jim Crow segregation. The crudely

labeled signs over drinking fountains—"Colored" and "White"—were visible symbols of hate and division. We marched to the rhythm of the songs we sang—"Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," "We Shall Not Be Moved," "Keep Your Eye on the Prize" among them. We thought we could make a difference.

I wasn't at the 1963 March on Washington, but have viewed the inspiring black and white footage many times. King's words and the songs performed have resonated with me through the decades. Who can forget the young Joan Baez's achingly beautiful soprano as she sang "We Shall Overcome," with 250,000 voices lifted in fervent agreement? A brash young Bob Dylan was also there. He sang what to me is a quintessential protest song, "Blowin' in the Wind." With a perfect and eminently singable marriage of lyrics, melody, and conviction, it confronts us with questions such as, "How many seas must a white dove sail, before she sleeps in the sand?"

Among the great performers there that day, Odetta also stands out. An imposing Black woman with a rich, gospel-infused voice, she sang so powerfully:

*Oh freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom
to my Lord and be free*



*My job is to show folks there's lots of
good music in the world, and if used
right, it may help to save the world—
Pete Seeger*

Protest songs led me into the world of folk music, some of it enjoyed live, some of it learned through listening to scratchy vinyl records in the dorm with my friend Kit. We learned to play our favorites on our thrift store guitars. We believed in their powerful messages decrying war and racism, and promoting peace.

Woody Guthrie, often deemed the Father of Folk Music, was a towering influence on the songwriters of the 60s and 70s. He highlighted corporate greed, while promoting unions and social justice. As a counterpoint to the anodyne Irving Berlin hit, "God Bless America," he wrote "This Land is Your Land," and included some pithy verses that you and I probably never learned in school.



Odetta

He asks, "Is this land made for you and me?" When a plane crash killed 28 migrant farmworkers being flown back to Mexico under the Bracero program, the New York Times account never listed the names of the dead Mexicans, only those of the flight crew and security guard. Angered, he wrote the poignant "Deportee" with the sad refrain:

*You won't have a name when you ride the big
airplane
All they will call you will be "deportee."*

Pete Seeger, a New York UU and friend of Woody, was an indefatigable activist/songwriter and a seminal figure in the folk revival.

With his mellow, kindly style, trusty banjo, and enduring optimism, he urged us to do



Marianna playing at UUFRC's Worship Service in August at Huddart Park

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED: SONGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE (CONTINUED)



This Machine surrounds hate and forces it to surrender
- words printed on Pete Seeger's banjo

better. He drew us all in to sing his songs, whether he was standing up for the environment on his boat, the Clearwater, or pointing out the folly of war, as in "Where Have All the Flowers gone?" In "If I Had a Hammer," co-written with fellow Weavers member, Lee Hayes, he sang about "a hammer of justice, a bell of freedom," and "a song about love between my brothers and my sisters, all over this land." This has been a perfect "Second Sunday" song!

Malvina Reynolds, another UU activist/songwriter, is also notable. Her most famous song, "Little Boxes," has a story behind it. She and her husband were driving down the freeway from their home in Berkeley when she noticed all the look-alike houses sprouting up in Daly City. "Stop the car, Bud!" she exclaimed. "I feel a song coming on." The resulting effort railed against the conformity symbolized by the "ticky, tacky houses." In her song "What Have They Done to the Rain?" she offers an ominous warning about nuclear testing. I still sing it, but not without stifling the urge to cry.

Over the years, pop and folk singers have lent their talents to worthy causes. Sam Cooke's "A Change Is



Joan Baez, an influential social justice singer

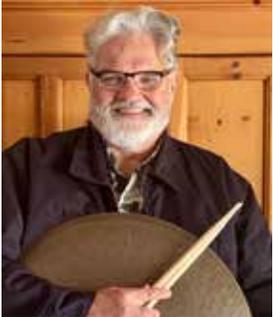
"Gonna Come" and John Lennon's "Imagine" are classics. Dolly Parton's "Nine to Five" stands up for women in the workplace. Cyndy Lauper's "True Colors" and Brandi Carlile's "The Joke" have become anthems for the LGBTQ community. Beloved by UUs, the duo Emma's Revolution, Pat Humphries and Sandy Opatow, are a strong voice. In singing their song "Swimming to the Other Side," our church community's unity and resolve are strengthened, and we are reminded that "we are swimming in this stream together."



Holly Near, UU and social justice singer

Over the past five years, I, along with others, have led the congregation in singing many of the songs of this continuing tradition. We believe we are making a difference with our songs and our activism, but there is more work to be done. To quote singer/songwriter Holly Near:

*We are a gentle, loving people,
And we are singing, singing for our lives.*



John Anning

UUFRC is known for diverse music. Hymns, classical, gospel, world, jazz, pop, folk, even some funky blues. That diversity didn't happen by accident. It happened both because there are a lot of musical congregants, but also because of Dawn and Larry. They both started in 2007.

Both of their roles have evolved, and both have shown us more and more of their creativity over the years, culminating in this last 18 months when they brought both musical and visual enhancement to our Zoom driven services. They are each natural music facilitators. They each like a lot of music, know a lot of music, but even more so, they each like to support the rest of us when we want to brave the chancel and sing a song.

This isn't a small thing. Guiding a choir of people with good voices and music reading skills is one thing. Supporting those of us who may not read music, may not be performers, may be nervous... these can be challenges for church music leaders. Some people in those roles feel that unprofessional music makes them look bad. I doubt either Dawn or Larry has ever worried about that.

This leads us to a topic near to my heart. Many years ago, UUFRC established a Second Sunday program where one Sunday a month we featured lay musicians doing all manner of music. At first there were some concerns that we would be taking away from the more traditional music, but soon the congregants came to see this as additive rather than subtractive. Different music opens people's hearts in different ways. Singing a hymn, or listening to a jazz instrumental or a folk song, these are not opposite

experiences, but different facets of worship and of music. Through exposure to new styles, we learned about each other, and our worship grew richer. I led Second Sundays at first, but the torch passed over time to David Reese, Candace Anderson, Bev Morgan, and Marianna Raymond. I thought I might share a few moments from my time at the helm:

- Larry and I playing "Cast Your Fate To The Wind": So many great moments with Larry, deciding on a Prelude or Offertory at the last second and just doing it without rehearsal.
- Leila Parrot, Amy French, and Jen Gill singing "May I Suggest" by Susan Werner: this is a deep and serious song brought to life by these great singers.
- The Street Corner Singers, our name for whatever loose aggregation of singers is available to sing songs without sheet music: A favorite memory is singing "Sadie" by the Spinners, a soul classic sung about a beloved grandmother. We sang it on Mother's Day, and I was proud to think we were probably the only church in RWC playing the Spinners that day!
- Jimmy Boyson: Jimmy's mom was a founder of UUFRC, and Jimmy comes around from time-to-time. When he sits at the piano and sings, he lights up the sanctuary.
- Jeff Buenz doing his service on Music Chaplaincy: He showed how he leads cancer patients in singing Tom Petty's "Won't Back Down."

We are a music-loving congregation with a breadth of musical skill and taste, from the staff to the congregants. Beyond the love of the music itself, there is immense feeling of support for anyone willing to step onto the chancel to sing or play. Thank you Dawn, thank you Larry, thanks to all who participate, thanks to all who enjoy.

UUFRC MEMORIES OF MUSIC

Sally Mentzer: Our choir amazes me and consistently enhances our services. One of my favorite choir pieces was their rendition of “Getting to Know You” with its lively animation by each member.

Annie Tate: One of my favorite UU hymns is “Blue Boat Home.” It was sung often when I started attending. Hearing it, I’m right back with Julia Older, appreciating that time when I gave a return to organized worship a chance, building a new opportunity for homecoming.

For me, music is a window to the past. I have always appreciated water -- lakes, rivers and waterfalls, hot tubs. One song that comes immediately to mind is a Girl Scout camp song:

Peace I ask of thee, oh river.

Peace, peace, peace.

When I learn to live serenely,
Cares will cease.

I don’t actually know why this song has been carried with me for 70 years, but it’s an antidote to anxiety. When I think of peace, I recognize that it wasn’t something I had a lot of growing up.

Joanne MacMahon: I love coming to UUFRC on Sunday mornings knowing that the music I hear will make my heart sing. Thank you Dawn, Larry, the choir, and all the performing artists who make the day so special. A favorite memory of mine is when over two hundred people sang the hymn “Spirit of Life” at my husband Clair’s Celebration of Life held at UUFRC on February 14, 2004.

Jennifer Bahr Davidson: Singing “Kore Evohe” while standing in a circle with such wonderful, strong, beautiful women is one of the most exhilarating musical experiences I’ve had at UUFRC! Different groups of women, different directors, all wonderful! I find it amazing that I can be a part of that! I always remember Tracey Fecher telling us the story of Kore, loving the story and the way the story is told in the musical version.



Peter Thielen playing the vibraphone



The Band playing during UUFRC worship



Ron Hansman singing during worship

Especially this time of year, I am reminded of marching band practices on Saturday mornings in college before football games. I played piccolo in the University of Colorado Golden Buffalo Marching Band and we had a warmup that was just a simple, glorious chord progression, played first softly then progressively louder. I loved the glorious, soaring sound as it echoed around the empty stadium, and felt in awe that I had a small part in it! Making music with others has been one of the greatest joys in my life and I’m so happy that I can continue to do that with the choir at UUFRC!

Chris Fuller: Soon after joining UUFRC, I came to a Blues Night open mic event in 2003. Although I hadn’t played the guitar much in the previous 20 years, I dusted off my vintage Stratocaster and joined in the jam, playing and singing the blues. This led to playing at other Blues Nights, New Year’s Eve parties, open mics, retreat song circles, and church auction parties. This has included performing in worship services as part of the

UUFRC MEMORIES OF MUSIC (CONTINUED)

Second Sunday band backing up many great singers, playing with much more talented musicians and over the years singing a few songs myself-- all for very accepting and supporting audiences that provided me the opportunity to explore and advance musically. I also found musical buddies with whom I have developed great friendships, notably John Anning, Mike McGrew and Darius Mostowfi. The biggest thrill for me in all of these musical adventures was having my then grade school sons, Will and Thomas, join me and the band to perform songs at several Blues Nights and New Year's Eve parties.

Wayne Burdick: My first UU experience, musical or otherwise, was a UUFRC Blues Night event 15 years ago. The roster of performers kept things so lively that my own guitar never came out of its case. I met both musicians and non-musicians who felt like old friends. Music, dance, drink, and friendship; lather, rinse, repeat. What's not to like?

Music is an altered state for me, whether as listener or performer. It functions like a spiritual high, drug high, euphoria, or love. But among these, music is unique: it temporally reorganizes the brain, causing its synaptic firings to fall into step, easing the vicissitudes of everyday life like a rhythmic chant eases the drudgery of hard work.

Jen Gill: Music shaped my ability for languages. My father played only classical music in our house until I was about 12 years old. I have always had an affinity for learning languages, particularly romance languages. I believe that the steady pentameter and ordered rhythms of classical music shaped my brain to more easily accept the rise, fall and lilt of Spanish, French and Italian. I believe that's why I speak Spanish fluently today.

Beth Eggers: Music can bring the world together. I once stood at the front of a small Gypsy church in rural Romania. On my left, I held hands with a former

Nazi from East Berlin; on my right were Romanians from three different denominations. Together we led the congregation in singing "Jesus Loves Me" in Romanian. This was not so much a religious moment, at least for me, as a moment of humanity. The Gypsies in this area were shunned and hated by most Romanians. The smiles on their faces, and the joy of the music, brought us all together.



Chris Fuller with Will and Thomas



Bev Morgan and Ellen Hill

CIRCLE OF LIFE

In each issue, we will continue to have announcements of transitions of our members including: marriages, births, deaths, moves, graduations, job changes, anniversaries, retirements, significant birthdays, or whatever else members would like to share with the community.

Send to Sally at circleoflife@uufrc.org



by Sally Mentzer

Tovis Page celebrated a “watershed birthday” of 50 years on September 4th.



Esther Ammon is transitioning in October from a manager in Oncology and Palliative Care at Stanford to the Palo Alto VA where she will be the coordinator of their Hospice Unit. She comments: “this position came at just the right time when refocusing on a better work-life balance has become a priority.”

Bill Welch reports that he is moving out of his home and into a “sweet” 9th floor condominium in The Peninsula Regent, a senior housing facility, in late October. He hopes that Elaine, his wife and partner of 20 years, will soon join him.



Rev. Brian and his partner **Natalie** joyously celebrated their daughter **Isla**’s 18th Birthday (gulp) on August 31st. She is smart, creative, fun with a great sense of humor and has brought so much joy into their life.



Sally Mentzer attended the annual reunion of her childhood neighborhood playmates. She grew up in Palo Alto at the corner of Newell Road and Greenwich Circle. Each home on the Circle had children her age and for years they played together.

About 10 years ago they had their first reunion and now that they are in their 70’s, it is a treasured part of their summers

We know that some of you are struggling with something which concerns you and we hold you in our hearts as we send you light. Please know you are welcome to reach out to our pastoral care team members who offer emotional and spiritual support at: pastoralcare@uufrc.org. Or you may contact Reverend Brian at ministeratuufrc@gmail.com

Susie Idzik. is excited to be two months into a new job after a very long job search. She is Director of Administration at Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, a progressive synagogue in San Francisco. She is grateful that services at the synagogue won’t pull her away from UUFRC on Sundays!

Brett Dyer’s postponed 50th Birthday celebration explained by his wife, Anna Dyer: Last March when the pandemic hit the one year mark and we had gotten our second



vaccine, we started to plan a belated 50th birthday weekend with friends and family in Tahoe for Brett. Fast forward five months, add in the delta variant, a dose of smoke and a fire like we’ve never seen before in the Tahoe area, and we of course adjusted plans. We did finally celebrate Brett’s 50.72 years birthday the last weekend of August with a lively poker tournament and an outdoor pub gathering with vaccinated friends and family in San Mateo. Note: Brett’s actual birthday was 12/7/2020.

Our hearts go out to all those affected by the fires in California and Hurricane Ida in Louisiana, New York and Philadelphia. Several of our members have homes in the Lake Tahoe Region. The name of Steve and Ellen Hill’s South Lake Tahoe home is “Gratitude.” Even though their home has great meaning and memories Ellen tries to keep the threat of the fire in perspective and expresses that with all the current issues in the world she chooses not to worry about a fire she cannot control. We hope the Caldor fire is fully controlled soon and that the coming of autumn brings rain.

**THE BACK PAGE:
HOLDING REALITY AND POSSIBILITY TOGETHER**

By Rev. Brian Ferguson

“Great possibilities await us even if all we can see is the cliff before us...”

Holding reality and possibility together is the holy, hope-filled work of humanity.”

- Rev. Samuel Trumbore

As I return for my second year of ministry here at UUFRC, I am reflecting on what possibilities does the future hold for us given our current reality? This past year was unusual and challenging - a vast understatement - and the coming year still has a great deal of uncertainty but the massive disruption of the pandemic has opened up new possibilities.

There seems to be a growing recognition that our culture is broken as we witness selfishness taken to extreme levels, a high level distrust of institutions, and the very real worry about the existential threat of climate change. Reality does not feel like a very hopeful perspective. If you agree our culture is broken then what group do you believe is going to heal it? If not us whom, if not now when? Unitarian Universalism is a religious movement of action and deep care for the world around us.

UUFRC as a religious community has a powerful life-affirming, loving, compassionate message about the worth of all people and the sacred preciousness of our environment. We can be a powerful force in the healing of our country's culture and our global environment. This vision of hope is grounded in the eyes-wide-open reality of our situation and the inspiring possibility that our righteous actions matter to repair the world around us.

In my view, our purpose as a religious community is to care for, nurture, and inspire each other to do our sacred work in healing the community around us including ourselves.

Perhaps we Unitarian Universalists in

community can be the “yeast” that gives rise to a new vision of society which is a new more inclusive, kinder, more loving American Dream.

These idealistic ideas about our religious community might seem a far cry from what we do showing up online for worship, gathering for choir rehearsal, attending a meeting, working on the building. or hosting a justice forum. Perhaps. Or I invite each of us to reflect on why we engage with our religious community the way we do? I suspect we all have some sense that our life and our world is better for it.

My involvement in a religious community is because I want to transform our world through acts of love. Being engaged deeply in a religious community helps me understand a broader reality of the human experience and envision a world of possibility beyond my own limited perspective.

As we engage this coming church year I hope each of us can experience love, caring, kindness and belonging here at UUFRC and share it with the community beyond our walls. I honestly believe that can be the beginning of healing for our broken world.



Rev. Brian Ferguson