

FALL 2023



# THE GOOD TABLE NEWS



## The Good Table Café & Nursery News

With encouragement and support from Supervisor John Gioia and Richmond city Council member Soheila Bana, we are working to get our **Planting Justice El Sobrante Farmer's Market** up and running in an alternate location while we continue construction. **Sam Lustig** of Planting Justice is the point person and we are working now to choose a good site and time for the market. Stay tuned!

In the meantime, we are **still stalled** on our main construction while we wait for the building department to review our latest full set of plans so that we can finally call for rough inspections of plumbing, electrical, and structural work done so far. This is how this process seems to work now - we scurry, scurry to turn in plans, forms, etc. and then wait weeks/months for a response.

Also, we are dealing with a **completely different permitting process** with the county Department of Conservation and Development due to COVID changes. They only work online now and are understaffed. Many senior folks have retired during our process and we've had to start over several times with new staff in different departments. Also, there is no more ability to negotiate "over the counter" either, instead it takes weeks of emailing back and forth. What was a slow process before has become slower and less efficient, in my view.

Once we hear back from the building department and the inspections are done (hopefully soon!?), we will be able to move forward somewhat quickly (provided our contractor's schedule opens up at the same time), but there is **no way we will be able to open this year**, so we are now hoping to open by April 2024, five years after purchasing the property in April 2019.

*Continued -->*

It seems like forever, but experts in this field say it nearly always takes this long - or longer. Meanwhile, we continue to refine plans, buy equipment and try to get ahead of the next permitting hurdles.

Our project manager **Xina Ash** has been looking high and low for the right company to do our required EV chargers in our parking lot. At the same time, Colleen and I regularly walk Teja past a neighbor's house that has vans with the logo [EVCharge4U](#) on them. Snapped a pic of the logo and contact info. and behold, a local company has given us an excellent deal on EV chargers for the site. Check them out!

**Upcoming work days will be held from 12n-3p on last Saturdays: (September 30, October 28)** And due to the holidays, on the first Saturdays, December 2 and January 6) at 5166 Sobrante Avenue. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing suitable for gardening or cleaning projects or just stop by for a tour!

Our workdays are organized and led by **Sam Lustig** of Planting Justice if you have questions or would like to help out at other times. If you haven't been to a **last Saturday Community Work + Fun Day recently**, you'll be delighted to see all the work being done in the **Planting Justice nursery** space outside and inside their lovely farm store space. Do come check it out!

Thanks to everyone who has **financially contributed to the project** and if you haven't given yet, please help as you are willing and able. We're delighted to receive **your tax-deductible contributions in any amount** and we would really appreciate introductions to other **individual donors and/or foundations** that would be interested in our project. You can give online through [the-good-table.org](https://the-good-table.org) or **save the processing fees** by mailing a check to: The Good Table LLC, 780 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. All donations are 100% tax-deductible.



*Youth from First Congregational Alameda and First Congregational Berkeley visiting our site for a service day.*



# Choice Tidbits

Planting Justice has received at **\$600,000 gift from an anonymous donor** to fund our Good Table project along with other excellent programs at PJ. These funds will ease the “gap” between expected completion costs and our loan from the Cornerstone Fund of the United Church of Christ. Huzzah!

**The Good Table UCC** and the **Orinda Community Church UCC** will worship together on Sunday, Oct. 8th, in Orinda, at 10a while exploring ways that we can partner together through our project to serve the wider community we share.



## Fall Birthdays Anniversaries

### September Birthdays

8th Carol Kiehn  
21st Iris Ridgway  
23rd Rev. Roger Ridgway  
23rd Elisabeth Severson

### September Anniversaries

8th Joan Thompson & Ken Alborn  
21st Ruth Ann Clark & Ardith Hayes  
24th Colleen Rodger & Melinda V. McLain  
25th Kathe Kiehn & Heinz Lankford

### October Birthdays

11th Joann Pavlinec  
13th Bonnie Hariton  
17th Diane Young  
25th Ali Edney

### November Birthdays

10th Heinz Lankford  
13th Amy Ukena  
19th Matilde Hollander  
24th Ty Kavanaugh-Lynch  
25th Elise Hariton

### November Anniversary

28th Brian Miller & Howard Campbell

*Let us know your birthday or anniversary date and we'll celebrate you here!*

# Dia de Los Muertos/All Saints Day Sun, Nov. 5

By Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

Pastor for The Good Table UCC



For many years now, The Good Table UCC spiritual community has designated the first Sunday in November for **remembering those beloved folks who have died** in our communities and families.

In Mexico and for our members of Hispanic descent or those with cultural ties to Hispanic cultures, celebrating **Dia de Los Muertos (the Day of the Dead)** is a tender and important time of remembrance. In our community, we build an ofrenda (altar) each year during this worship service using photographs and mementos of family and friends who have died as a way to honor them and the ways that they continue to inspire us in our current lives.

In the Christian tradition, **All Saints Day** now follows All Hallows' Eve (Halloween) on Nov. 1 and is an ancient tradition that originally focussed on the lives of Christian martyrs in the early church who were tortured and executed because of their resistance to the Roman Empire. With the conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine, the first in 312 C.E. to Christianity, this liturgical feast shifted focus and was expanded to include the remembrance of all the faithful who had died. Over the centuries, the date for All Saints has changed during various periods, but is now uniformly celebrated on Nov. 1 or on the first Sunday in November.

Do plan to join us for our **Sunday Gathering on Sunday, Nov. 5th at 12n** if you would like to participate in building the ofrenda as a way to honor your beloveds who have died. Bring photos and or small objects that remind you of your beloveds for the altar. If you have questions or want more information about this service, please contact [Pastor Melinda](#).

# What Will the Live Edge Readers Read Next?



Our next book will be: [Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life](#) by Dacher Keltner and we plan to take the month of September off and resume meeting on Wednesday, October 4 so you have plenty of time to get a copy and join us! **Live Edge Readers** meets **via zoom on Wednesdays, 2:30-4p.**

**Meeting ID:** 868 7644 9214

**Zoom Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86876449214>

*Summary from goodreads:* Awe is mysterious. How do we begin to quantify the goose bumps we feel when we see the Grand Canyon, or the utter amazement when we watch a child walk for the first time? How do you put into words the collective effervescence of standing in a crowd and singing in unison, or the wonder you feel while gazing at centuries-old works of art? Up until fifteen years ago, there was no science of awe, the feeling we experience when we encounter vast mysteries that transcend our understanding of the world. Scientists were studying emotions like fear and disgust, emotions that seemed essential to human survival. Revolutionary thinking, though, has brought into focus how, through the span of evolution, we've met our most basic needs socially. We've survived thanks to our capacities to cooperate,

form communities, and create culture that strengthens our sense of shared identity—actions that are sparked and spurred by awe.

In *Awe*, Dacher Keltner presents a radical investigation and deeply personal inquiry into this elusive emotion. Revealing new research into how awe transforms our brains and bodies, alongside an examination of awe across history, culture, and within his own life during a period of grief, Keltner shows us how cultivating awe in our everyday life leads us to appreciate what is most humane in our human nature. And during a moment in which our world feels more divided than ever before, and more imperiled by crises of different kinds, we are greatly in need of awe. If we open our minds, it is awe that sharpens our reasoning and orients us toward big ideas and new insights, that cools our immune system's inflammation response and strengthens our bodies. It is awe that activates our inclination to share and create strong networks, to take actions that are good for the natural and social world around us. It is awe that transforms who we are, that inspires the creation of art, music, and religion. At turns radical and profound, brimming with enlightening and practical insights, *Awe* is our field guide, from not only one of the leading voices on the subject but a fellow seeker of awe in his own right, for how to place awe as a vital force within our lives.

# Spiritual Discipline at the El Cerrito Pool

By Joyce Hedges, GTUCC member

Over dinner with a friend, my husband said, “Joyce is training with the Master Swimmers at our neighborhood pool.”

I cringed. Thank goodness this is an East Coast acquaintance who won't ever see my lack of “mastery” in the water.

My love of swimming began when my father taught me the “Australian crawl” in the neighbor's pool back home in Cincinnati. I never took lessons or joined a team, but I am now jumping into the pool twice a week with well-trained swimmers.

Why rouse myself to get into the water at 7 a.m.? I dreamed of improving my stroke after I celebrated a significant birthday this spring. I was reassured by the pool manager that the only criteria for participation was being over 18 and being able to swim the length of the pool.

After the first practice, a quote from Father Richard Rohr in his book “Falling Upward” came to mind.

***I have prayed for years for one good humiliation a day, and then, I must watch my reaction to it. I have no other way of spotting both my denied shadow self and my idealized persona.***

When I paid for a year's membership in U.S. Masters Swimming, I was not thinking about my shadow side or my idealized self. I wanted a new challenge for my aging body and brain. I forgot the part where trying new things can be scary, ego-deflating and, yes, humiliating.

On the first day. I took out my wax ear plugs to hear what I was supposed to be doing and realized I don't speak “swim coach.” Being told to do a “25 kick, 75 swim, 200 pull and 4 IMs” gave me a sinking feeling. Not the feeling you want in the deep end.



In the last few months, I've watched swimming tutorials online and read swim term glossaries. I try to imitate the sleek form of the other swimmers over in the fast lanes.

Though I now understand more of the coaching lingo, I don't often finish a drill before the next instruction is given. I know my kick is off, my breathing is wrong and my freestyle catch is a mess. I am on a steep learning curve, humbled by the technical challenges of swimming.

As I do what feels like treading water, rather than progressing on this journey, I notice the friendliness of the pool staff and other swimmers. The coaches provide helpful tips. The only one judging me is me.

After each swim, I feel both revived and tired as I towel off and walk home. It reminds me that we are meant to use and enjoy our bodies. Can a workout be a form of worship? A prayer of thanks for our enfleshed selves?

In the movie “Chariots of Fire,” the Christian Olympic athlete, Eric Liddell, says that when he runs he “feels God's pleasure.” I mean to do the same. Even when I'm the slowest one in the pool.

# Today's Harvest!

By Bonnie Hariton, *GTUCC member*

August 23, 2023

We were depressed today. We were exposed to covid - this year's summer surge - and I had to cancel plans to fly East for my brother's 70th birthday. After deciding that cancelling was the Right Thing to do, I sought solace in the garden.



The bean pole, I started there. We picked baskets-full just a week ago, and now there are more. Blue lake beans. When I brush my hands against the thick leaves, the beans appear. I even peaked into the interior of the teepee. What a hiding place. Cool, with more beans visible on the interior. I imagined myself as a child, curling up in there.

Then I checked out the cucumbers. Oops! There are some big ones! My husband likes to juice those, along with green apples and bunches of celery. Even our grandson wanted a second glass. The smaller ones make delicious raita (along with yogurt and pressed garlic). Now on to the zucchini. Somehow there is always another one. Zucchini boats, or spiralized zucchini salad along with bell peppers, tomatoes, feta cheese, and edamame. Yum.

My husband decided to start with tomatoes. Our neighbors are making theirs into many quarts of sauce. We like to eat them straight and to give them away, along with some dahlias or marigolds. My next thought is shakshuka for breakfast tomorrow.

I feel a little better. And October is a good time to head East. Autumn leaves are so beautiful.



# Four Things We Can Do to Help Stop or Mitigate the Climate Crisis

By Nancy Lemon, *GTUCC member*

By now we are all aware that the climate crisis is happening. Many of us are doing various things to help stop it: giving money to climate change organizations like the Sunrise Movement, recycling and composting, keeping things out of the landfill as much as possible, avoiding flying except when necessary, conserving water and electricity, driving less, buying hybrid or electric cars, installing solar panels on our roofs, etc.

Here are four more easy things we can do that people may not be aware of.



1. **Multiple times daily:** Use bamboo toilet paper like Reel, available at Target, instead of paper made of trees. Trees are key to sequestering carbon – we need more of them, not less. Bamboo is a sustainable and fast growing alternative that works very well for TP and other things. Reel also uses no plastic to wrap the TP, just paper and cardboard, both recyclable. And it's only a bit more expensive than the cheap stuff which is wrapped in many layers of plastic!

2. **Daily:** Download a free app for your phone called Climate Action Now and use it daily to email various elected officials to urge them to support climate-friendly legislation and policies. In the process you get to quickly learn about many interesting aspects of how to stop the climate crisis, e.g., that electric vehicles are always a better choice climate wise in spite of the misinformation that because there are some fossil fuels used to make electric vehicles, there's no gain for the planet in switching to them. That's simply false.

3. **Weekly:** Use biodegradable strips for laundry detergent like Tru Earth instead of liquid in big plastic bottles. We need to cut way down on buying plastic, and transporting the bottles on trucks uses a huge amount of fossil fuel because they are bulky and heavy. Our household has been using strips for a long time now – they work with any temperature water (though we wash on cold) and get the dirt out. And they come with no perfumes or fragrances, which is also better for the environment.



4. **Once in a lifetime:** California legalized human composting, or natural organic reduction, in September 2022. The body is put into a steel container and covered with wood chips, alfalfa, straw and other materials until it decomposes. The remains are given to the family or added to soil in a conservation area, which returns the nutrients from our bodies to the natural world, restoring forests, sequestering carbon, and nourishing new life. The cost is approximately \$7000, more than cremation but less than traditional burials. Each cremation is estimated to release more than 500 pounds of carbon dioxide, collectively creating 360,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases each year, according to Web MD, and embalming can leach fluids into the soil. There are also green burials which have no embalming or casket, and green cremation, which uses water and potassium hydroxide to reduce the body to ash without burning. I am telling my family and will write on my 5 Wishes document (a great document to fill out about what we each want around our last days, any memorial service, etc.) that I want one of these options.



## Worth Noting

- Our **Community Work + Fun Days @5166 Sobrante Ave** are held on **(September 30, October 28)** And due to the holidays, on the **first Saturdays, December 2 and January 6) 12-3p**. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing and bring work gloves and/or favorite gardening tools. Or just stop by for a tour!
- **The Good Table UCC Council** meets each **4th Monday, 4p** [via zoom](#).
- On **Sunday, October 1**, The Good Table UCC will have a **Picnic in Pinole, 10:30a-1p**
- The **Orinda Community Church (UCC)** and **The Good Table UCC** will have a joint worship experience on **Sunday, October 15 @Orinda UCC, 10a**



## Regular Ways to Connect



Join us on **Sundays at 12 noon** for our celebration with music, prayer, and preaching in person AND [via zoom](#). We celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion every First Sunday**. All are welcome at our table in El Cerrito @780 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito (near Stockton) and online everywhere!



**Wednesdays, 2-3:30 pm** - How do we find our true self? What are the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity? Is there something that is real beyond the limits of our perception? These are just some of the questions that our Live Edge Readers has explored while reading and pondering together. If you are interested, kindly send an email to Pastor Melinda to get added to the list: [info@the-good-table.org](mailto:info@the-good-table.org)



**Thursdays, 6 pm** - Interfaith Meditation via Zoom. There is an old Zen saying, "Everyone should meditate for 20 minutes each day unless you're really busy, and then you should meditate for an hour." We sit in chairs in silence for about 45 minutes and no previous experience with meditation is required.