Trees Are Us:
A BFUU Poetry Service

Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists

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Hope
Frances Hillyard 2
Survivors
Frances Hillyard 2
Amongst the Redwoods
Gene Herman 3
Fireflies fill the lowlands
Gene Herman 3
Dance of the Golden Poppies
Gene Herman 3
The Ocean
Eva Doucette 4
Gualala Winter
Kathleen McClung 5
For the Man at Cape Arago with a Small Lacquer Box
Kathleen McClung 5
Fountain
Deborah Hamouris 6
At Twilight
Leigh Harwood 7
Hollow
Marianne Robinson 7
The Messengers
Carrie Knowles 8
Solstice Song Letting Go
Carrie Knowles 9
Frances Hillyard was the first BFUU Poet Laureate and chairs the Poetry Committee. Which currently consists of herself. Anyone else care to join?

Hope
by Frances Hillyard

Eggtooth
crack the tight shell
open to fresh air.
Poems grow,
smiles blossom in the street,
love and food, freedom and respect.
We greet each other, strong, healthy, gentle,
kind and confident
that the words we spill
like seeds ripen into grass
to feed next season’s flight.

SURVIVORS
by Frances Hillyard

Fire has torn away forest
Stolen breath
From ghosts of trees
Ghostly birds
Call us
We shake
The soot
From our wings
And continue flying
Gene Herman
Gene Herman, a Berkeley poet, started writing poetry in the 70's while living in Albany, NY. He continues writing poems covering love, politics, sailing and nature. Gene produced and hosted the Wind Song Coffee House, an acoustic venue while living on Nantucket Island. He was a member and past president of the Bay Area Poets Coalition, and has been published on both coasts. Current Chapbook collection of trumpian prosetry was compiled between 2017 and 2020. Currently Gene is co-chair of the Social Justice Committee of the Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists; and is the current Poet Laureate of the Berkeley Fellowship.

Fireflies fill the lowlands
by Gene Herman
Woods alive with twinkling lights
Christmas in June
Gods own electric circus
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Dance of the Golden Poppies
by Gene Herman
Butterflys in the breeze
Little birds fluttering in the wind
Tiny jets buzzing straight ahead
Once in a while a humming bird pops up

Dance of the Golden Poppies.

Amongst The Redwoods
by Gene Herman

Sitting on rotting pine leaf carpet
Alone amongst the ancients
Downed and dead and aged and saplings in one sacred grove
Light and shadow play tag through limbs and branches 80 meters high
Groans and squeaks and mighty rumbles emerge from the core of shifting tall tall trees swaying in the wind
There are no homeless here
The black tail deer the juncoe
the chickadee are all at one in the forest
Yet the grumbling jay and the griping grackle
tell a tail of dispossession
through the rush of lumberjack’s axe
In solemn space Unitarian’s meet
To pledge their spirit to eternal fallen families
and to the ever valiant struggle to save the dispossessed.
Eva Doucette
Eva is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist and BFUUer.
Eva is homeschooled and enjoys doing gymnastics, making art and
drawing, writing stories and adventuring around Berkeley with her
friends. She co-founded an environmental activist organization with
her friend at a local private school to spread awareness about climate
change.
Eva is also proud to serve on the BFUU Worship Committee and help
run the Sunday Services!

The Ocean
by Eva Doucette

Waves wash over the sandy shore,
Rippling and crashing, white foam bubbling.
Home to so many creatures.

A small jellyfish, a crab washed up into the sand,
Then are pulled back by the water's hand
riding the waves with a harbor seal
**Kathleen McClung**

Kathleen McClung is the author of four poetry collections. Her most recent *A Juror Must Fold in on Herself* won the 2020 Rattle Chapbook Prize. She teaches at Skyline College, serves as guest editor for *The MacGuffin* and as associate director of the Soul-Making Keats literary competition. [www.kathleenmcclung.com](http://www.kathleenmcclung.com)

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**Gualala Winter**

by Kathleen McClung

Keep dreaming of gray deer asleep in woods
as sheets of rain claim every living thing—
tailor bees, bracelet cones, chipmunks, hawk broods
high up in nests that sway but last. Each wing,
leaf, stem of fern—soaked through, wet to the core—
endures these January storms we track,
evade behind our screens, our twice-locked doors.
Nervous, we curse old roofs, new leaks. Come back.
Mend quietly what’s torn. Listen to wind.
Confuse it with Pacific surf close by,
cars crossing flooded roads. Gray deer may find
logs hollowed out, may curl inside, stay mostly dry
under mossed bark. Or not. Our sun will rise,
night storms will end. We animals open our eyes.

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**For the Man at Cape Arago with a Small Lacquer Box**

by Kathleen McClung

We three share a vista point above the blue
Pacific waves. A balm, this Oregon coastline:
stones, surf, sunlight, terns. Faithful and new,
this seascape hushes chatter while the two
of us watch you aim a lens at Douglas fir, at pine.
We three share a vista point above the blue
but do not speak. We wonder what—or who—
might be inside your carved box, polished fine.
Stones, surf, sunlight, terns, faithful and new—
were they beloved by someone else? Have you
brought ashes here? One day who will bring mine?
We three share a vista point above the blue:
a stranger, Tom, and I. Below, a few
seals bark, one more language we can’t define.
Stones, surf, sunlight, terns—faithful and new
companions in our minds. We may review
them as we sleep. A box may open, shine.
We three share a vista point above the blue—
stones, surf, sunlight, terns, faithful and new.

Published in *Temporary Kin* (Barefoot Muse Press 2020)
Deborah Hamouris
DJ Hamouris lives, plays & teaches mountain dulcimer in her
Oakland, CA, home, as well as thru The Freight & Salvage, online
and in Berkeley, CA. She is working on a book of compositions and
arrangements for the baritone dulcimer. Her recordings and book,
“Indian Summer,” are available at djhamouris.com.

Fountain
by DJ Hamouris 2010

Fountain
Two birds
Waiting their turn.
One on the head
of the girl
that is part of the

Fountain.
One drinks
the other one waits.
I'm sure they're grateful
for a drink in this heat.

When the first bird is done
it flies along.
Then its mate hops down
looking around.
If I stand still
they won't know that I'm near.

It dips in its beak to drink
only aware of the

Fountain.
A third bird,
waiting its turn
stands on the steps
near the fountain.
And then, forgetting,
I reach down
scratching my toe.
When I rise up
the birds have all flown.
Leigh Harwood
Leigh Harwood was BFUU Poet Laureate 2016-2017.

AT TWILIGHT
by Leigh Harwood

The sounds of songbirds settling in
and faint rustling in the ivy.
Golden light fades to mauve.
The fragrance of freesias intoxicates my lungs
as the day exhales.

Marianne Robinson
Marianne Robinson, activist, poet and photographer, edited and
produced the BFUU Communicator. She was our third poet laureate.

Hollow
a place among hills
a dark depression where the runoff
rushed downhill to join
the creek to meet the river
to find the bay

hollow is a gray, forlorn place
in winter
all is damp
leaves piled layer on
decaying layer
slippery underfoot
treacherous and yet
lifegiving, for underneath this
blanket on the hollow floor
countless miniature creatures
scutter here and
crawl there
going about their tasks
playing out their lives
unaware of changes
wrought by upright
two-legged creatures
who crash through the
Underbrush
trampling them underfoot
while trying to stay upright
on the layers of slippery leaves
here in the dark, damp
hollow
where old life decays
and new life is born
Carrie Knowles
As an ordained UU Minister in 2013, I am a recovering psychologist and recovering attorney who spent many years as a university teacher. In my spare time, I wrote poetry and nine of my poems have been published in “little magazines” including Poetry Magazine and the Northwest Review. Currently, I provide pastoral care at BFUU and lead our Sunday Service once a month.

Song for the Solstice: Letting Go
by Rev. Dr. Carrie Knowles

I watched a tree all day through the window and wondered how this tree made its decisions, when to let go. Its leaves were brilliant with light, more than spectral gold, a testament to the sun’s rising and setting again.

That day, I watched moment by moment the rich trove of leaves on the branches. I was surprised—few if any leaves drifted down at random one by one. Then, with no wind at all suddenly—a shower of gold! A cascade of gold! By the hundreds, the sunstruck leaves were dropping straight to the ground in the quiet air, like a falling wall of light. This happened not just once. In the time I had I saw this happen three times over many hours. I can only tell you, it was not the wind.

It was an old tree, I thought, and grown wise from its many seasons of bare and green, the waxing and waning of our light. The tree, I thought, made its own choice when to let go.

This heart, too, has its seasons. And so I have wondered for myself how to be wise, how to let go in a season of loss, when sorrow shadows the heart. How shall I learn to let go in my own way, and brave the quiet air to scatter richly the harvest of so much light knowing even less than this tree if there’s a time of leafing out again in some imagined spring.
The Messengers
By Rev. Dr. Carrie Knowles

Would it be surprising if, in the vast vortices of stars made and unmade, the riotous writhing of galaxies in this pulsing, warping universe of stretched time the gods themselves were dancing, stretching, becoming in their tantric flux of love, lust and anger, unendingly new, unbounded, and so birthing new rivers of creation?

And would it be surprising if they dreamed us, yes, us into being, needing precisely our mouths to declare the reckless beauty of their dance, required the drumbeats of our hearts to shape and comprehend them, our songs to tell the love and terror of their birth, as they pulse through us and demand our witness?

And what if, fearing the unleashed unbearable radiance of exploding stars and the imploding of our patterns—what if, fleeing the upthrusting of their tantrums that strew destruction and birth—if, shunning the thunder of the volcano, we hide our eyes and stop up our ears and, having eyes, see not, having ears, hear not, and fall, and fail to meet what they would have of us?

It were best then to sit beneath the fig tree and rend our garments—helpless, alone and naked when night falls and draws the darkness down.