



Trees Are Us: A BFUU Poetry Service

*Berkeley Fellowship of
Unitarian Universalists*

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BFUU Poetry Service April 11, 2021

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Frances Hillyard

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 prose 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

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 BFUUser.

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

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.

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
rushes 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.