



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

January 2024; Vol 18 No. 1

The Corner Monument

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*



The monument at the corner of Front and Arbor was originally created to celebrate the 125th anniversary of First UU. Stone, Paper, Scissors, with owner Lynn Susholz, did the tile work, with the help of volunteers from the church congregation. Community members contributed words and phrases that are etched into inlaid granite. Over the years, the landscaping has become overgrown and a reimagining of what it could be was needed.

Brennan Hubbell, who's been doing art installations for 35 years, was asked to come up with a design to draw the viewer's eye to the First UU campus. He envisioned a virtual stream, with columns on either side of the stream. The columns are based on the Japanese concept of a torii, a gate that marks the transition from the mundane to the sacred.

The result is a pathway of tiled pavers, with no beginning or end, laid in a streambed. It is not meant to be walked on but to be admired from the sidewalk above it on Arbor St. The columns have circles spilling colorful tiles out to pavers that are covered in those same tiles in a sort of rainbow, in shades of blue, white, green and turquoise. He is also replanting the area with native plants such as ambrosia, white sage, jojoba, red yucca and mountain currant. The streambed will encourage the pooling of water, allowing the plants to flourish.

Brennan studied art at St. Olaf's in Minnesota. He works on commissions, which sometimes includes public art, or at people's homes. He likes conceptual art. This is the first project he has worked on with First UU.



His father, James Hubbell designed and installed the fountain in front of the Meeting House, using members of the congregation to lay the tile in it. It was the first collaborative community project Jim Hubbell had ever attempted and that collaborative spirit became the bedrock of the philosophy for his organization Ilan Lael, combining art, nature, and community.

In the redesign of the landscaping, Brennan is continuing his father's philosophy of using community members to install art. Brennan is training volunteers from his parents' foundation, Ilan Lael, and members of the church, to tile the columns and the pavers. Some of those volunteers are David Sanders, Joyce Howard, Charlene Penner and Charry Palma.

The dedication of the art installation will happen soon. Watch the Window for the announcement.



In this issue:

- Outpouring of Love by Rev. Kristen Kuriga Pg 2
- Looking Forward and Back by Tony Bianca Pg 3
- Jud Caswell at First UU by Nancy Fisk Pg 4
- Paul Lambert, First UU ASL Interpreter by Nancy Fisk Pg 5
- Amending the Church Constitution by Valerie Jaques Pg 6
- The Right Relations Team by Marla English Pg 6

Outpouring of Love

by Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*



Throughout the month of December, I've been moved by the outpouring of love from this community. Love embodied as caring for one another, engaging in service, and acting on our values to help heal the world.

We gathered as a community to honor the life of our Minister Emerita, Rev. Dr. Carolyn Owen-Towle. Hundreds of us in-person and online, including colleagues from around the country, joined together to share memories and to comfort one another as we grieved and celebrated a life dedicated to truth,

beauty, and love. The moment that has stayed with me is singing *Spirit of Life*, all of our voices mingling together in harmony. It felt powerful and healing.

The next day, seven youth went through the rite of passage called Coming of Age. What an honor to be part of this transition in the lives of our young people as they explore who they are, what they believe, and how they want to live in the world. I'm inspired and humbled by the wisdom shared, and the support expressed by their families and our community. Right after the service, the youth helped us dedicate and unveil the first two sections of the beautiful River of Life installation on the Hillcrest Campus, connecting the memorial wall with the fountain and the new memorial garden.

Donations of blankets and toys have been pouring in to be shared at the South Bay Food Pantry for the holidays. The pantry, powered by an estimated 50-60 volunteers each week, continues to serve an increasing number of families in our community. It is the largest justice ministry this church has ever taken on!

We've also been out living our values in the local community. On December 9, we participated in the 30th Annual Posada sin Fronteras at the border wall. This reenactment of the story of Mary and Joseph looking for room at the inn is an act of witness to our broken immigration and asylum system, and a commitment to continue the work for greater justice. On December 10, SOLACE, the Interfaith Detention Center Visitation Program, originally started by the church, was honored with the Digna Ochoa Human Rights Award by the North County Chapter of Amnesty International. SOLACE leaders had the opportunity to share about their experiences with over 200 youth at Rancho Buena Vista High School.

This is just a fraction of the ways we show up for one another and our larger community. The ways that we embody love. I'm going into this New Year with my heart full, ready to pour out more love, and with deep gratitude to be on this journey together.

January Worship Schedule

Hillcrest Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Meeting House, Hillcrest Patio & **Livestream** Worship

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

January's Theme:

"The Gift of Liberating Love"

Throughout the month of January we are exploring the theme of liberating love. What do we mean by love? Why is it at the center of our faith as Unitarian Universalists? In one of our hymns we sing these words by Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker: "There is a love holding us. There is a love holding all that we love. There is a love holding all. We rest in this love." Join us to explore the many forms love can take and the ways that love calls us to work for the liberation of all beings.

Looking Forward and Back

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



As you might know, January is named for the god Janus - a literally-two-faced god of passageways, beginnings and endings. As we start the new year, I'd like to look back on 2023 and forward to 2024 with a special focus on Lifespan Programs.

Also, since we're thinking about a god with two faces, let's celebrate some of the successes and highlight some areas for growth.



One big, celebratory take-away from 2023 has been the success of our multigenerational gatherings like the Halloween Pumpkin Carving and the Tree Decorating Potluck and Sing Along. It was joyful to see so many members of the congregation across all age groups gather together for food, conversation, song, games and fun.

As we enter 2024, I hope to plan more of these types of events. While they do take work and planning, they're relatively easy and fun to host, and I love that they are, essentially, parties without a strict agenda or program. We sometimes underestimate the power of just

hanging out and having fun together. It's the relationships we forge in these social events that become the foundation that supports the deeper, more challenging work that we are called to do as people in a covenantal community. I hope you'll take the opportunity to attend some of these multigenerational events in the future.

That brings me to another take-away from the past year, namely, that I'd like to do a better job of encouraging us all to attend multigenerational events. Whether it's All Church Camp, the Tree Decorating, or our Coming of Age Service, I'm typically inundated with feedback afterwards about how heartwarming and hopeful it was to see members of every generation gathered together in community.

Yet there is also, sometimes, a feeling that "multigenerational" is being perceived as meaning "for kids." These events are certainly planned knowing that young children and youth will be present, but the events are not exclusively intended *only* for families with young children. If you've typically steered clear of multigenerational services and events, I hope you'll consider coming to some in 2024.

Finally, I've been very pleased with how both our Adult and Children's RE Programs have gone in 2023. The Adult RE Zoom Series had over 175 unique individuals attend throughout the year. Our Sunday Programming has been growing as well. In the Spring, I'll be offering the Jubilee Kids anti-racism program and will also be writing my own curriculum, "Myth-UUnderstanding," for the Sunday, 2nd-5th grade group based on Greek Mythology.

It has been a very rewarding 2023 and I look forward to continued learning, joy and community in 2024!

Jud Caswell, Singer-Songwriter at First UU January 27th

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

On Saturday, January 27th, 2024, Jud Caswell, singer-songwriter will lead a songwriting worship from 3 pm - 4:30 pm, and will offer a concert that evening at 7:30 pm.

Maine singer/songwriter Jud Caswell has a keen eye for detail, a head full of far-away, and a heart full of home. In 2006, he burst onto the national scene, winning the legendary Kerrville New Folk competition. His songs have been taught at Berklee, recorded by Judy Collins, and named “#4 Song of the Decade” by New York’s WFUV. Jud left the road to raise a family where his own roots go deep. He draws inspiration from the land like Mary Oliver, pushing gently into the specific until it unfolds into

the universal. He paints his landscapes like Wyeth, with a reverence for humble beauty. And with a voice fresh as water over granite and soft as a pine needle bed, he wields his instruments with the matter-of fact deftness of an old woodsman with an axe.

On Sunday morning, January 28th, Jud will join our music team to lead the music for our worship service. Do join us to hear some beautiful music from one of our own UU musicians.

Jud Caswell is a member of the UU Congregation in Brunswick, Maine (where our own Grace Lewis-McLaren is also a member).

To learn more, here is a link to Jud’s website: <http://judcaswell.com/presskit.php#bio>



Paul Lambert, First UU ASL Interpreter

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Paul Lambert has been our American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter since 1999. He's been interpreting professionally for 31 years.

Paul was raised Catholic. At twelve, he became disillusioned with Catholic dogma and swore off the Church. Nearly a decade later, he attended a commitment ceremony at First UU Church of Columbus (OH), which was his first introduction to UUism. He found the church to be predominantly humanistic and appreciated that a person could be religious without believing in the supernatural. He was a member of First UU Church of Columbus before moving here.

He attended Ohio University, majoring in botany. Later, he decided a degree in ASL-English Interpretation might be a more accessible profession. He tested out of most of the ASL classes because he had been immersed in ASL and Deaf culture for nearly a year. His Deaf boyfriend, his boyfriend's Deaf family, and a membership in the Deaf Club of Columbus provided him multiple signing models to help acquire the language, leaving him to focus on interpreting classes. Before completing his interpreting degree, he met the deputy director of Deaf Community Services of San Diego (DCS). He was offered an interpreting position at DCS and moved to San Diego in October 1995.

He worked for DCS for 4 years, then became a freelance interpreter. He attended First UU shortly after moving here. After leaving DCS, he was approached by another First UU member who was interpreting the service for her Deaf husband. Paul took over interpreting the service from her.

At one time, there were eight signers regularly on

campus. Many were involved with Young Adult Odyssey (YAO). Paul also led an ASL wisdom circle for several years. To make the content more visually accessible he created PowerPoints and displayed them by projector.

In addition to interpreting the Sunday services live, his interpretation is also included in the livestream of each service. Besides interpreting the worship service at First UU, Paul interprets in a variety of settings such as medical appointments, conventions, classes, etc.



Paul sees himself as being there more for hearing people who don't know how to sign than the Deaf people. He points out that the communication burden often falls unfairly on Deaf people when Deaf people communicate with non-signing hearing people.

Paul also believes interpreters are too often centered by other hearing people rather than centering marginalized Deaf people.

Paul has suggestions for those who would like to make socializing at First Church more welcoming to Deaf people:

Rather than expecting Deaf people to speech-read, open a texting window on your phone and share it with the person you are communicating with.

- Be careful when using idiomatic expressions as English is not the first language of most Deaf people and idioms may lead to misunderstandings.
- Gesture or pantomime
- Use pen and paper.

These are just some of the ways we can make First UU more welcoming to the Deaf community.

Amending the Church Constitution

by Valerie Jaques, *Board Vice President*

On Sunday, January 28, 2024, the board will be calling a mid-year congregational meeting. Among the items on the agenda will be two proposed amendments to the church constitution.

At present, our constitution requires a financial audit or review be performed and presented to the congregation on an annual basis. This requirement appears in two places:

- Article III, Section 1, setting out requirements for the annual membership meeting, and
- Article IX, Section 7, which further describes the annual audit or review and how it is presented to the membership.

The Board is proposing to change the requirement from annually to at least every two years.

There are a few reasons we're proposing this change. During the pandemic, there was a year First UU was obliged to skip the audit, and there was no change in the error rate discovered in the next review. There does not appear to be any

particular benefit to conducting these reviews annually, and the finance committee and board feel comfortable with reviews every two years.

This would also save First UU some money, because rather than spending about \$5000 every year, it will be spending about \$6-7000 every two years. Further, it's been clear that having an annual review means the staff, treasurer, and finance committee are always in some stage of preparing for the next review. Having reviews every two years will allow for some breathing room, particularly for the staff.

Some important notes about this change. While reviews would not be required annually, the wording of at least every two years allows for reviews to be conducted more often should a concern arise. The financial review will cover two years rather than one, so all financial records will be reviewed.

Questions? Comments? Join me, Valerie Jaques, at the next *Board Chat via Zoom* on Sunday, January 7, at 12:30 pm for more details.

An Update from The Right Relations Team

by Marla English

As we start this new year, the Right Relations Team continues its work to help our congregation build the skills it needs to address both the difficulty and the opportunity that conflict brings to our church. We have just completed a congregational survey with results published in the last edition of the Window and on the Right Relations webpage at www.firstuusandiego.org/right-relations.html

Thank you to all who participated. Don't worry,

there will be other opportunities to share your thoughts throughout the year. The Right Relations team learned a lot from this tool about where First UU is strong and where we need to grow. We will be offering an update on the survey as well as future steps for this important work at the upcoming January 28 congregational meeting.

Please put this important meeting on your calendar now.



2024

-JANUARY-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

-FEBRUARY-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

-MARCH-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

-APRIL-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

-MAY-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

-JUNE-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

-JULY-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

-AUGUST-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

-SEPTEMBER-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

-OCTOBER-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

-NOVEMBER-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



-DECEMBER-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Staff
 Rev. Justine Sullivan, Lead Minister
 Rev. Kristen Kuriga, Assistant Minister
 Swamini Adityananda Saraswati, Intern Minister
 Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Löne Broussard, Affiliate Ministers
 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey, Rev. Julie Forest and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Tony Bianca, Director of Lifespan Faith Formation
 Marshall Voit, Music Director
 Rose Littler-Riedel, Communications Coordinator & Chaplain Intern
 Lara Anderson, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator
 Kate Collier, Program Assistant
 Jazmine Ramanathan, Administrative Assistant
 Corina Macias, South Bay Ministry Assistant
 Pam Bates, Scheduler
 Andrea Spiero, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
 Tomás Acosta, Collaborative Pianist
 Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
 Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Minister Emeritus

Board of Trustees FY 22-23
 Everardo Aguilar, President
 Valerie Jaques, Vice President
 Sue Marberry, Treasurer
 Karen Lamphere, Secretary
 Leland Beck, Rosalba Ciampi, Steve Howard, Gay Hybertsen and Paula Johnson —Trustees

ONLINE email & Web Addresses
 First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk:
nfisk1@juno.com
 To be added to the E-mail List:
firstwords@firstuusandiego.org
 Scheduling of Church Property Requests:
schedule@firstuusandiego.org
 The Window submissions (Church bulletin):
[window@firstuusandiego.org](mailto>window@firstuusandiego.org)
 Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
 First Church Web Sites:
 Main Website: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org>
 South Bay Campus:
<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/south-bay-campus.html>
 To view sermon video casts, click on these
 YouTube or Vimeo buttons: 
 Giving: <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving.html>
 Click on these Amazon Affiliate or iGive buttons for your online shopping and First Church receives a portion of the sales. Secure and private.



First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

4190 Front Street (GPS use 298 W Arbor Drive)
San Diego, CA 92103-2098

Phone: 619-298-9978
E-mail: mail@firstuusandiego.org

POSTMASTER:
 Send address changes to:
 First Words, 4190 Front Street,
 San Diego, CA 92103