



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

February 2024; Vol 18 No. 2

Rosalba Ciampi, Board Member at Large

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Rosalba Ciampi has been a member of First UU since 2017. She came here from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where she belonged to the UU Fellowship of Falmouth. She began raising her children there and was asked to be on the Board of the Fellowship right before she left for San Diego. When asked to be a Board member at First UU three years ago, she agreed immediately.

Her family moved to San Diego when Rosalba's partner, Fiamma Straneo, became a scientist at Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Fiamma is now a full professor of Oceanography at UCSD.

Rosalba taught Greek and Latin at an academy in Massachusetts. In San Diego, she became a non-student tutor at UCSD. She and Fiamma have two children, Yanni, 18, a senior in high school, and Kea, 14, who is about to enter high school.

Rosalba first came to Unitarian Universalism when a cousin told her to check it out, because they felt Rosalba's values and UU values were aligned. She came to an alternative gifts market in November of that year and the UU Fellowship was part of that market. She liked the community and decided to join the Fellowship. Rev. Bob Murphy was her minister there.

When the family first moved here, Rosalba checked out where First UU was located, because she knew she wanted to live near it. Since then, she's become involved in the Parent's Lounge and is the Board liaison to Journey Towards Wholeness (JTW), our anti-racism committee.

As a Board Member at Large, Rosalba says our most pressing issue is whether the congregation should stay

on or leave the current property. She points out that at some point, the buildings of the UCSD Medical Center will surround us, leaving the congregation to decide if we want that as part of our identity. She feels we need to talk to people outside of the congregation to get a true picture of how this will look when the hospital is done.



Rosalba will be leaving the Board in June 2024, after a three-year term. She wants to continue being active in the UUA's Green Sanctuary issues, which considers the environmental effects of climate change in our world (uua.greensanctuary@uua.org). She believes racial and climate justice issues are interconnected and will be active in both. She will rotate off the leadership of JTW but will stay involved in the Racialized Identities Awareness Book Club.

She appreciates that UUs are a community of learners at heart. She also believes we need to be more willing to face conflict even though it's uncomfortable. As a congregation we need to gain conflict resolution skills, to talk to people with whom we may not always agree. We need to be comfortable with our truth and let other people speak their truth. The key is to communicate, communicate, communicate.

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The 150th Anniversary year in Review

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



2023 marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of this congregation. We celebrated that anniversary with several important events. The year was bookended by visits from two UUA presidents. Outgoing president Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray preached in November 2022, and this past November, current UUA president Rev. Sofia Betancourt was in our pulpit. It's not every congregation that gets an in-person visit from the UUA president, but this congregation holds an important place in the Unitarian Universalist community. It's good to be

reminded of that.

Here in San Diego, the work of growing the Beloved Community is central to our identity: welcoming the LGBTQ communities, leading efforts to combat racism, working for justice at the border—all while also attending to daily congregational life. Have we always done all this perfectly? No, that's not possible, nor is it a realistic expectation.

But it's important for us to keep reflecting, revising, repairing, and moving forward together. Our mission statement for the 150th celebration year was Remember, Reflect, Realize/Recordar, Reflexionar, Realizar. These three steps continue to guide our work in this developmental time: Remembering who we've been, Reflecting on what we've learned, and deciding together how we'll move forward to Realize our dreams.

Over the next few months, we'll engage the question of how we can continue to have a vital ministry that is financially sustainable in this place. Your staff team and I are assessing our campuses to see what repairs and maintenance are needed in the coming years. We need to ensure we've the resources to care for our buildings and grounds well into the future. We're also in close communication with the hospital to make sure we're following the progress of their construction project and to see how our own plans align with what the hospital's doing.

In addition to questions of financial sustainability, we'll also have conversations about our covenant—the promises we make about how we'll be together, how we'll engage conflict, and how we'll invite each other back into covenant when trust is broken or strained. The Right Relationship Team has been meeting to review our guidelines for engaging conflict and will be working with Reverend Kristen and me to help strengthen our skills and comfort in this area.

After worship on Sunday January 21, about 40 of us gathered for a "Dining for Dollar\$" event in Bard Hall. We broke bread together, sang some favorite songs, and then folks got up out of their chairs and began to dance—young, old and together, dancing in pairs, trios and groups—dancing for the joy of being together.

Let's do more of that. I'm convinced the isolation of the shutdown-time of the pandemic made everything worse, made every conflict seem more intractable, every problem more overwhelming. But we're back now, together, facing our future. Like the story I shared recently in worship of the late Congressman John Lewis joining hands with 14 of his young cousins to keep their house from blowing away in the wind, we can weather the storms of change and loss if we hold each other close and work toward our common purpose of helping to heal our aching world.

I remain grateful to be here with you, serving as your minister in this developmental time.

Peace and Love to you,

Justine

February Worship Schedule

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

February's Theme:

"The Gift of Justice & Equity"

Throughout the month of February we are exploring the spiritual theme of justice and equity. How are we called to respond to injustice as Unitarian Universalists? What do we dream that we want to make reality? And what sustains us in this work? Join us for a month of exploring the spiritual grounding of our work for justice and equity, the connection between joy and resistance, and how we can live into our church's mission to "act on our values to help heal the world."

Gather Round With Us at Camp!

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



As hard as it is to believe, it's that time already! "What time?" you might ask. Great question! Glad you asked! It's time to register for All Church Camp! This year, Camp will take place from Friday, May 31st through Sunday, June 2nd at Camp de Benneville Pines and I hope you can join us!

Last year, those who attended talked so highly about their experience, all our ministers have decided to attend this year! We've also expanded our efforts to build community across the region and are excited to announce that, in addition to First UU and Chalice UU Congregation, we've been in contact with Summit UU about participating and hope to include members of other regional congregations as well.

For those who haven't been to camp before, I can't say enough about the experience—there's something for everyone. For those who like their calendar full, we offer a substantial schedule of programs including art, music, archery, a variety show, meditation, hiking, swimming, games, poetry, and a host of other workshops led by our staff and volunteers. If you prefer to have more unstructured

time, you're also welcome to simply chat on the deck, rest in the gazebo, or even hang out in the hot tub. And, of course, there's always plenty of good food to share!

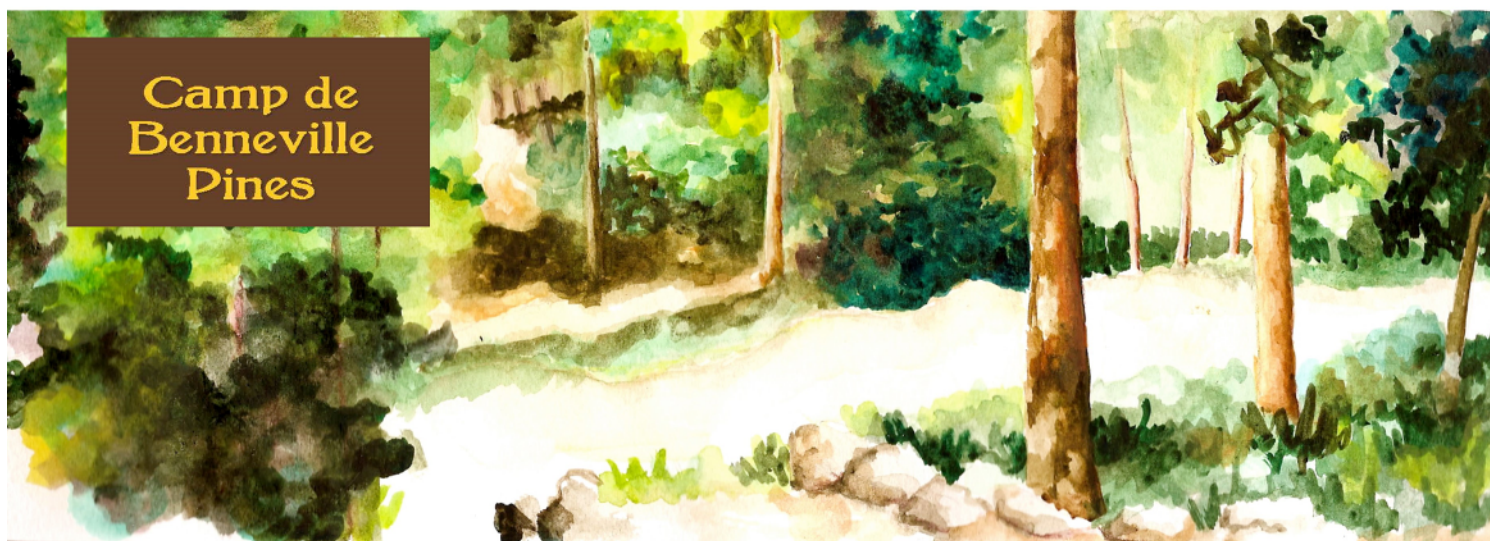
Our theme this year is "Gather Round" and, for me, it really captures where I see a lot of positive energy building in our congregation lately. Whether it's been at our Halloween Party, our Tree Decorating Potluck & Sing Along, our Christmas Day Potluck, or our Staff Spaghetti & Sing Along Party, I've been struck by how much fun people have when we simply gather together in community.

I say "simply" gather, but I think gathering may be one of the most important things we do. It's not by accident that "Create Community" gets first billing in our congregation's Mission Statement. Community is the foundation of what we do, the container in which we do it, and an end result of our having done it. It's our Alpha and Omega, the Love at our center.

If you'd like to know more about All Church Camp, I'm available by emails or in person, and you can read more about it as well as you register on the Camp page of our website:

www.firstuusandiego.org/all-church-camp.html

I hope to see you in May as we Gather Round at All Church Camp!



Interfaith Shelter Returns to First UU

by Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*



INTERFAITH SHELTER NETWORK

This winter our congregation will host the Interfaith Shelter for the first time in four years. From March 10-24, 2024, we'll provide shelter and meals for up to twelve guests. The guests, which can include adults and children, are screened by a case manager and will be supported throughout their time in the program to achieve their goals around employment and housing.

For these two weeks in March, the Common Room, Room 113, and Room 114a on the Hillcrest Campus will be our guests' temporary home. To run the shelter, it can take as many as 80-100 volunteers. Volunteers provide potluck evening meals, serve as greeters and overnight hosts, and can help with a variety of small projects, including coordinating bedding, organizing laundry, shopping for food and supplies, and helping with set-up and clean-up of the shelter.

We'd also love to have daytime volunteers for shifts on weekend days. During the week, guests leave the shelter by 7:30 am and return at 5:30 pm. If we have enough volunteers to cover daytime shifts on the weekend, this will allow our guests time to rest and relax on Saturdays and Sundays.

Hosting the shelter is one important way that we as a congregation live our values. We hope you will consider how you can be part of this important program. One fun way to take part is to offer a meal with your family or a small group like a wisdom circle. It's a wonderful way to be of service and deepen your relationship to one another.

Sign-ups are going on now at both campuses. If you want to know more, you can check out our [**frequently asked questions sheet**](#).

Not able to volunteer but want to contribute? We are collecting toiletries and bedding which you can donate at bins on either campus. We can also use monetary donations, which help us buy food for breakfast and lunch, as well as supplies.

Thank you for being a congregation that is passionate about living our mission to "create community, nurture spiritual growth, and act on our values to help heal the world." We look forward to making this rotation of the shelter a success by working together.

TAMARA HASKIN

Soprano



"Transformation"

In a compilation of unique 21st century songs by American composers, international opera singer Tamara Haskin takes you on an inspiring musical journey from darkness to light, sorrow to happiness, death to life and earth to heaven. Songs by Ricky Ian Gordon, Richard Taylor, Judy Collins, Adam Guettel and others, will rejuvenate in you a new appreciation for the beauty of life.

7:30 pm Saturday, February 24th 2024



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Growth Fund

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298 W Arbor Street San Diego, CA 92103
Free accessible parking in our lot 

Admission is free with registration.
Sign up online at

FirstUUSanDiego.org

Author Susan Straight at First UU on March 16th

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Author Susan Straight will be coming to First UU on Saturday, March 16th. She'll be discussing her most recent novel *Mecca*, published March 2022 and released in paperback March 2023. *Mecca* is a stunning epic tracing the intertwined lives of native Californians fighting for life and land.

In *Mecca*, Susan Straight crafts an unforgettable American epic, examining race, history, family, and destiny through the interlocking stories of a group of native Californians all gasping for air. With sensitivity, furor, and a cinematic scope that captures California in all its injustice, history, and glory, she tells a story of the American West through the eyes of the people who built it—and continue to sustain it. As the stakes get higher and the intertwined characters in *Mecca* slam against barrier after barrier, they find that when push comes to shove, it's always better to push back.

Susan was born in Riverside, California in 1960, and still lives there with her family. She is a Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, where she has taught since 1988.

In 2021, she was named Woman of the Year for the 61st Assembly District, by Assemblyman Jose Medina, for her

thirty years of writing stories of African-American, Mexican-American, Asian-American, and immigrant life in southern California, bringing little-known histories, especially of women, into American books, museums, magazines, and libraries.

In 2014, Straight received the Kirsch Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. In 2011, she received the Gina Berriault Award for Fiction from San Francisco State University. In 2007, Straight received The Lannan Prize for Fiction, for her body of work. In 1998, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for Fiction.

She has published hundreds of essays and articles in numerous magazines and journals, including *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *O Magazine*, *Salon*, *Harpers*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Believer*, *Orion*, and *The Sun*.

Her novels and stories have been translated into French, Italian, German, Polish, Arabic, Russian, Turkish, Japanese, and Spanish.

We look forward to a lively conversation with Susan in March.



Susan Straight Author Talk

Saturday, March 16th 2024
7:30-9pm
First UU Church of San Diego

"A wide and deep view of a dynamic, multiethnic Southern California . . . Susan Straight is an essential voice in American writing and in writing of the West." —The New York Times...

On-site book sales by:
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Admission is free with registration.
 Sign up online at
FirstUUSanDiego.org

First UU Year In Review Pictorial



Staff D4\$ Event



Rev. Sofia's Visit



Halloween Party



South Bay Quiceanera



New Member Blessing



South Bay Tamalada



PRIDE



General Assembly

WITH MUCH APPRECIATION FROM THE
UUA ANNUAL PROGRAM FUND
2023 APF LEADERSHIP CONGREGATION
CELEBRATION, PITTSBURGH, PA.



Thanksgiving Potluck



Christmas Day Potuck



Holiday Sing Along





Staff D4\$ Event

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 Rev. Kristen Kuriga, Assistant Minister
 Swamini Adityananda Saraswati, Intern Minister
 Rev. Löne Broussard, Affiliate Minister
 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Everett Howe, 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

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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>
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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