



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

April 2022; Vol 16 No. 4

Life at First UU Without a Lead Minister

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor* with Robie Evans, *Director of Operations*

Our system of governing policies at First UU requires we have a Lead Minister at the helm, making decisions. In the past, the Lead Minister has had the support of the Associate or Assistant Minister, the Director of Operations, and a Lay Leader. This group of people is known as the Executive Team. Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube started the team in 2010, when he was our Lead Minister, to assist him with personnel matters.

In 2021, both Rev. Kathleen Owens and Rev. Tania Márquez resigned their positions at First UU. In the absence of a Lead or an Assistant Minister, First UU entered into an interim period, which—according to a succession policy found in the Staff Limitations of our policy governance—required that an Interim Committee (Exec) be formed. The Interim Committee (Exec) includes the President of the Board (Julie Forest), the Vice President (Cora Pendergast), the Director of Operations (Robie Evans), and the Lay Leader from the Executive Team (Dave Hunt).

After being formed, the policy states, “the Interim Committee shall immediately contact the UUA’s Transitions Department to pursue an interim Lead Minister search. The Interim Committee shall be separate from a Ministerial Search Committee and shall serve only until an interim Lead Minister is hired upon approval of the Board of Trustees. Until such hiring, the Interim Committee may hire additional staff if necessary to ensure compliance with Governance Policies and to assist in pulpit and pastoral care responsibilities. The Interim Committee shall report and be accountable to the Church Board of Trustees.”

We weren’t able to hire an interim Lead minister to be with us this year. The Interim Committee (Exec) has performed the duties that would normally fall to a Lead Minister. Here’s a list of what they’ve accomplished this year, many along with our Board of Trustees:

- Hired Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt in September as a contract Assistant Minister for the next two years.
- Hired a series of Ministers in Residence to lead services, provide pastoral care, and support the Board of Trustees.
- Contracted with Unfolding Peace, (Rev. Deanna Vandiver and Rev. Denise Graves) to lead a restorative process and begin a re-covenanting process, starting with Listening Circles.
- Encouraged the food pantry to become their own affiliate organization, per the First UU’s Constitution.
- Helped the pantry find their own space, and move out of the South Bay meeting space, so that worship services may resume there in the future.
- Helped to administer the Renewal and Growth Fund, an anonymous gift provided to First UU for various designated congregational needs over the next five years, such as the technology for the livestream service.
- Worked with the Reopening Team on resuming activities on campus.
- Been the linkage for all communications for these decisions, via e-blasts, First Words, and the Window.

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Preparing to Be Together Again

by Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*



“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” While days grow longer here in San Diego, I’ve noticed a shift in the work of our community at First UU and I can’t help but think there’s a relationship between the stuff of sunbeams and the energy of gathering and recommitting to the mission and values we share.

Perhaps for the first time in almost two years, there are conversations being had about the important ways we can rekindle our relationships, re-envision our spaces, and renew what it means to be a part of a community that covenants to be together in the Sacred.

In March, our community sang together for the first time in two years. Our voices united from the Hillcrest patio with those who watched from locations spanning the region. Other important changes have taken place—the volunteers of the Food Pantry have successfully shifted their work into a new space, and plans are under way to create opportunities for the South Bay community to gather in person. The staff of both campuses are working hard to make our spaces ready with the hopes we can begin meeting in person, safely, again soon. Rev. Kathleen McTigue finished her tenure here, and we welcome Rev. Suzelle Lynch with excitement for the gifts she’ll bring as she ministers to us until June.

As we already turn towards summer and fall plans, we think ahead to celebrations next year for this church’s 150th birthday. A committed group of former and current ministers, staff, and lay leaders has already begun to plan for a year of festivities. “To everything there is a season.” The next year will bring many changes, including a new Lead Minister, and we’ll join as a community in celebrating the past, acknowledging the complexities of our legacy, and moving towards a bold future of growth and renewal together.

May the sunbeams of this spring bring healing to our hearts so we may turn to the hard and infinitely beautiful work of being together again.

Assistant Minister

April Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Hillcrest Patio & Livestream Worship:
Sunday, 9:30 am - (ASL Interpretation)

RSVP to Attend In-Person Worship

Watch Worship **Online**

April's Transformational Theme is: "Stories of Who We Are"

April 3, 2022

"Independent or In(ter)dependent?"

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

April 10, 2022

"The Stories We Come From"

Rev. Suzelle Lynch, *Minister in Residence*

April 17, 2022

"Easter Awe and Wonder"

Rev. Suzelle Lynch, *Minister in Residence*

April 24, 2022

"Earth Day Climate Justice"

The Next Chapter of Our Story

by Tony Bianca, *Program Director*



As we enter April, I'm mindful of the many spring holidays that celebrate new life and new beginnings. I'm also reflecting on our April theme, "Stories of Who We Are," and wondering what the next chapter of our story is going to be like. We're in a time of the year when we, your Program Staff, would normally be wrapping things up and looking toward the slower,

low-key days of summer—those months when there's less going on and more people away on vacation. But, this year, who knows?

Things have been shut down for so long, it feels somehow wrong to start winding down just as we're gearing up. So, at the risk of interfering with your summer plans, I'd like to ask you to consider committing some time to help with our Lifespan Programs. Here are some areas where we could use your help:

Sunday RE: We need two adults in each RE group on Sundays during service. If you can read, manage craft supplies, and relate well with children, you're qualified. We do all the planning and prep so you can just show up on Sunday and take it from there. And there's always another adult with you to help.

All Church Camp: Honestly, the most helpful thing you can do is sign up to attend camp this year. Information and registration can be found here: www.firstuusandiego.org/all-church-camp.html

If you're going and want to lead a workshop, activity, meditation group—any activity, really—you can say so on your registration form. Can't make it this year? We could really use donations to help offer scholarships to those who want to go but can't afford it. You can make those donations by check or by using the registration form on the page linked above.

Adult RE: We could use individuals who would be willing to offer an Adult RE class, workshop, spiritual practice group, etc. Have a special talent or area of expertise that you think might be interesting to others? I'd like to talk to you.

OWL, Youth & Young Adult Programming: These program areas have been dormant for a while for

various reasons. We're working on a plan to get them up and running again ASAP. In the meantime, if you've been involved with them previously (trained OWL facilitators, Youth Group Advisors, members of the Young Adult Group, etc.), I'd like to talk to you, too. I'd love to have your input and help as we write the next chapter of the story of these program areas.

If you're available to help in any of these ways, please email me at tony@firstuusandiego.org. And, if you have other ideas about our programs—email me later. Right now, we need a cast of characters for this chapter of our story before we brainstorm ideas for our next chapter's plot. (Have I stretched that metaphor to its limit yet?) I hope you'll join me in this vital work.

Life at First UU Without a Lead Minister

Continued

On top of all this they've:

- Dealt with all personnel matters.
- Overseen the negotiations effort with UCSD about an easement agreement issue.
- Changed the pledge drive from year-round back to an annual event.
- Approved the purchase of devices that will make multiplatform meetings with Zoom easier for members whether they're in person or wish to attend from home.

When the Developmental Minister is hired this spring to begin work in August, that person will become the Lead Minister and then this committee may go back to its original configuration of Lead Minister, Assistant Minister, Executive Director of Operations, and a Lay Leader, depending on the wishes of the new Lead Minister. Our new minister will take some time to get to know us, then will make their own decisions about how to best work with the congregation.

The Interim Committee (Exec) is a highly confidential group. They can't always talk about their decisions until the time is appropriate for letting the congregation know what is happening next. But they've worked to be as transparent as possible. We owe them our thanks for keeping First UU operational during the pandemic and beyond.

Join the San Diego Cluster Reading of the Widening the Circle of Concern Report

Hosted by the 8th Principle Collaboration Group of San Diego

What is the 8th Principle Collaboration Group of San Diego?

Our group formed in 2021 as part of the work San Diego UU congregations are doing to implement or adopt the 8th Principle. The following congregations are presently part of this group: Chalice in Escondido; Palomar in Vista; San Dieguito in Solana Beach; Summit in Santee; First UU's two campuses in Hillcrest. We collaborate to share ideas and resources; we celebrate being able to do the work of the 8th Principle in community. We usually meet monthly and welcome new members. Use the google form bit.ly/3CXmdHb join our mailing list.

What is Widening the Circle of Concern?

Widening the Circle of Concern: Report of the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) COIC (Commission on Institutional Change) is the final work of the Commission, presented in June 2020. This book “represents the culmination of the Commission’s work analyzing structural and systemic racism and white supremacy culture within Unitarian Universalism and makes recommendations to advance long-term cultural and institutional change that redeems the essential promise and ideals of Unitarian Universalism.” Read more about the Commission on Institutional Change here.

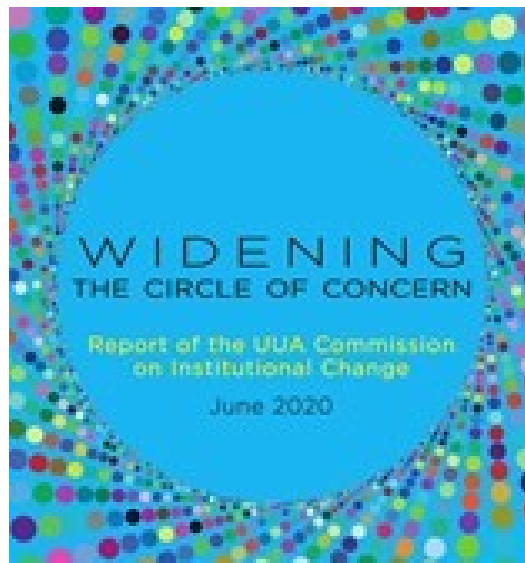
An Invitation from the 8th Principle Collaboration Group of San Diego

The 8th Principle Collaboration Group of San Diego invites you to join us in beginning a study of Widening the Circle of Concern. The first three sessions of our group will meet virtually this spring from 10 am-11:30am on Saturday mornings: April 30, May 21, and June 11. We’ve found these discussions to be enriching and fulfilling work and hope to share that joy among our congregations. This work is an affirming

way to celebrate the adoption and implementation of the 8th Principle. These sessions will be informal and open to all San Diego UUs. We’ll all read one chapter from the book prior to that month’s discussion. We hope you’ll return each month, but joining for a topic that particularly interests you would work as well. The book is available for free online, including in audio format, and is also available for purchase as a printed book or kindle book (links below).

- April 30: Getting Started: Preface - Trends
- May 21: Theology
- June 11: Governance

If you’re interested, please sign-up here: <https://bit.ly/3CXmdHb>



[Read or listen online](#) (free)

[Download the pdf](#) (free)

[Purchase the paperback book](#)

[Purchase the kindle edition](#)

If you would like to purchase the Report and need help with the cost, First UU’s JTW (Journey Toward Wholeness) will help cover it.

Our Next Minister in Residence

by Rev. Suzelle Lynch, *Minister in Residence*

Dear First Unitarian Universalist San Diego friends,
Hello from Janesville, Wisconsin! I look forward to meeting you on Sunday, April 3, when I'll be with you for the first time. I hope you'll come to the Hillcrest campus that day.

My partner, Tom Ness, and I will arrive on April 2. We're driving across the country, and then he'll fly back home. But I should tell you, because I have family in your fair city, I've visited you before. I also had the pleasure of meeting your excellent Board via zoom. I was impressed with their respect and caring and good conversations!

I've also walked your labyrinth in the past . . . Walking labyrinths has been my spiritual practice for many years; I've led labyrinth workshops as well. May 7 is World Labyrinth Day—perhaps you'd like to help me create a joyful, meditative event?

It's an honor to be your final Minister in Residence during what has been a challenging year for you. You've suffered the loss of two beloved ministers, and other stresses on top of the uncertainty, struggle, and hardship of the COVID-19 pandemic. I bring you my understanding of how hard the pandemic has been, and a heart that longs to listen and learn how the journey has been for you. I also hope to bring some lift for your spirits through worship and small-group gatherings.

Spring is a season of holidays sacred to people of different faiths around the world. I marked Ostara/Spring Equinox with my college-senior son this past weekend, and look forward to spending Easter, Passover, and Beltane/May Day with you. What I love most about these holidays is that they're touchstones along the year and markers of the sacred along the arc of our human, temporal lives.

At this time last year, my partner and I traveled to a lake 60 miles north to see a flock of Common Loons who nest and breed there. Loons are strange and ancient birds who return with their mates to the same lakes each spring. It was thrilling to see



them fishing and preening, and calling with their wild, haunting voices.

The loons' return reminded me of the way in which returning helps us with emotional and spiritual development. Returning to cherished places, holidays, or practices helps us grow and heal. As we cycle around to a sacred event, we touch life's powerful questions, its hurts and joys with a deeper touch each time. Passover, for example, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the transition from slavery to freedom, may deepen a person's religious identity, but also their commitment to justice work. For me, the Spring Equinox brings me closer each year to the sacred earth to which I will return. And my engagement with Easter brings the joy of new human perspectives each year on its metaphor of eternal life rising from stone cold death. It will be good to journey and celebrate with you.

Blessings to you,

Rev. Suzelle Lynch

UU Seniors and the Homestretch

by Marv Pulliam and Joan Helland

A few years ago, Rev. Jim Grant started a program for First UU seniors and entitled it "The Homestretch." This was in reference to an excellent book written by Rev. Tom Owen-Towle. Recently, the Homestretch Coordination Committee has changed the name of the program to UU Seniors. Over the few years the program has been active, we've observed that the name "Homestretch" puts the focus on the end of life and suggests one's preparation for the inevitable.

The name change makes it clear this is a program focusing on the wide range of issues that affect seniors. With this change, we hope to attract folks who are seniors but may not perceive themselves as being in the "homestretch!" Our objective is to continue to offer programs and meetings of interest to the many seniors of the Church.

On the third Saturday of each month, everyone—including non-seniors—is invited to join us in these presentations and the discussions that follow. Currently, the meetings are conducted using Zoom.

Some examples of past programs:

- How to Be a Friend to Someone with Dementia
- Wills and Trusts
- Using Technology (Smart Phones, Computers)
- Healthy Eating Shortcuts
- Resilience during COVID, and
- What is the Church of the Future?

As part of UU Seniors, Grace Lewis-McLaren has been leading groups who want to learn to ride the Trolley. She does it to save the environment and to help people who might be intimidated by public transportation to have some support as they navigate the trolley system. She will be in San Diego through April for all who are interested. You can contact her at 6mainer6@gmail.com to ask about the next Trolley day.

Our March 19 program, Conversation with the Board President, is available at <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/uu-seniors.html>. The speakers were Board President, Rev. Julie Forest, and Board Vice President, Cora Pendergast. Anyone with additional First UU-related questions is encouraged to contact Jenner Daelyn at jenner@firstuusandiego.org who will work on getting them answered.

Finally, our upcoming program, an Art Conversation with John Keasler will be held on Saturday, April 16th. John Keasler, Chair of First UU Bard Hall Art Guild, will lead a discussion of the value of art in our lives and how we all can be more involved in art. The information for joining the Zoom call is in the Window and on our web page.

We're considering future programs such as Housing Options for Seniors and more programs on technology, to name a few. Again, everyone is welcome to attend any of these programs, including non-seniors. To be included on the email list for these programs, contact Marv Pulliam at pulliamm@mac.com.



Play a Part in First UU's Future: Consider Running for the Board

by Marcia Biller, Nominating Committee Member

When I asked Julie Forest why she's enjoyed being on the board, she answered with this quote from Angeles Arrien: "If you've ever seen a flock of geese flying overhead, you've probably noticed their unique "V" formation. It turns out the inherent nature of geese in flight has a lot to teach us about leadership, connection, and teamwork. Here are five ways geese teach us how to show up, share vulnerability, take the lead, and care for ourselves and each other at work:

Fact #1: *As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying together in one "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% more momentum than if each bird flew alone.*

Lesson: There's power in unity when a group of people is working toward a shared goal. Great teams recognize and leverage the strengths of each individual, which enables them to accomplish much more than if they were working alone.

Fact #2: *When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly recognizes this and moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.*

Lesson: When one team member is struggling and not showing up as a team player, there's a real risk of morale and productivity issues for the whole team. Quickly address your concerns by inviting your team member into a collaborative dialogue and revisiting the teams' vision, values and goals. Explain how they contribute and why their role matters to the rest of the team. Find new opportunities to re-engage them.

Fact #3: *When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies into the leadership point position.*

Lesson: It builds trust and confidence when team members take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. Like geese, a team is interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique talents. By sharing responsibility and accountability, we develop stronger, more connected teams.

Fact #4: *Geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed (this is my favorite geese fact!).*

Lesson: When's the last time you gave a shout-out or "honk" to your team? In teams where there is consistent encouragement and recognition, productivity is much greater. The power of encouragement, i.e. to give someone support, confidence, or hope, is the quality of "honking" that creates the culture of connection every team desires.

Fact #5: *When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to support, assist and protect. They stay until the goose dies or can fly again. Then, they launch a new formation or catch up with the flock.*

Lesson: The very best teams mirror the instinctive behaviors of geese and stand by each other in difficult times, looking out for one another and caring deeply about each other's well-being."

Before I retired, I was a very committed choir member, and served on a few short-term committees. When I retired, I decided I was now able to do more for our UU community. I was nervous about taking on being a board member, because there was certainly a learning curve. However, major transitions were happening and I wanted to help ensure they went smoothly. As a member of the board, I felt part of a committed team. We did some really good work and communicated well with our community. I felt like I made a difference.

Again, we're at a pivotal transition in our community. Please consider being a key part of a wonderful team, working to ensure our growth at First UU, and possibly our future survival as a congregation. We need you! Please speak to any of us on the Nominating Committee and explore your potential contribution. Thank you for considering this service opportunity.

Nominating Committee members: Christy Anderson, Marcia Biller, Adrienne Kaplan, Mindy Hochgesang, Mitch Mitchell

Email: nomcom@firstuusandiego.org

Staff

Rev. Suzelle Lynch, Minister in Residence
Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, Assistant Minister
Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Løne 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
Rose Riedel, Office Manager and Scheduler
Tony Bianca, Program Director
Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator & Congregational Assistant for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Kate Collier, Program Assistant
Marshall Voit, Music Director
Chase Pado, Pianist
Lorelei Garner, South Bay Music Coordinator
Andrea N-L, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper
Ray Evans, Maintenance
Joshua Morrison, Janitor
Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
Revs. Dr. Carolyn and Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti

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Giving: <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving.html>.

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