



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

September 2023; Vol 17 No. 7

Right Relations Team: Connecting More Deeply

by The Right Relations Team

“We want to rebuild and deepen trust” said Rev. Justine in her June year-end message.

We’ve important work to do as a congregation, and we want to grow as individuals in the process. We want our heartfulness, our kindness, our commitment to one another, and our values to show up in all our interactions. Most of all, the Right Relations Team would love for all of us to feel great about being part of First UU.

Purpose: Relationships

How do we want to be with one another? We believe the answer is about connecting more deeply, listening non-defensively, being more loving. Perhaps we could each reach out to one person a week who is new, or alone, or is simply someone we have not met.

We aspire to be a congregation accepting of those who are different from us, extending grace to one another, and giving others the benefit of the doubt. We want to learn new skills and create processes that will allow conflicts to transform us, rather than debilitate us.

How do we make that happen?

The Right Relations Team was formed by Rev. Justine to take up this challenge. The members are: Marla English, Brandon Hall, Bill James, Dan Paul, and Rev. Justine Sullivan. We were voted in by you, members of the congregation, which means you have placed your trust in us. Thank you. We will do our very best—because each of us, like you—love this church, love our shared values, and love the people.

Transparency.

We’ll be transparent in sharing our thinking and our plans—before making any decisions. We promise to keep you informed. We want your ideas and will ask for your feedback at each step. (See link at the end of this article.) The African proverb comes to mind: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.

These periodic articles in First Words will serve as an ongoing journal about our work-in-progress.

First Thoughts about Goals

These are the ideas we listed at our first meeting. Please give us your opinion, and help influence our direction.

- Agree on a vision statement (as a congregation) of how we want to be with one another, and how we aspire to “show up” as a congregation.
- Incorporate our UU Principles, our Church Covenant, and our values into this work.
- Learn from the past. Draw lessons from the Listening Circle findings and from exit interviews.
- Provide training around managing the tensions that are inevitable when congregations grow and change.
- Model and coach creative conflict for our church community.
- Offer tools and skills that can help improve relationships at church (and at home).
- Revisit the existing Conflict Resolution Guidelines and make them available to all.
- When conflicts occur, create brave spaces where people can move from defensiveness to understanding. If conflict becomes more heated, offer opportunities for deep listening and a restorative process. Utilize the guidance of the ministers and the Board when appropriate.
- Create new listening opportunities to stay abreast of concerns.
- Create a measurement tool to determine a baseline on these issues now, and assess progress yearly.

We want this to be a collaboration! We all have a big stake in this. Please add your comments here:

<https://form.jotform.com/232345656226154>.

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Welcome

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging.

Since love prevails in heav'n and earth,
how can I keep from singing!

Welcome and welcome back, dear ones! I'm excited to begin my second year with you, and I hope you all had some restorative time this summer. Dale, our dog, Callie, and I took a road trip up the coast. We spent time with a cousin of Dale's and saw some beautiful old trees and stunning coastal views. I enjoyed driving on the winding roads—what a beautiful part of the country we live in.

I'm sorry we cancelled worship on August 20th because of the predicted hurricane, not something I thought I'd ever say while living in San Diego. The storm was less severe than predicted, but we made the right call to keep us all safe from harm. We'll reschedule that service, developed by members Rosalba Ciampi, Maggie Marshall, and musician Andrea Spiero, as soon as we can.

A big thank you to Ray Evans for all the work he did this past spring to improve drainage around the administrative building; even with all that rain, our building stayed dry. Ray also arranged for all the metal work around campus to get sanded and painted this summer. Many hundreds of feet of fences, gates, and doors – all rust free and freshly painted. It makes me downright giddy to see it all looking so shiny and smooth.

Over these summer months we've experienced many deaths in this community, and I've been deeply moved by the way you care for one another in this time of grief. Please know that Rev. Kristen and I are here for you as well, along with the dedicated members of our lay ministry team.

And what a joy it is to welcome Rev. Kristen Kuriga to our team! We've had some wonderful conversations. She's jumping right into life here on both campuses. Welcome also to Kristen's husband, Josh, and their child Lucas.

Welcome back to Robie Evans, our Director of Operations, returned from her 6-week sabbatical, relaxed and ready to start the new church year. Big thanks to all who covered in Robie's absence, including our Administrative Assistant Jazmine Ramanathan; Membership Development and Communications Coordinator, Rose Littler-Riedel; Facilities Manager Ray Evans; and many others who stepped up to help.

I'll be meeting with the board and other leaders to plan our second year together. In particular, I'll work with the Right Relations Team to update our Covenant of Right Relations, our process for engaging conflict, and to offer opportunities for skills development. Rev. Kristen and I'll be working with groups across the congregation with a focus on moving forward together. Our ministerial intern Swamini Saraswati will be here in mid-September and will be with us for two years working in all areas of congregational life. I'm excited about all that lies ahead and am grateful to serve as your minister.

In faith and service,

Rev. Justine

September Sermon Schedule

September's Transformational Theme:
"Welcome"

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

September 3, 2023

"Songs of the Movement"

Marshall Voit, *Music Director*

September 10, 2023

"Enter, Rejoice & Come In"

Rev. Justine Sullivan & Rev. Kristen Kuriga

September 17, 2023

"Days of Awe"

Rev. Justine Sullivan & Hillel Rubin

September 24, 2023

"Yom Kippur"

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

September 3, 2023

**"From the Folks Who Brought
You the Weekend"**

Rev. Justine Sullivan & Rev. Kristen Kuriga

September 10, 2023

"Enter, Rejoice & Come In"

Lay Led Livestream of Hillcrest Service

September 17, 2023

"Days of Awe"

Rev. Kristen Kuriga & Andrea Spiero

September 24, 2023

"Yom Kippur"

Swamini Adityananda Saraswati
leading Livestream of Hillcrest Service

Sneak Preview: Lifespan Faith Formation 2023-24

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



Here we are in September. I find myself asking, as I'm sure many of you do too, "Where did the summer go?" It also occurs to me this is the first time in four years that we've started the church year with a comprehensive plan for programming that covers the full range of "Lifespan" Ministry

(thanks, COVID!). I'm very excited about all the things we've planned for the coming year, and I'd like to share those plans with you.

On Sundays, we'll offer three options for Children & Youth during the 10:00 a.m. service, but this year, we'll be using Tapestry of Faith curricula rather than Soul Matters. This will allow us to have a better sense of the scope and sequence of the programs we run and will also allow the Lifespan Staff to plan farther ahead through the year (Soul Matters was released month-by-month).

- Kate Collier will be leading the PreK - 2nd Grade Group using "Chalice Children," which gives children a comprehensive introduction to the UU culture, values, and practices.
- I'll be leading "Riddle and Mystery" with the 3rd - 5th Graders. This is a children's version of a "Big Questions" curriculum.
- Lara Anderson will lead the social justice based curriculum, "Heeding the Call," with our Jr. and Sr. High Youth. The Youth Group will also continue to plan monthly, non-Sunday outings and events for Youth. These events give youth and their families the opportunity to gather in community during the week.

After service on Sundays, we'll offer three programs for those who choose to stick around and participate.

- Lara, along with Liz Jones, will lead our Coming of Age Program for Youth in Grades 8 - 12. Typically, this would be for 8th Grade youth, but we're expanding the age range this year to allow high schoolers to participate who missed out during the COVID shut down.
- I'll be offering "Jubilee Kids," an anti-racism program purchased for the Lifespan Program by our Journey Toward Wholeness Team.
- Kate will lead a Children's Music Program.

We're planning to host an Our Whole Lives (OWL) training this year, the UUA's human sexuality curriculum, to continue to build our pool of OWL Facilitators and offer OWL on a regular rotation.

Our Young Adults have been meeting regularly throughout the spring and summer and will continue this year. Young Adults gather on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. in room 114b. You may have also noticed some of our Young Adults tabling on the Patio again each Sunday! We've reached the point where the group is vibrant enough to begin planning how they'd like to be more involved in the broader life of the congregation.

For families, we'll continue to offer monthly Parents' Night Out, a program where we provide dinner and childcare so parents can have a night to themselves. Additionally, parents gather on the 1st Sunday of the month for Parents' Lounge, and we host an outside group, Transforming Families, on 1st Sundays from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. to support families with Trans members.

Last, but not least, we have some exciting programs for adults planned. Our Adult RE Speaker Series was a hugely successful model for Adult RE, meeting monthly on Zoom for a 90-minute presentation. We'll be continuing that model this year and already have a program on Artificial Intelligence scheduled on August 31st and a Reproductive Justice presentation on October 24th.

For more information on any of these programs, see our weekly newsletter, *The Window*, or email tony@firstuusandiego.org.

Let's Celebrate and Move Ahead with our Philippine Students!

by Liz Jones, Carolyn Owen-Towle, and Rick Zemlin

The members of our Partner Church in Malingin in the Philippines have sent us some wonderful photos of the many children in their congregation who have done so well in school this year! This past year, First UU supported 45 students with scholarship



assistance for Elementary and High School. These funds are used for school uniforms, school supplies, transportation, and in some cases food. We want to share with you the excitement we see in the progress of these students. These are just some of the pictures which they sent to us in gratitude for our assistance. Many of the students were photographed with their proud parents.

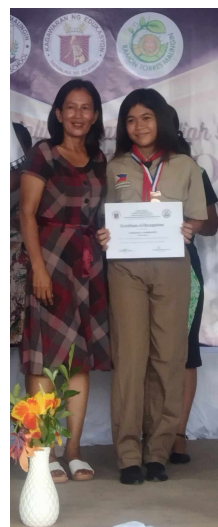
We continue in our support of these students. Quite a few have moved up to high school this year, which gladdens our hearts and theirs. We support students at \$100 a year for Elementary Students and \$200 a year for High School Students. The new school year is just beginning and this year we have been sent a list of 17 elementary students and 27 high school students who need assistance. Your generosity is what makes it possible for us to continue this support of our partners. Please

donate generously so we can help them complete school. Finishing High School allows students to get jobs that will help support their families and communities. Some of these students have even gone on to college, which is of special importance for their families.



You can donate by sending a check made out to First UU Church of San Diego with Philippine Partner Church noted in the memo line, or by donating online at firstuusandiego.org/donations In the pulldown menu please select "other" and be sure to note in the comments box that this gift is for the Philippine Partner Church.

Thank you so much and come visit with members of our Philippine Partner Church Connections group on the patio on the 4th Sunday of each month!



Neighborhood Groups

by Susan Riegel Harding

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego is a thriving community of individuals from many neighborhoods within the San Diego region. For many years, Neighborhood Meet Up Groups were one of our most successful ways to meet the first part of our mission statement—Create Community.

It was an easy way to encourage interaction and participation in one's own neighborhood. It was an especially successful way to connect newcomers with our congregation. These meetings usually took place in a First UU members' home and were potluck events.

As we all know, the pandemic changed everything. It restricted our ability to meet in person so, while many groups continued to meet online, others sadly fizzled away. Now as we return from summer vacations, is a great time to relaunch these groups.

An advantage of having experienced the pandemic is that groups can be in person, online, or a hybrid. Groups can decide:

- whether to focus on a specific topic to share among the attendees;
- when, where, and how often to take place;
- how they wish to do food and beverages; and
- whatever it takes to help people be involved.

Whatever works best for the group and the individual that wants to participate is the key to successful Neighborhood Groups.

This is a perfect opportunity to ask the congregation about what we want from our neighborhood groups and how best to include all that are interested.

Let us know:

- What worked in the past (for those who've been involved in a neighborhood group)?
- What new ideas and suggestions about reviving our neighborhood groups do you have?
- What would attract you to join a Neighborhood Group (if you haven't participated in one before)?

Other ideas you have for "Building Community."

We want to hear from all of you. You can send your suggestions to Susan Riegel Harding at ssrh41@gmail.com. A list of current neighborhood groups and their contacts can be found on the [First UU website](#).

NEIGHBORHOOD
groups 

First Unitarian Universalist Art Guild

by Marla English

The First UU Art Guild was formed on April 12, 1960. The purpose of the Art Guild is to “bring beauty and culture to church members and grounds in the form of diverse art, art shows, and artist discussion groups.”

Over the years, the Art Guild has been asked to collaborate on many First UU projects. To walk onto our campus is to become aware of the aesthetic interest here.

Bard Hall Gallery is an official gallery in the San Diego art scene and offers the space to artists in the congregation and from the community to display their artwork in a comfortable setting. We seek established, underrepresented, and aspiring visual, photographic, mixed media, and fabric artists. We especially encourage young people to get involved. You do not have to be a First UU member, and there are no fees to submit a piece of art. We will work with you to get your piece ready to display.

The Art Guild holds gallery showings 3-4 times per year, each with an applicable theme. Our current show, entitled “Harvest of Art” will be up through October. In addition, we’ll have a call for artists for our annual “holiday” show

with a deadline for submissions of October 30. This show will hang in November and December.

The Art Guild group is re-creating itself after the shut-down of past years. We meet every other month as a steering committee on the months when there is no gallery opening/reception. We’re hoping that participants in this steering group can find ways to expand creative expression throughout congregational life. Art can be a spiritual practice and we want to support one another as we move along our creative path.

The reception for the “Harvest of Art” show will be on Thursday, September 21, from 6-8 pm in Bard Hall. Our next steering committee is Thursday, October 12, 6 pm on Zoom. Please come to one, or both, to see what we’re about.

You can also contact the Art Guild via our fearless leader, John Keasler, at keaslerart@gmail.com (619-278-1267) or Marla English at marlajeanenglish@gmail.com (858-254-7337). The Art Guild also has a Facebook page that keeps up with all we do at www.facebook.com/groups/FirstUUArtGuild/.



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REVUE**



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&
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Sat, Sept. 16 @ 7 pm

Sun, Sept. 17 @ 4 pm



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LookingGlassSD.org

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Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Lõne 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
Rose Littler-Riedel, Membership Development and Communications
Chris Chambers, Social Justice Coordinator
Lara Anderson, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator
Kate Collier, Program Assistant
Jazmine Ramanathan, Administrative Assistant
Pam Bates, Scheduler
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Lorelei Isidro-Garner, Music Coordinator
Andrea Spiero, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
Tomás Acosta, Collaborative Pianist
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