



First
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Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

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South Bay Campus Hosts Its Quinceanera

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

On Saturday, October 7th, 2023 at 6pm, there will be a celebration for First UU's South Bay community on their 15th anniversary, with food, the Mariachis Victorias, and other entertainers at the Chula Vista campus. Join us as we remember our past, reflect on who we've become, and work toward realizing who we aspire to be. This event is free, but space is limited, so be sure to reserve your spot today. Also, parking is at a premium, so carpooling is recommended where possible.



Rev. Arvid Straube first proposed the idea of a bilingual campus in the South Bay when he interviewed to become the lead minister at First UU. He later appointed an intern minister, Carol Layne, to shepherd the project. People interested in the idea of a satellite campus to First UU met in Chula Vista, at the clubhouse in the community where Manny Llera and Kay Phillips lived.

The first service was held at Parkview school in October of 2008. They set up the school auditorium for services, then listened to a sermon recorded the day before at First UU. In 2009, South Bay campus moved to their current home on Broadway, near L St., in Chula Vista. Once First UU had enough ministers to serve at both campuses, the ministers did a rotation so South Bay could have a live service every week.

The services were between 20-40 people a week. Spanish translation was available through headphones, and much of the service was delivered in English and Spanish. When Rev. Tania Yadira Marquez was ordained at First Church, she worked with South Bay on a regular basis.

The members at South Bay have always taken an active interest in the social justice work that needed to be done in the area. Their first big effort was taking supplies to Tecate after an earthquake devastated the area. They traveled to protest in Arizona when a hardline immigration law, SB 1070 was passed by the Arizona legislature. They worked with an agency known as Al Otra Lado, lawyers that help asylum seekers, led

by Nicole Ramos. They joined a rapid response network when undocumented immigrants were being seized and driven to the border, where members of South Bay were on call to record and observe the actions of the agencies involved.

Most of the time, members of South Bay bore witness in yellow shirts that the UUA created, with the title "Standing on the Side of Love," a saying that came from a comment Bill Sinkford made when asked about

marriage equality. After awhile, people came to know them as the "yellow shirt people" and knew they could count on them to show up when necessary to support social justice in the South Bay and other areas.

Another effort was organizing support for the Drag Queen story hour at the Chula Vista library. They had the support of Mayor Mary Casillas Salas, the first Latina mayor for Chula Vista. Finally, Maureen McNair, a member at South Bay, organized the South Bay Food Pantry, which helps as many as 300+ families every week and is housed next to the meeting space and social hall for the South Bay campus.

Connie Mack, one of the founding members of the South Bay campus, says, "From the beginning, the role South Bay has played in the community is of being recognized as a liberal voice that could be relied on to support social justice issues, such as immigration and LGBTQ rights." She hopes South Bay will be able to fulfill that role for many years to come.

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Forgiving Ourselves and Each Other

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



For injuries I may have caused you or any other person, I ask forgiveness.

For injuries you may have caused me, I forgive you.

Such powerful words. Forgiveness sought and offered. I've included that ritual of forgiveness in any service honoring the Jewish High Holy Days in the congregations I've served. Although I didn't grow up in the Jewish tradition, I've been deeply moved by this practice of examining the promises we've made, kept, and broken in the previous year, and then working to restore good relations with the people in our lives.

I first experienced this practice as a teenager, when I had a close relationship with an adult mentor, who was supportive, wise, kind, and Jewish. One day, around this time of year, she asked if she could speak with me. She told me about this tradition during the Jewish New Year, of acknowledging injuries and seeking forgiveness. I braced myself, thinking I'd done something wrong for which I needed to apologize.

Instead, she told me she was aware she hadn't always done right by me and hadn't supported me at times when she could've. Then she apologized and asked for my forgiveness. *A trusted adult apologizing to me—a 15-year-old!* I grew up in a time when grownups were always right and not to be challenged. I don't remember what she did that caused her to apologize, but I'll never forget how it felt to be seen, heard, and valued in such a way.

We can offer that to each other, and it doesn't have to be limited to the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. When we fall short, we can acknowledge it, offer a sincere apology, and seek forgiveness. *And* we can forgive ourselves and each other. Holding onto resentment is, as someone wise once said, like taking poison and expecting the other person to suffer. If we want to move forward together, then we must reach *toward* each other.

We need to listen to the voices of those who've been harmed, listen without defensiveness (that is so hard to do), without making excuses or trying to deflect or minimize the offense in order to ease our own discomfort. We demonstrate we've heard what's been offered, apologize sincerely, and commit to doing better in the future, and then . . . hope and pray that the person who's been harmed accepts our apology. Then, if we're willing and able, we can move forward together. This is what's required to be in community, to love one another, to seek forgiveness when we cause harm, and to forgive.

Over this church year, Reverend Kristen and I, the Right Relations Team, and other leaders in our congregation will be working to revitalize and renew our covenant, and by covenant I mean: What do you need from this community in order to be your authentic self and to risk vulnerability; AND what are you willing to commit to so our siblings in faith can be their authentic selves?

That's it—simple, but not easy. Maya Angelou says, "When we know better, we do better." Let's keep learning and growing, trying, sometimes failing, but always returning to the place where we can be held and hold one another in love.

May it be so. It is an honor to serve as your minister, *Rev. Justine*

October Sermon Schedule

October's Transformational Theme:
"Heritage"

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

October 1, 2023

"The Gifts of Heritage"

Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*

October 8, 2023

"Indigenous People's Day"

Swamini Saraswati, *Intern Minister*

October 15, 2023

"Our Promising Future"

Worship Arts Team

October 22, 2023

"Kairos and Chronos"

Rev. Julie Forest, *Community Minister*

October 29, 2023

"Social Justice Sunday"

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

October 1, 2023

"The Gifts of Heritage"

Livestream of the Hillcrest Service
with Rev. Justine Sullivan & Swamini Saraswati

October 8, 2023

"Uncovering Authenticity"

Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*

October 15, 2023

"Our Promising Future"

Livestream of the Hillcrest Service

October 22, 2023

"Poetry to Nourish Our Souls"

Rev. Kristen Kuriga & Swamini Saraswati

October 29, 2023

"Social Justice Sunday"

Come Be Awkward With Us!

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



Rev Justine and I were talking about our recent Ingathering Service and she mentioned quite a few people enjoyed the fact that we held everyone on the patio and walked in together as we sang the opening song. I'm not sure everyone liked it, but enough people mentioned it

positively to make an impression. What I found interesting was that it wasn't so much the walking in together part that people mentioned. Rather, they talked about having a few unexpected moments to mill around on the Patio to chat, connect and generally engage in community with each other.

I'm happy people enjoyed that time together, but I admit to wondering, "Don't they do that at Social Hour?" As Rev. Justine and I talked about it, it occurred to me what made this patio time different from Social Hour was, in part, that it was unexpected and, perhaps, even a little awkward. At Social Hour, I expect many (if not most) of us have an unconscious routine. We leave service, perhaps we wait to talk to the minister, then we beeline it into Bard Hall for our coffee and snacks, and then seek out those we know to have a little chat. We're being social, but I suspect that most of us are doing it in very routine and familiar ways.

At Ingathering, we surprised you (unintentionally) by interrupting the routine. Instead of heading into the Meeting House to your usual space, there were five to 10 minutes of low-level chaos. I can imagine some of the internal responses (at least the ones I would have had): "Oh, good grief, what are they doing to me now?" "I just want to sit down. Now I have to talk to people!" I'm not one who is 100%

comfortable in those kinds of "cocktail party" situations where I feel pressure to make small talk. At worst, I feel anxious or even trapped, and I find them, at least initially, awkward.



But I think it's also true that the only way to expand our sense of community is to have those awkward, unscripted moments when we're placed (gently) outside of our comfortable routines. What I saw on the Patio that morning, amid some confusion and uncertainty milling around, was people who would likely sit in different sections of the Meeting House standing next to each other talking. I saw people of different generations who would be in different circles at Social Hour mixing and mingling. And I witnessed some small connections being made that may not have happened in the normal course of events.

So while we can't always surprise you and disrupt your routine, I'd like to invite you to engage in a little disruption of your own. Maybe you'll join us for the South Bay Quinceañera on Oct 7th even though you don't think of yourself as part of that community (register [HERE](#)) Maybe you'll come to one of our upcoming multigenerational events like the Pumpkin Carving or Tree Decorating (check The Window for details).

Or maybe you'll just make an effort to start an initially awkward conversation at Social Hour with someone you don't know. Some good starters are: "Hi, I'm X! I don't think I've spoken to you before. What's your name? I'm trying to get to know people I haven't met before. What did you think of the Service today?" (Notice I didn't make any assumptions about the other person). Shake up your routine in whatever way you feel you can. It may be awkward at first, but it might also lead to a rewarding connection and a deeper sense of community.

New Small Group Ministries at First UU!

by Rose Littler-Riedel, *Membership Development and Communications Coordinator*

In Fall of 2023, three new small group ministries began, and one small group ministry has been redefined. Please feel free to join us at any of these open group meetings! We hope these small groups will help our members and friends create deeper connections with one another.

Do you have an idea for a new small group? Contact rose@firstuusandiego.org and let's talk about the possibilities!

First UU San Diego Animal Ministry



Our new Animal Ministry team meets on the first Sunday of each month, at noon. The location will be determined by what we're planning to do that month. Our Animal Ministry team is focusing on animal rights

advocacy, as well as honoring the beloved animals in our own lives.

On October 1, we worked on a pet memorial garden in the Peace Garden (the garden behind room 113). We put in new plants, décor, and pet memorial items. We have a supply of river rocks and paints so that folks can leave a memorial of a beloved animal in the garden at any time. On the patio every Sunday morning until October 29, we're also collecting fabric scraps, old pillows, sheets, towels, etc., as well as pet food and supplies.

On November 5, we'll be holding a "pet bed sewing party" in Room 323. Using the supplies collected on the patio during September and October, we'll be fabricating pet beds to be donated to local animal shelters. Please join us!

In the future we're planning "field trips" to places like "Lions, Tigers, and Bears" and other local sanctuaries.

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) of San Diego

Our new CUUPS group meets the second Sunday of each month at noon in the Common Room and Peace Garden. On



October 8, we'll be working on creating a ritual space in the Peace Garden by placing new plants and tending to plants already in the garden, putting in an herbal garden bed, cleaning out weeds, putting in décor, and more! Indoors, for folks who need to keep out of the sun, we'll have divination and scrying supplies, some "thrifty witchery" supplies, and supplies for crafting magical items.

Planning ways of honoring the various holidays throughout the wheel of the year through ritual are also in the group's future.

First UU Humanist Book Discussion Group



The new Humanist book discussion group is meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 pm, in Room 320. In October we'll be discussing "The Good Book: A Humanist Bible." Please join us for a lively discussion!

First UU Abrahamic Religions Study Group

The Abrahamic Religions study group meets on the fourth Sunday of each month at noon in Room 321. Formerly called the First UU Christian Study Group, the name has changes as the group decided to expand its scope to the study of the history of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. At our September meeting, Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*, led the group through a fascinating lecture and discussion on the non-literal interpretations of the first three chapters of *Genesis*. What a fabulous discussion was had! The October topic is still in the planning stages. Please join us!



How Do We Want To Be With One Another at First UU?

by Your Right Relations Team

Do these statements reflect your thinking about our congregation?

- ▶ We extend grace to one another.
- ▶ We're radically welcoming.
- ▶ We keep getting better at addressing conflict. You know, the ordinary, everyday, to-be-expected type of conflict that arises when people *who have strong values and who care about issues, work together.*
- ▶ More of us take on the frame of mind that, *This is my church. What I do and how I act matters.*

The Right Relations Team is taking the time to focus on these and other noble aspirations for our congregation. We believe that being clear about what we want is the first step to getting there. A first step is to clarify and publicize the vision to specify how we want to be with one another as a congregation.

We'll be gathering your ideas as we create that vision. Please reach out, at any time, to any member of the Right Relations Team, to let us know your thoughts about the vision, or any aspect of our work.

There are three other areas the Right Relations Team will be working on between now and the end of June 2024:

We'll distribute a survey to serve as a temperature check about how we're feeling now about being part of this congregation and how we are with one another.

We all value being a covenant-based church. Our covenant is our agreement about how we will be with one another. First UU has a covenant now, and we believe it would be beneficial to review it and, perhaps, make it more robust and descriptive about how we intend to be with one another, and how we'll address conflict. Revising our Covenant of Right Relations is the next priority for our team. Any revised covenant will need to be approved by the Board and the congregation.

A section of the covenant will define a process for addressing conflict at the individual level. It will also describe an additional process, and a group to which unresolved conflicts can be referred.

To help make all this happen, skill building will be offered to all. We expect developing for all of us to have new skills, and honing our existing skills can benefit us in all areas of our lives and in all relationships, at church, at home and at work.

Marla English, Brandon Hall, Bill James, Dan Paul, and Rev. Justine Sullivan



EMMA'S REVOLUTION

7:30 PM
SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 4TH
2023

Celebration
Concert for FUU's
150th Anniversary

Known for fearless,
truth-telling lyrics and
melodies you can't
resist, this award-
winning duo sings
about critical issues.

Funded by
the First UU
Outreach and
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Free parking in
our accessible lot.

"Fervent and heartfelt"
~The New York Times

Free admission.
Registration
required.
Tickets at

FirstUUSanDiego.org



Our UUUNO Envoys and UNICEF

by Abby Marcato and Rosalba Ciampi, *UUUNO Envoys*

Taking over from Everardo Aguilar as the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UUUNO) Envoy for First UU, Rosalba Ciampi and Abby Marcato are using this opportunity to augment their multicultural competency and engage in the world community. They plan to do so by taking on the saying “think globally, act locally,” and to facilitate a greater perspective of the connection of local community work and the global efforts around us.

Between Rosalba and Abby, they have lived in five different countries and their families represent eight individual cultures, making the Envoy position serendipitous for them. They're also doing this work because as Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the current U.S. representative to the United Nations, said, “We believe the greatest challenge of our time can only be resolved together.”

In a departure from previous years, instead of handing out cardboard boxes for donations during trick or treating, this Halloween season, Rosalba and Abby invite donations to

UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund, formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund): an agency of the United Nations that administers programs to aid education as well as child and maternal health.

These donations can be made digitally via the QR code below or on the patio after

Sunday services on October 22 and October 29. These donations will be totaled and

forwarded to UNICEF from the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.



TRICK-OR-TREAT
FOR UNICEF

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 Swamini Adityananda Saraswati, Intern Minister
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 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey, Rev. Julie Forest
 and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
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To view sermon video casts, click on these

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

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