



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 to 2023

This document captures the activities of this
UU Congregation between July 2022 and June 2023.

**Our Mission is to create community, to nurture spiritual
growth, and to act on our values to help heal the world.**



firstuusandiego.org

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The Mission of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego is to create community, nurture spiritual growth and to act on our values to help heal the world.

COVENANT OF GOOD RELATIONS

Preamble:

We members, friends, staff, and ministers of First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego covenant to treat ourselves and one another with respect. We vow to live our values, to learn, and to serve in ways that are fulfilling and responsible.

We respect and honor ourselves and others when we:

- listen, speak, and act with integrity and compassion;
- communicate openly without anonymous criticism; and express gratitude and appreciation.

We value ourselves and others when we:

- invite and welcome into our church the diverse populations and cultures of the wider community;
- enjoy each other with playfulness and good humor; act with awareness of ecological issues.

We learn when we:

- educate ourselves about church structure and governance, and the responsibilities of ministers, staff, and volunteers;
- appreciate our own limitations as well as those of others; and
- practice the established process of resolving differences.

We serve when we:

- contribute our financial resources, time, and skills according to our ability, whenever possible;
- model Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values; and strive to reflect more accurately
- the demographics of the wider community in our Church.



**First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego**

Approved by the Congregation on June 8, 2008

Journey Toward Wholeness

Purpose of the group:

Working as an arm of the Board of Trustees under a mutually-agreed directive of the Board, Journey Toward Wholeness team (JTW) helps the Board direct, monitor, and assess the work of the Church in dismantling systems of oppression and becoming a genuinely anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural institution.

Major Accomplishments / Activities (July 2022 through June 2023):

The Team has strived to integrate JTW activities with some of the Church's main Developmental Goals:

- Goal 1. Rebuild trust and community through a re-covenanting process that defines how we want to be together as a congregation.
 - ⇒ We have started a conversation with the Board and the congregation on the last 5th Tuesday of the year, May 30, 2023, about establishing a new covenant with each other.

- Goal 4. Live into the 8th principle by becoming a fully welcoming and inclusive community.
 - ⇒ On October 16, 2022 JTW offered a workshop on anti-racism presented by SURJ (Showing up for Racial Justice) San Diego Chapter, at FUUSD.
 - ⇒ **On November 29, 2022 5th Tuesday Board meeting, the team led a discussion of the "Rethinking Thanksgiving" toolkit produced by the Indigenous Solidarity Network.**
 - ⇒ On January 31, 2023 for the 5th Tuesday Board meeting, Valerie Jaques discussed social justice assessment tools created by the Southern Delaware UU designed specifically to help each Church committee assess their efforts with respect to creating an anti-oppressive/anti-racist multicultural environment. The social justice assessment template on Social Justice was emailed to Laura Ball (SJET), the Covenant Committee assessment template to Reverend Omega, the leadership assessment template to Cora Pendergast and the Executive Team and Administration template to Robie Evans.
 - ⇒ On Sunday, Feb.12, 2023 several JTW members attended the workshop by Rev. Terasa Cooley, on **"Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil."**
 - ⇒ The Lay Leadership team, together with Reverend Justine, led a service on May 7, 2023 entitled **"Journeying Toward Wholeness: Why is it so hard?"** Bill James delivered the main message at the service.
 - ⇒ Together with the newly established cluster-wide 8th Principle Collaboration Group of SD County with representatives from five congregations, JTW will have completed by June 2023 the reading and discussion of the Widening the Circle of Concern Report, open to all congregants and friends of FUUSD.
 - ⇒ JTW continued raising awareness of AO/AR (anti-oppression/anti-racist) work by putting notices in the congregational newsletter "The Window" (JTW: What can I do?).
 - ⇒ **In order to bring more experiences of diversity, members of JTW suggested the reading of "The 1619 Project" for an existing book group of eight white liberal thinking friends.** We determined that this model is good for discussing diversity issues, but "The 1619 Project" is a dense book needing more than just one meeting to cover all talking points. JTW has determined to organize a First UU book group with the intent to discuss our different racialized identities. We hope to choose a book shortly and have a first book group meeting during the coming summer.



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Journey Toward Wholeness

JTW would like to express deep gratitude for important anti-racist, anti-oppressive teachings that occurred at FUUSD in 2022-2023 (not JTW projects) which included:

- * August 18, 2022 Peter Bolland on "Dismantling Racism, One Insight At a Time"
- * September 15, 2022 Peter Bolland on "Why It's so Hard to Talk about Racism"
- * October 27, 2022 Michael Crumpler "What about Us? Remembering and Recentering the Presence of BIPOC in White Spaces"
- * November 17, 2022 Dr. Natalie Fenimore on Widening the Circle of Concern
- * December 8, 2022 Michael Crumpler and Panel on HIV and AIDS: A Community Conversation
- * January 26, 2023 Aisha Hauser on Religious Education
- * February 23, 2023 Michael Odegaard on his work on preserving the Kumeyaay language
- * Weekly, at every staff meeting, staff discusses different topics during their AR/AO 30-45 minute sessions

Anticipated projects for next year :

- Goal 1. Rebuild trust and community through a re-covenanting process that defines how we want to be together as a congregation.
 - ⇒ We have started a conversation with the Board and the congregation on the last 5th Tuesday of the year, May 30, 2023, about establishing a new covenant with each other.
- Goal 2. Develop a plan to ensure the financial sustainability of the Church.
 - ⇒ JTW aims at ensuring that FUUSD deposit as much as possible our assets in Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs) and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) which are banks, savings banks, and savings associations (collectively, banks) that serve minority, low- or moderate-income (LMI), and rural communities at higher rates than mainstream banks. Such banks are **commonly known as "mission-driven banks" because they play a role in transforming the lives of underserved citizens and communities by making loans and providing other vital banking products and services.** Mission-driven banks also ensure that residents and businesses in these communities have access to safe and affordable financial services.
- Goal 4. Live into the 8th principle by becoming a fully welcoming and inclusive community.
 - ⇒ Identify outcomes that indicate whether we are making progress in living into the 8th principle and establishing ways to measure that progress. Possible directions to pursue could be related to the Good Relations team, the assessments from Southern Delaware UU, and others to be explored. We are open to creative thinking in this regard.
 - ⇒ In order to raise awareness of racialized identities a JTW Core team member, Ruth Turner, and a **member at large, Louise Titlow, will launch after the summer the "Racialized Identities Awareness" Book Club** to help nurture our Beloved Community by reading and discussing literature (articles, books, poems).
 - ⇒ Continue to collaborate with and support the Developmental Lead Minister in congregational AR/AO work and in developing a new mission and covenant for JTW.
 - ⇒ Continue raising awareness of AO/AR (anti-oppression/anti-racist) work by putting notices in the **congregational newsletter "The Window" (JTW "What can I do?")**
- Goal 5. Evaluate our governance structure and revise as needed to support our congregation's diverse needs and growth.
 - ⇒ Encourage the study group tasked with revising our governance to use an AR/AO lens in their process.
 - ⇒ Discuss with the Board recommendations contained in the Widening the Circle of Concern Report and their possible implementation in our congregation .

Lay leadership: Valerie Jaques, Rosalba Ciampi, Ruth Turner, Tonia Vyenielo, Bill James

Board of Trustees



Submitted by Cora Pendergast, President

The 2022 - 2023 church year has been one of re-centering, regrowth and rejuvenation.

This year's Board of Trustees had five new members. Everardo Aguilar, Valerie Jaques, Steve Howard, and Leland Beck were voted in by the congregation at the 6/22 Annual Meeting of the congregation. A fourth new member, Gay Hybertsen, was appointed by the board as a replacement after the resignation of former member Rhiannon Rhys Roselle.

The board identified four goals as the Board Agenda that was published in September. The following goals were all met over the course of the board year:

- ◇ Create a Board Calendar of key Board due dates and events
- ◇ Increase visibility of Board members
- ◇ Work with the Minister to develop a Good Relations Committee
- ◇ Create a Governance Study Group to evaluate current governance processes

The board was also committed to supporting the ministry teams, minister and staff, and the congregation at large in working towards the seven Congregational Goals for our period of developmental ministry, which are listed elsewhere.

At our regular monthly Board of Trustees meetings, the board members:

- ◇ Gave **"Attitude of Gratitude"** thanks to Congregants and Staff who had gone above and beyond in the past month
- ◇ Celebrated congregational successes
- ◇ Reviewed and discussed minister and staff monthly reports, which were formatted to report progress towards the seven Congregational Goals
- ◇ Reviewed and discussed a Finance Report from Treasurer Sue Marberry
- ◇ Reviewed progress against the four Board Agenda goals
- ◇ Discussed and voted on issues brought forward for Board consideration. All votes are documented in the monthly meeting minutes which are published on the Board page of the church website

In months with five Tuesdays, the board also held Fifth Tuesday Board Meetings which were led by the Journey Towards Wholeness team. The goal of these meetings was to educate the Board on racial justice concerns and begin to strategize on moving forward.

Other key events involving board members included:

- ◇ Monthly virtual Board Chats on the first Sunday of each month. These typically had few congregant participants but nevertheless yielded some fruitful conversations.
- ◇ Two open meetings, one in-person and one Zoom, hosted by Treasurer Sue Marberry and Rev. Justine Sullivan, to discuss church financial matters and answer related questions.
- ◇ **Five meetings "Congregational Conversation" meetings, two in person and three on Zoom,** facilitated by Rev Justine Sullivan and President Cora Pendergast, the focus of these meetings was discussion of challenging events in the congregation between 2018 - present and how to understand and move on from those events.

Rev. Justine Sullivan, Lead Minister



It has been my deep honor to serve you in this, the first of our four years of developmental ministry together. A Developmental Ministry allows and invites a congregation to pause and work on issues that seem to be interfering with the ability to move forward together. When I reflect on this church year, I think what I am most pleased about is that we are building and rebuilding trust – between you and your ministers and staff, between you and your volunteer leaders, and between and among you, the members of the congregation. I feel it in the singing and the laughter and the occasional tears in worship. I witness it on the patio at Hillcrest and out on the sidewalk at South Bay, and it even comes through the computer screen in the many online gatherings and meetings we have had over this first year together. Things feel less tense, less pressured. That is something I have worked for this year, to help us remember to pause and to breathe and to trust that we are moving forward together and that it takes time to connect and to re-connect after long stretches of separation and after a period of increased conflict. I don't mean to say that we have accomplished all that we need to, but I am feeling confident that we, that you, are on the right track.

We Unitarian Universalists yearn for a more perfect union, and I think that desire for improvement can cause us to overlook the progress that we make and the beauty that is all around us. So I would like to lift up some of the beauty and progress that I see.

Your board of trustees are faithful servant leaders, who take seriously the responsibility and trust you place in them. We have been capably led this year by board president Cora Pendergast, who has helped me immensely this year in learning the stories and the longings of this congregation. I look forward to working next year with incoming (if elected) board president Everardo Aguililar. I am grateful for the ongoing work and commitment and excellence of our treasurer Sue Marberry, and all the members of the board who are diligent and thoughtful and committed to seeing First UU continue to flourish and grow.

I must mention also our amazing staff team – our Director of Operations Robie Evans, who manages to see to just about everything with love and deep knowledge. Tony Bianca, our Director of Lifespan Faith Formation, shares his many gifts (both in music and in storytelling) in worship, with our children, and with adults, as well. Our Adult Religious Education program is flourishing, thanks to the work of both Tony and First UU member Jan Garboski. Our Program Assistant Kate Collier has a magical way with the children, and she also shares her musical gifts in worship. Lara Anderson is helping to spark a resurgence in our youth and young adult programs, which is delightful to see. We are returning to being a 7-day a week church! It is a joy for me to see our own Rose Riedel moving into the newly-created Membership Development and Communication Coordinator position. This role takes fuller advantage of Rose's gifts for helping visitors and newcomers get connected at First UU and allows her to continue with the work of creating the weekly Window and maintaining and increasing our social media presence. Our music program, under the direction of Marshall Voit is one of the best things about First UU. Marshall has taken up the challenge of creating beautiful music himself and with the members of our music team while helping our volunteer musicians return to making music after many months away during the shutdown phase of the pandemic. We are blessed with an abundance of gifted musicians: Marshall with his singing and his guitar, ukulele, and brass instrument playing; Tomás Acosta on piano, offering beautiful solo piano pieces and sensitive accompaniment of our ensembles and sometimes, he blesses us with his own gorgeous singing. Lorelei Isidro-Garner is the primary musician at our South Bay campus along with her band; the South Bay singers, whom she directs, and she also plays organ and guitar and sings in worship at our Hillcrest campus and leads our women's

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Rev. Justine Sullivan, Lead Minister

chorus – so many gifts. Andrea Spiero leads the a cappella JUUL Tones and also plays flute and sings in worship. In the coming months, Andrea and the JUUL Tones will return to bringing their music to members of our community who find it difficult to travel to us and especially to those nearing the end of their life. Such a beautiful ministry of music.

Every member of our staff team has done beautiful work in this church year and I am certain that I am leaving important things out. Please tell me of the beauty you have noticed, the kindness, the assistance, the blessings you have received from our talented staff. And of course, I must mention my beloved colleague, the Reverend Dr. Omega Burckhardt. Reverend Omega arrived here with a very challenging assignment – to be the stabilizing ministerial presence in a congregation that had experienced considerable upheaval when she didn't yet know a soul here and in the middle of a pandemic. Although she was newly ordained as a minister, she had lots of large-church experience from her years as a lay leader in her home congregation in Milwaukee and in the Mid-America region of our UUA. She also came with years of experience as an educator, administrator, and program manager (and other surprising gifts like painting and brewing beer – you never know what might actually come in handy some days in the life of a minister!). Omega is steadfast, creative, grounded, deeply spiritual, and I am so grateful for her ministry here. Pasadena is so lucky to have called her to be their next senior minister. Thank you, Omega. You are and will always be part of the story of healing and repair that has occurred here at First UU.

Over this year we have had many important conversations. We gathered with our UUA Congregational Life Staff member Rev. Sarah Gibb-Millsbaugh in December to address some of the difficult events of the past five or so years. Board President Cora Pendergast and I offered four follow-up conversations to that congregational conversation – one in person and three online. Over the course of the four sessions, the conversation shifted in emphasis from reviewing the past to finding ways to move forward. I have heard from many of you a wish for skills building, especially in the area of conflict engagement. The training offered by Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley was well received and many groups and individuals have been reading her book on transforming conflict and are finding it useful. In the next church year, there will be additional opportunities for learning together about healthier ways to engage conflict and specifically on how and when to intervene when we experience or witness behavior that is out of covenant.

After receiving from you over 45 names of people that you think would be good candidates to serve on a Good Relations Team, I have chosen four people to work with me over the next church year to rebuild that team and to perhaps broaden its focus beyond intervention when a conflict erupts and toward helping us to develop our skills in and comfort with engaging conflict. Those four people are Bill James, Brandon Hall, Marla English, and Dan Paul. I will ask the congregation to affirm this list at our Annual Meeting on June 11th, and I expect to add a few more people next year as we begin offering trainings and continue offering congregational conversations in small groups. We are a passionate people with strong ideas and growing diversity among us (not just racial diversity but also in gender identity and expression, educational, linguistic, cultural background, age, family composition, professional experience, and income level to name a few). Conflicts emerge; this is natural and expected, and if we can learn to engage conflict with curiosity and compassion, we will soar as a community. Now more than ever, the world needs caring communities with a theology of welcome and inclusion. We can do this. You can do this.

Over the summer I will be taking some time off to reflect, refresh, and prepare for the new church year. In August we will welcome the Reverend Kristen Kuriga as our Assistant Minister. Reverend Kristen will be the primary contact for our South Bay campus and will supervise our Social Justice Coordinator, but we will both serve both campuses. We will also be welcoming a Ministerial Intern, Swamini Saraswati, who will be with us part time for two years. Swamini enters UU ministry with over 20 years of experience leading interfaith organizations in Africa and India. She will join us in September, and she is thrilled to have the opportunity to learn while serving in ministry here.

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Rev. Justine Sullivan, Lead Minister

There is much to look forward to in the coming year and much work to do. I will ask us to resume work in engaging the Stay/Go question. It was wise to table this during the shutdown phase of the pandemic, but I believe that it is important for us to decide once and for all – will we stay and invest in our future here, or will we sell this campus and move somewhere else? This is a huge decision and will no doubt stir up strong emotions. I am confident that we can have important, difficult conversations with respect and compassion, but to delay deciding is in essence deciding to stay but without a plan to ensure sustainability. This is the time to plan for our future. Our finances are strong. We have a robust endowment. We budget carefully and follow sound accounting practices. We have a large source of revenue (the parking lot) that has helped to sustain us over the years, but that revenue stream may diminish in the next several years, and we need to plan now for how we will respond to that possible decrease in revenue. At the same time, our physical plant is aging and will likely require increased spending in the near future. We need to plan for that, as well, and this is all part of that Stay/Go conversation. I will invite the folks who worked on this before to resume their roles, but there will also be opportunities for some new voices in those conversations, so let's get ready for that.

Another important gift that I would like to lift up is that there are among us a number of anonymous donors, people who have decided to share from their abundance with this congregation. This has come largely in the form of grants dedicated to specific purposes. For example, when the pandemic shut everything down and congregations needed to pivot (to use a favorite word of Rev. Omega!) to online worship, an angel came forth from among us to provide funding for state-of-the-art equipment that would allow live streaming from our Hillcrest campus and the viewing of recorded and live-streamed worship in our South Bay campus. This gift allowed us to continue as a worshipping community in the midst of a pandemic, and it continues to allow us to bring worship into the homes of those who cannot be with us in person. Other generous donors have offered to match donations given to relief organizations in response to a natural disaster; others provided seed money to create a new staff position, allowing our operating budget some breathing room to be able to take over the expense over time. This investment in us, in you represents an act of not only generosity but also of faith in your future and a commitment to seeing our UU faith continue to flourish and grow. Not all of us can give large financial gifts, but we can all share gifts from our heart. We can offer one another the gift of our attention and welcome. My request to you is that you think about the welcome that you received when you first arrived here and all the ways that First UU has been part of the important moments of your life and then offer that same welcome to someone you haven't spoken with before, someone you don't already know. US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy recently published an article about the toxicity of loneliness, its actual danger to our health. Let us offer one another the healing energy of our outstretched hand of welcome.

I look forward to continuing this work alongside of you. It is my privilege to serve as your lead minister during this developmental time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Justine

Rev. Justine Sullivan, Developmental Lead Minister

First UU San Diego

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, Assistant Minister

If there had been a theme set out for this year, 2022-2023, it would **have been “return to a new normal.”** The summer months of 2022 provided the congregation with the possibility to refine safe and healthy worship and best practices for gathering as COVID cases went down. Throughout the fall, some groups continue to create community online, and others returned to in-person meetings. By early spring of 2023, the church calendar was again full, with meetings and events scheduled daily. The groups and committees in **the Assistant Minister’s portfolio are outlined below.**

Rev. Justine Sullivan’s arrival in the fall of 2022 helped steady a congregation reeling from multiple ministerial transitions over the year. We have all benefited from her experience and guidance, and FUUSD will enjoy several more years of her leadership.

Worship at our Hillcrest campus started at 10 am indoors on July 10th of 2022, after over two years of meeting virtually and on the patio. The caliber, variety, and depth of the worship services continued to gain strength and momentum all year.

Worship at South Bay took several forms over the year as we found a rhythm that was compatible with our staffing and the changing community needs of that campus. In the early fall, we settled on twice monthly minister-led services on Sunday mornings at 10. We also began a Saturday morning short service, Gracias y Bendiciones, to coincide with the growing Food Pantry. By the late spring, each service was drawing about the same numbers of worshippers from different parts of the South Bay community.

The Food and Diaper Pantry continued to grow and felt supported by staff and ministerial presence. Community volunteers (not previously affiliated with FUUSD) began to outnumber church volunteers, and a deep sense of affinity and deep relationship are now hallmarks of the Pantry.

We kicked off the celebration of the 150th year of FUUSD with a worship service featuring UUA president, Rev. Susan Frederick Gray. In January, we had an all-congregation party with music, food, and national and **local leadership. Other events continued to highlight FUUSD’s status as a regional flagship: a week with Melanie deMore, a worship and event to highlight the work of Rev. Carolyn Owen-Towle, and an evening with Nadia Bolz-Weber, among others.** Accountability with work with the Kumeyaay nation led the Adult RE offerings in early spring.

The Lay Ministers team grew as they settled into a pattern of both in-person and online groups and discussions. Wisdom Circles also grew in number of participants and scope of outreach (a new-to-UU group, for example).

A Social Justice Coordinator was hired to focus on the work of SJET and the congregation within the **San Diego region. Chris Chambers’ previous work experience as community activist in Tijuana has continued to be helpful as FUUSD works to align its mission with its action in this volatile border region.**

As I prepare to depart FUUSD after being called as Senior Minister at Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena this summer, I am proud to have been part of this tremendously important time in **FUUSD’s history. I have learned a great deal, and I have a deep sense of affection and appreciation for this congregational community.**



Robie Evans, Director of Operations



I'm celebrating my 12th year at First UU! I thank everyone for making my work life here such a wonderful experience even through the ups and downs. We are grateful to have Rev. Justine Sullivan here with us for four years (three remaining) as our Developmental Lead Minister and we will say a fond farewell to our Assistant Minister, Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt in June. I work with the best staff team in the world and I'm grateful to each of them!

Hillcrest Facility

- Cleaned all Meeting House, Chapel, and Welcome Center windows before first indoor worship service, July 2022
- Large Maintenance Projects:
 - ◆ New a/c units for admin building
 - ◆ Sewer ejector pumps; major repair
 - ◆ Drywall restoration in Room 111 (RE office) from flood in preschool infant room last month
 - ◆ Meeting House LED light installation over audience area
 - ◆ Repairs to showers behind the two restrooms near admin building
 - ◆ New roof and HVAC units for Admin Bldg
- Admin building flooding mystery; found the morning of 12/28 in the center hallway. Flood restoration called right away; was completely dry by in a couple of days. Inspections by Ray Evans, flood restoration company, and our roofing contractor and nothing was found to be the source of that water/liquid.
- Worked with UCSD and DPR Construction for the **fire water tie in at the top of the church's driveway**. Went fairly smoothly and communications were stellar.
- Corner Monument tile repair work is happening now with volunteers from our congregation as part of 150th Celebration year
- Staff is spring cleaning! Went through all rooms in **all buildings to see what we don't use/need any longer that can be donated**
- Facilitated Social Hour back inside Bard Hall
- Performed with trio in Flower Communion worship service

Human Resources

- Onboarded Pam Bates, returning to staff as part-time 12 hrs/week Scheduler.
- Onboarded Rev. Justine Sullivan
- Onboarded Lara Anderson, our new Youth & Young Adult Coordinator
- Worked with health insurance broker to align benefit with State laws:
- Onboarded Tomás Acosta, Collaborative Pianist
- Held a meaningful Staff Retreat at the UUFSD campus on 10-8-22 with 12 in attendance.
- Working through our Scheduler to train a couple of additional Event Coordinators
- Onboarded our new Social Justice Coordinator, Chris Chambers
- Facilitated a grand Staff holiday luncheon; a great time was had by all!
- Worked with health insurance broker to align benefit with State laws
- Worked through UUA Fair Comp analysis due to complete re-vamping of this program
- Promoted Rose Littler-Riedel to Membership Development and Communications Coordinator
- Onboarded new Administrative Assistant, Jazmine Ramanathan, 20 hrs/week
- Helping Rev. Justine with logistics for Ministerial Intern and Assistant Minister positions
- Managed the UUA transition from TIAA-Cref to Empower for retirement funds; all retirement **benefits' deposits to employees accounts are going smoothly**.

Finances / Giving

- Increased parking spaces rental fee for preschool teachers by 7.9% starting Aug 1st.
- Parking lot closure rates for facilities rentals; new **fee schedule for "premium" and "non-premium" days/times**
- Annual Pledge Drive team member

Robie Evans, Director of Operations

- Helped facilitate annual internal review
- Helping Connie to get caught up after several health issues and the recent death of her mother
- Mortgage Refinance process: facilitated presentation of refi plan first to Finance Committee, then to the Board of Trustees, then to the congregation at the special membership meeting held on March 5th. Also facilitated voting process and supervised Ballot Committee for counting the ballots, then announced the results via an email to voting members. Signed loan docs and refi was funded!
- Looked into getting extra bookkeeping help for Connie; found the Office Mgr for the preschool for six hours / week
- Submitted Spirit Level Grant (matching) for \$50,000 on behalf of the 150th Celebration team. Submitted to Board for their approval 01-17-2023.
- D4\$ 2023 is underway!
- Budget team presented the FY23-24 budget to the Board on 5/16 and will be presenting to the congregation on 6/11 at annual meeting
- Facilitating opening another account with Neighborhood National Bank to deposit funds from FRB and Schwab to allow for fully FDIC secured deposits.

South Bay Facility

- Worked with landlord to try to solve weekday parking lot overflow issues
- Researched lease term, amount and square footage for all South Bay spaces to help new South Bay task force with help in future planning
- Joined South Bay Task Force to assist in moving logistics
- Completed and submitted City of Chula Vista **Conditional Use Permit (CUP), but it's in limbo** at the present time; pending parking lot solutions or move.

Outreach & Growth Fund Committee

- Filed fictitious Business Name Statement with SD County for "Front Street Productions," "Front Street Events," and "Front Street Productions and Events."
- Have produced many of these events, along with help from our production team. Sharing taking the lead with Louise Titlow and Marshall Voit.

Worship/LiveStream/Other Technology

- Back to regular indoor worship services in July 2022 in the Meeting House
- Trained staff on video/media in tech booth for services

Administrative / Other

- Ongoing help for South Bay Food Pantry throughout the year
- Ongoing facilitation/maintenance issues with our tenant, SD Cooperative Preschool
- Part of the 150th Celebration Team for 2023
- Converted hard-copy Board Binders to electronic binders through livebinders.com.
- Updated Ministry-Team related Org Chart reflecting all ministry teams with minister/staff leaderships.
- Help with Board Retreat logistics / set up
- Updated Succession Policy with Exec Team
- **Worked with City of San Diego Mayor's office to confirm Mayor Gloria's attendance at our January 2023 kickoff event for our 150th Celebration**
- In January, opened church office again! Tuesday through Friday 10 am to 2 pm, with a front desk volunteer.
- Working closely with Scheduler for calendar program transition, response times, and overall management of our fast growing and vibrant **facilities rentals income stream (we're over budget!!!)**
- Ongoing website updates
- Helped facilitate many surveys and many eblasts
- Met regularly with Staff, Exec Team, Board of Trustees, Finance Committee, Annual Pledge Drive team, Outreach and Growth Fund, MAG (Marketing Action Group), D4\$ Team
- **We've transitioned our scheduling software, ScheduleU to eSpace with many thanks to Pam Bates**
- Working closely with Rev. Justine on coverage during my sabbatical (July 10 thru Aug 20) and **who will do what while I'm away.**

Rose Littler-Riedel, Membership Development & Communications

Hello friends! While I am still with you as a member of your staff, my roles have changed. I am no longer in administration and have been promoted to programming as your Membership Development and Communications Coordinator. I am thrilled to be in this new role and am so thankful for the support of this community.

Membership Development

Purpose:

The purpose of Membership Development is to grow the congregation by welcoming visitors, guiding prospective members along the path to formal membership, fostering opportunities for growth and involvement, and supporting newer members as they integrate into the wider church community.

Since taking on the role of Membership Development in March 2023 we have seen nine new members join First UU! In my short time in this role I have held Steps to Membership Meetings, begun visitor outreach, implemented a GA scholarship program for new members, and completed Video Engagement Strategy 131 training and Visitor to a Full Spectrum of Member Engagement 141 training with UU Institute.

There is good and exciting momentum in Membership Development, and I am looking forward to the joys and challenges of growing this program. Looking toward the coming church year, here are programs being developed to engage and welcome visitors and new members into our community:

- ⇒ New member mixers
- ⇒ Regularly scheduled Steps to Membership meetings
- ⇒ **Regular “Welcome” refreshers for all our welcoming volunteers**
- ⇒ UU 101 Adult RE programming
- ⇒ Mid-week, evening, worship services

Communications Coordinator

I have also taken on the role of Communications Coordinator beginning in March 2023. In my time with this role I have completed a Social Media Strategy certificate program through HubSpot Academy. I have also begun taking a deeper look at the publications used by First UU to communicate both inside and outside of our community and have begun to implement strategies for ease of readability and further community engagement. In my role in communications, I work with our Marketing Action Group (MAG), keep our publications updated, and engage with social media to increase our community visibility.



Caring Ministry Team

Purpose of the group:

To provide opportunities to strengthen our church community via mutual care, support and service. The team also provides practical care information and resources available from First Church and the county. The Advisory Board meets quarterly with ministers to update, identify, coordinate, and make plans to address pastoral care needs.

Activities this past year:

- ◆ Provided loaner medical equipment to members and friends, and make sure equipment is available for visitors to campus.
- ◆ Provided, trained, and supported a team of Lay Ministers for both campuses. These volunteers were a Sunday listening presence, responded to Pastoral Care Cell phone calls, provided opening words for UU Seniors meetings, facilitated three church support groups, and provided one-to-one short term (usually six meetings) conversations with congregants paired by ministers. The team meets monthly with a minister and Gay Hybertson, the Lay leader. Those meetings involved skill building, and provided support where needed. In 2023 **the group had been reading and discussing “Transforming Conflict” by Rev. Teresa Cooley. During the year, the group conducted a Sunday worship service.**
- ◆ Worked to increase visibility of our services on our church website, and by regular announcements in the Window and Sunday Order of Service. In addition, ministers routinely make a statement during the Sunday service confirming the presence and purpose of a Lay Minister.
- ◆ Support groups were online with ZOOM and were well-attended.
 - ⇒ *Coping with Chronic Conditions* support group meets twice monthly, and is facilitated by Chris Smith.
 - ⇒ *Memory Matters*, a twice monthly meeting for folks with memory issues and their loved ones, continues to meet twice monthly. This group is led by Gay Hybertsen and Kathy Gilbert.
 - ⇒ *Caregiver support group* meets twice monthly, and is facilitated by Les Vivian.



(continued on next page)

Caring Ministry Team

Practical Care Network (PCN)

There were approximately 70 church members who continued to be willing to provide rides, meals, errands, etc. for members in need. PCN provided services 2-3 times per month, and was coordinated by Chris Smith.

Education and Resources

We were available to assist church folks find resources for variety of needs. Sometimes we directed **people to our Facebook Community Page. Other times we provided county resources. We've helped** with housing needs, caregiver needs, end-of-life resources. A table on the patio was staffed at least twice a month.

Anticipated goals/projects for next year:

- ◆ Seek to increase the number of Lay Ministers, and continue to seek diversity in that group.
- ◆ Plan a Lay Ministers worship service in July 2023.
- ◆ Discuss the formation of a grief support group with the ministers, Gay Hybertsen, and with a new church member who is interested in facilitating.

Lay Leaders: John Holl, Peggy Holl, Gay Hybertsen, Chris Smith and Les Vivian are current lay leaders of Caring Ministry Team, and continue to meet quarterly.



Larger UU Connections (LUUC) Ministry Team

Purpose: The purpose of the Larger UU Connections Ministry Team is to connect and coordinate First UU with the larger UU Community including:

- ◇ Camp de Benneville Pines
- ◇ Pacific Western Region (PWR)
- ◇ Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)
- ◇ UU United Nations Office (UU-UNO)
- ◇ UU Service Committee (UUSC)
- ◇ Partner Churches in Romania and the Philippines

Noteworthy achievements in 2022-2023 (for more detail see individual reports which follow)

- ◇ First UU donated \$5000 to Camp de Benneville Pines from 2022-2023 budget
- ◇ Encouraged and increased the number of Monthly Givers to Camp
- ◇ Raised money sending scholarships for 46 students as well as disaster relief funds for storm recovery for our Partner Church in the Philippines.

Future Plans: LUUC will continue to strengthen connections with UUA and its suborganizations.

Denominational Relations

The purpose of the Denominational Relations Team is to solicit, select and orient members to attend Annual UU General Assemblies (GA) and UU Regional Meetings (RM) and Camp de Benneville Pines Annual Meetings. Active members include John Schaibly and Jan Garbosky. This year the Camp de Benneville Pines annual meeting was held in person and zoom at the San Luis Obispo UU Church. First UU registered ten delegates, three in person and seven by Zoom. It was presided over by First UU member and President of the de Benneville Pines Board, Pat Gordon.

Ten delegates volunteered to attend (three in person and seven by ZOOM) the UU General Assembly in Pittsburg.

Friends of Camp de Benneville Pines (FdBP)

Purpose: To support de Benneville Pines (our UU Camp in the San Bernardino Mountains) through fund raising, publicity and hands-on-work projects and to provide support for scholarships for All Church Camp and youth camps.

Major Accomplishments (July 2022 – June 2023):

Friends of Camp de Benneville Pines helped meet the successful goal in the “Bear Hugs from Camp” year-end fundraiser to raise \$100,000 in matching funds in the area served by the Camp.

We thank all who are monthly givers and donors to Camp. The Camp experienced another closure in September 2022 due to the Radford Fire in Barton Flats, closing Hwy 38, but resumed for Thanksgiving. After heavy snow, concerns about spring melting continue, but Camp has opened to larger capacity events. We look forward to All Church Camp June 2-4, and full summer schedule.

The first Pacific Southwest Service Area Assembly with Camp de Benneville Pines Annual Business Meeting was held in San Luis Obispo April 21-23, 2023. It is expected that FUUSD will host the 2025 Assembly.

How Our Activities Have Happened:

Friends receive no church budget funds. We continue to be grateful for FUUSD’s budget item of \$5,000 given annually to Camp de Benneville Pines. We also are thankful for Staff support, including Tony Bianca’s gifts from his blanket sales.

Larger UU Connections Ministry Team

Ardath Schaibly spoke in person on January 22 about the Camp's value and need for money, which would be matched.

Ardath's Poetic Expressions booklet continues to sell, and \$645 has been given to Camp.

Friends held monthly meetings throughout the year, in-person, online, or hybrid. We submitted Window announcements to promote Camp activities.

Several San Diego Friends served as online delegates for the PSWSA Assembly. In-person attendees besides Pat Gordon, Camp Board President, were PJ MacPhee, Jane Takahashi, and Ardath and John Schaibly. The Schaiblys presented a workshop about the San Diego Friends of de Benneville Pines: A Workable Model for Camp Support - our 35-year history, how we support the Camp, and tips for starting a camp support group in other congregations.

Friends mourn the loss of our longtime Co-Chair Mac Downing. A memorial happened with ice cream and other refreshments at FUUSD in Bard Hall after service on Sunday, May 21 .

Anticipated Projects for next year:

- ◇ Continue to meet and fundraise
- ◇ Attract new leaders and younger Friends
- ◇ Promote increasing monthly giving to preserve the Camp until full attendance can be resumed.
- ◇ Resume fundraising for scholarships
- ◇ Promote Camp attendance

Lay Leadership: Ardath and John Schaibly led meetings. We thank Marie French for serving as recording secretary.

Our group is particularly grateful for the help of Friends Pat Gordon, Camp Board President, PJ MacPhee, Camp Champ, and Andy French, who has done outstanding work on several special Camp projects for Director Janet James.



Larger UU Connections Ministry Team

Partner Church, Romania

Purpose of group:

To sustain and nurture the relationship between First UU and our Partner Church, the Unitarian Church in Brassó, Romania.

Two major activities or accomplishments (July 2022 through June 2023) and How Did They Happen:

Communication between our congregations continued to be limited by the lasting effects of the Pandemic, including illness and deaths. Also, the retirement of the other longtime minister put more onto the shoulders of Rev. Benedek. He was quite ill himself for a few weeks, and in addition, late last year he was appointed Assistant Bishop of the Transylvanian district. **It's quite an honor, but it also brought quite a few more responsibilities.**



- ◇ More recently, the Brassó Church has called a young woman to be their Co-Minister (see photo). We shared this news with our Partner E-list and with the Congregation via the Window, highlighting the fact that the Unitarians are the progressive voice in that part of the world, leading other denominations in the ordination of women, among other issues. We were also able to make E-introductions between her and our First UU Ministers.
- ◇ Early this year we compiled and sent to our Partner E-list a retrospective of the history of Unitarianism in Transylvania (our Denomination recently celebrated the 450th Anniversary of the Edict of Torda, which happened in Transylvania, and was in effect the beginning of Unitarianism.) We included an overview of the nearly 40 years of our Partnership with the Brassó Church, highlighting the visits, the gifts and the learning both Congregations have experienced.

Anticipated Projects for next year:

It is still difficult to anticipate what comes next, given the ongoing war, as Romania borders both Ukraine and Moldova. Just this year, travel to Europe is returning to near normal, and we hope that this will make an in-person visit possible.

Lay leaders:

Dan Ratelle, *Chair*

Resource People: Ken Herman, Liz Jones

Larger UU Connections Ministry Team

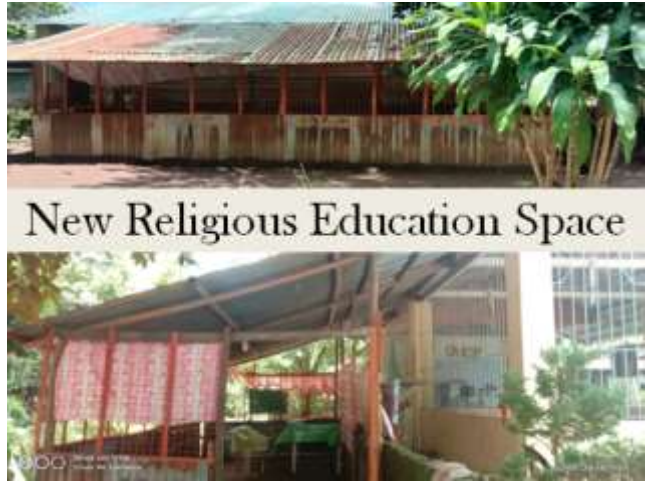
Partner Church, Philippines

Purpose – The Purpose of our Committee is to coordinate efforts to connect with and support the members of our Partner Church in Malingin on the island of Negros in the Philippines.

Two Major activities or accomplishments (July 2022 through June 2023):

Our major accomplishments this year were

1. Raising the funds to support 45 Elementary and High School Students
2. Increasing our ability to maintain communications with our Partner Church through the use of Facebook Messenger.



How our activities have happened for the past year:

We met as a steering committee either in person or by Zoom. Our fundraising was done through the **Church’s regular publications (The Window and First Words) as well as during the fifth Sunday offerings** this year,. Some email outreach was done to our regular supporters. We have also staffed a table on the patio occasionally.

Anticipated projects for next year:

We anticipate continued work in raising funds for the scholarship program, and working to raise awareness within our congregation of our Partnership with this wonderful congregation in the Philippines. We are looking forward to when we may be able to arrange another tour to visit the Island of Nagros and the Malingin congregation.

Lay Leadership:

- Liz Jones,
 Rev. Carolyn Owen-Towle,
 John Schaibly, Rick Zemlin



Larger UU Connections Ministry Team

UU@UN ENVOY

Purpose – The UU@UN Envoy is the local representative and liaison to the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Office at the United Nations. **The Envoy educates and promotes the congregation on the United Nations and its activities. Raises awareness in the congregation of global issues and helps further the 6th principle of Building World Community.** The Envoy also communicates with the UU@UN Office about local activities centered around the UN and local concerns about the UN.

Two Major activities or accomplishments (July 2022 through June 2023):

Rosalba Ciampi and Abby Marcato volunteered to take over as Envoy after Everardo retired in December, 2022, and provided onboarding and consulting as able. Bruce Knotts, retired Executive Director of the UU@UN gave a video sermon on Human Rights on December 11, 2022 during our Sunday service. Bruce also had a discussion after service, moderated by Rev. Justine, via Zoom on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

How our activities have happened for the past year:

- 1) Trick or Treat for UNICEF was entirely online.
- 2) **The youth Spring Seminar was virtual again in 2022. Everardo wasn’t sure if the Youth Group was meeting at church without a youth coordinator.**
- 3) Everardo recorded a video presentation for our United Nations Sunday segment of the service on October 23, 2022. He also announced his retirement as Envoy and introduced Rosalba and Abby as Co-Envoys.
- 4) Worked with Rev. Justine for a service commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 11, 2022. Co-presented the service with Rev. Justine.
- 5) Abby and Rosalba coordinated to attend the 2023 UN Engagement Summit in New York City in February, and presented the UU UN Envoys service in May of 2023, with an outcome of letter writing to local and state representatives supporting the fulfillment of the **United States’ annual UN dues, which continue to not be paid in full.**

Anticipated projects for next year:

- 1) Increasing access to United Nations based resources, education, and activities for the appropriate established working groups of the First UU Church.

Increasing member engagement in UNA-USA San Diego Chapter goals and events.

Providing routine easy access participation opportunities for advocacy in support of the 17 Sustainable Goals.

Lay Leadership: Everardo Aguilar (retired), Rosalba Ciampi and Abby Marcato as co-Envoys

Family and Lifespan Ministry Team

Sunday Lifespan Programming

The purpose of Sunday Religious Education (RE) is to provide a safe and nurturing space for children & youth under the age of 18 to learn about our faith and build connection to each other and the congregation. Sunday RE takes place at our Hillcrest Campus during the 10 am service after the Time For All Ages.

We have a total of 33 children and youth who participate in our Sunday RE Programming (not counting holiday visitors) but it is rare that all 33 attend on any given Sunday. On average, we have 12 children and youth attending weekly.



Tony Bianca



Lara Anderson

After returning from COVID, we slightly restructured our Sunday Programs and have been basing our weekly activities on the monthly Soul Matters Worship Themes. There are three groups offered: PreK - 2nd, 3rd- 5th, and 6th Grade and Above. Each group is lead by a staff member (Kate Collier, Tony Bianca, and Lara Anderson) assisted by two paid childcare workers (Laura Partido and Alex Riedel), requiring only one additional volunteer each Sunday.

We have begun offering Our Whole Lives programming again, beginning with OWL for Grades 7-9 this Spring. We plan to offer one session of OWL each semester in rotation such that all OWL levels are offered over a 3-year cycle. This Spring, eight students from across the region participated.

In addition to Sunday RE, children and youth have been involved in several multi-generation Sunday Services, our annual Easter Egg Hunt, the Rainbow Action Committee’s Day of Silence, Flower Communion, and weekly Time For All Ages.

Non-Sunday Lifespan Programming

In addition to Sunday RE, the Lifespan Team is responsible for programming that educates and builds community across all ages.

Each month we have a Parents’ Night Out when Lifespan Staff provides dinner and childcare from 6:00 - 8:30 pm so that parents have a night free to do whatever they like.

Our newly-revived Youth Group under the direction of Lara Anderson plans monthly events to build community. Since its start, the youth group has had a Pumpkin Carving, Tree Decorating, a day at the Jump Park, a Movie Night and a day at the Fleet Science Museum.

Our newly-revived Young Adult Group meets every Thursday evening for conversation & community, and has quickly established a core membership. The group is also beginning to explore ways they can connect to Social Justice activities in collaboration with Social Justice Coordinator, Chris Chambers.



Kate Collier

Tony Bianca and Jan Garbosky launched a very successful Adult RE Series this year in which a speaker was invited each month to present on a topic. The series took place on Zoom with an average of 30 people attending each month, many people watching the recording later, and a peak attendance of over 90 people!

Family Ministry Team

Speakers have included many national and regional leaders with a focus on issues that align with our 8th Principle. We also hosted one in-person **Adult RE Workshop**, “The Schedule and the Soul,” led by Rev. Arvid Straube.

Tony Bianca has released a monthly podcast, “The First Source,” in which he has interviewed a congregant about issues related to spirituality, church life, and life in general. After 12 episodes are completed, this podcast series will become a curriculum available for use across the UUA.

The Lifespan Team also hosted and/or supported several one-time, multigenerational events this year including: a beach bonfire, a trip to the Kumeyaay Cultural Center, the Christmas Eve Family Service, participation in the Pride Parade, All Church Camp, and the Tree Decorating potluck & Sing-Along.

Finally, the lifespan staff have engaged in a considerable amount of professional development and work at the regional & national level this year. Director of Lifespan Faith Formation, Tony Bianca, has completed several Renaissance Modules while working toward his Leadership Level Credential with the UUA, and attended the LREDA Fall Conference in Birmingham, AL. Youth & Young Adult Coordinator, Lara Anderson, is working with YUUP, a national community care network and multi-directional communication channel that centers BIPOC, trans/non-binary and neurodivergent youth and offers a transition zone for young people moving into emerging adulthood. And all three lifespan staff have been certified to teach Jr & Sr High OWL.



Social Justice Ministry Team

Social Justice Executive Team



The purpose of the Social Justice Executive team (SJET) is to act as a catalyst and resource to structure, lead, and support the **congregation's initiatives under the Social Justice Ministry Team**, and coordinate and/or promote social justice events and movements of importance to our community.

SJET has met every 2nd and 4th Wednesday online to discuss our Generosity Offering processes, hear reports from each Action Team, and discuss ways to further engage the congregation in social justice activities both within and outside of our church.

The dedication of the members of these Action Teams is a testament to the continued emphasis of First UU San Diego to fight for the many intersecting social justice struggles here in our region.

Current SJET members are Laura Ball, Maren Outwater, Newt Ferris, and James Long, and the team has been led by Rev. Omega

Burckhardt and Social Justice Coordinator Chris Chambers.

Kathy Smith served as liaison for both the Palestine/Israel Social Justice Team and SOLACE into 2023, and Rhea and Armin Kulmin attended meetings as part of their sustained organizing for the Climate Justice Action Group.

Rainbow Action organized a great deal of meaningful moments for the church through their extensive calendar of events and days of observance under the leadership of co-chairs Louise Titlow and John Keasler.

The Reproductive Justice Action Group, in no small part to the dedication of its members and co-chair, Karen Lamphere, raised critical funds for grassroots organizations providing care to those made most vulnerable by the chaotic chain of policy changes throughout the nation affecting abortion access with the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

SOLACE continued its support of detained migrants through its letter-writing programs, expanding them beyond Otay Mesa Detention Center to include those detained in other states in their distribution of basic legal information and personalized communications, and is resuming in-person visitations as much as pandemic-era restrictions permit.

The South Bay Food Pantry scaled up its food distribution operations even further this year, reaching almost 400 a week consistently. Volunteers and other community members have been meeting before distribution for a simple, bilingual spiritual communing initiated and led by Rev. Omega, called Gracias y Bendiciones, with recent musical support from the Music Director and Social Justice Coordinator.

Social Justice Ministry Team

As with the previous year, a strong emphasis has been put on developing lasting relationships with **Generosity Offering partners, and many of 2023's offerings furthered collaborations begun in years prior.**

In February, financial support through the Generosity Offering went to BLUU (Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism) as well as to help church member Isaac Castro with travel expenses related to the Finding Our Way Home Retreat for Religious Professionals of Color.

San Diego Organizing Project had a strong impact as GO recipient in the month of March, interacting with many community members face to face and further demonstrating the power of people through **their model of interfaith, intercongregational justice advocacy that partners with First UU's own group, Organizing 4 Justice.** In April, the Climate Justice Action Team led the focus on the urgency of **the climate emergency, with a strong and engaging presence from the month's Generosity Offering** Recipient, Environmental Health Coalition, and a powerful Earth Day service.

In April, longtime border activist and repatriated deportee Robert Vivar informed SJET, and subsequently First UU at large, of the imminent threat of new border wall construction to the sacred space that is Friendship Park, where families had been able to meet with their loved ones through the border wall and local religious and activist leaders have held Border Church since 2011. While SJET **responded by supporting Border Church through May 2023's Generosity Offering and community** members participated in the Stop the Wall! Build The Park! campaign, a simultaneous humanitarian crisis was unfolding at the border resulting from massive policy shifts and leaving thousands of asylum-seekers stranded between the two border walls. Beginning in April, church members Nina Douglass and Jeff Kline worked tirelessly to support these migrants trapped with no access to basic necessities by taking massive amounts of supplies graciously donated by our community members and delivering them directly, spearheading what would become a volunteer and multi-organization, 24/7 emergency relief effort in San Ysidro, and then identifying and supporting the many similar migrant camps springing up in other border regions.

As the situation at the border continues to develop, it's all the more evident that global issues like migration do not exist independent of other social justice issues, but are interconnected in many ways to the struggles for climate justice, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive justice, food justice, labor rights, and alternatives to mass incarceration and militarization. To bring together the range of passionate labors for social justice that our community members devote their energy to under one united network for spiritually-grounded action highlights the strength in our diversity and critical importance of working together, not alone, in these efforts.

SJET looks forward to further developing these collaborative efforts to better fight for social justice causes with an emphasis on intersectionality into the next year.

Social Justice Ministry Team

South Bay Food Pantry

Purpose: We aspire to let service be our prayer by addressing food insecurity and economic hardship among South Bay and First UU-affiliated individuals and families. Free food, diapers, feminine hygiene products and other necessary items are distributed weekly from the site of the First UU South Bay Campus. The pantry is **sustained through partnerships with the San Diego Food Bank and Feeding San Diego, “food rescue”** relationships with multiple area retail food establishments, and essential funding from FUUSD donations, pledges and grant-funding.

July 2022—June 2023:

In the spirit of previous years, the 2022-2023 church year has seen massive growth in the number of people benefitting from the South Bay Food Pantry, which is an Affiliate Organization under the Social Justice **Ministry Team. The project’s diaper pantry now distributes an average of 114 packs of diapers per week, up** from 87 the year before. Period products have started being distributed on Saturdays as well as Sundays, totaling 3600 free products distributed since June 2022. The average number of households receiving food each week at Saturday morning distribution has increased from 200 to 374, and reached nearly 600 unique households (2,428 individuals) in the most recent three weeks. However, since January, the amount of food being received by the pantry each week has decreased from 10,000 lbs to 4,000 as pandemic-era distribution efforts in the region have subsided. Though creative problem-solving and structural adjustments have permitted the pantry to continue providing food for the thousands of individuals it reaches each month in spite of this reduction in available food, the need to strengthen food supply networks in our post-pandemic world is a priority for the upcoming year.

A short time for spiritual grounding and communal connection, led by Rev. Omega under the name of **Gracias y Bendiciones, has become an important fixture of Saturday’s operations. Volunteers, church members and** guests share music, prayer and laughter in this time between food preparation and distribution. After food distribution, what started as an informal potluck has become a regular tradition, at times providing the **centerpiece for the pantry’s consensus-based, collective meetings.**

51 church-affiliated and 29 community volunteers have contributed their time and efforts to supporting the South Bay Food Pantry this year. The following lay leaders are *some* of those who have been especially instrumental in sustaining this critical resource for our South Bay community:

- * Valerie Jaques, *Food Pantry Coordinator and Church Liaison*
- * Deirdre Lonergan, *Organizer of Everyday Things*
- * Mindy Hochgesang, *Diaper Pantry Coordinator*
- * Dan Ratelle, *Midweek Bagging Coordinator*
- * Armin Kuhlman, *Finance Minder*
- * Barbara Davenport, *blog writer and pantry promoter*
- * Nina Douglass & Jeff Kline, *super involved volunteers*
- * Adrienne Kaplan, *super involved volunteer*
- * Rhea Kuhlman, *super involved volunteer*
- * Sara Ferguson, *super involved volunteer*
- * Nancy Toba-Laba, *super involved volunteer*
- * Manny Reyes, *super involved volunteer*

Social Justice Ministry Team

Rainbow Action Group

Accomplishments July 2022—June 2023:

- ◇ Continued monthly Coffee Klatch meetings
- ◇ Continued monthly Twilight Walks & Dinners in Balboa Park
- ◇ Celebrated Welcoming Days of Observance in Sunday services
- ◇ **Continued in San Diego Pride's DevOut, a faith community comprised of other LGBTQ affirming congregations in San Diego**
- ◇ July 2022—Helped to produce and present Pride Sunday Service
- ◇ July 2022 —Participated in Light Up the Cathedral
- ◇ July 2022—Helped to produce 2022 Pride Parade Trolley
- ◇ September 2022 —Produced Bisexual & Pansexual Seminar
- ◇ September 2022 —Participated as First UU team in AIDS Walk San Diego
- ◇ November 2022 —**Participated in Mama's Kitchen Annual Pie Sale Fundraiser by selling Thanksgiving pies** and hosting the only Hillcrest Pie drive-through distribution site at the Hillcrest First UU campus.
- ◇ November 2022 —Helped present Transgender Day of Remembrance Service at First UU
- ◇ December 2022—Presented and partnered with Tony Bianca of Adult Religious Education in HIV & Faith Webinar with Rev. Michael Crumpler, UUA Director of LGBTQ & Diversity
- ◇ January 2023 — Presented Inclusive Pronouns at UU Seniors meeting
- ◇ March 2023 —Successfully completed Welcoming Congregation Recertification
- ◇ April 2023 — presented an observance for the Day of Silence on the Patio



Anticipated projects for 2023 and 2024:

- ◇ Promote Diversity and Inclusion in Rainbow Action events and membership
- ◇ Participate in Pride Service, Parade and Festival
- ◇ Participate in Light Up the Cathedral and Stonewall Rally
- ◇ **Continue support of Mama's Kitchen through pie distribution**
- ◇ Continue support of AIDS Walk
- ◇ **Continue participation in San Diego Pride's DevOut**
- ◇ Highlight Transgender Day of Remembrance Service
- ◇ Attend and support the World AIDS Day celebration
- ◇ Highlight Welcoming Days of Observance in Sunday Services
- ◇ Present 6th Transgender Inclusion Workshop in Fall 2023
- ◇ Present an LGBTQ+ Anti-Bullying Seminar in Fall 2023
- ◇ Contribute to Our Whole Lives trainings
- ◇ Staff a patio table on the 1st Sundays of the month
- ◇ Continue monthly Coffee Klatch meetings on the 2nd Sundays
- ◇ Continue monthly Twilight Walks and Dinners in Balboa Park on the 3rd Thursdays

Lay Leaders: John Keasler, *Co-Chair*; Louise Titlow, *Co-Chair*

Social Justice Ministry Team

Climate Justice

Purpose: To create a spiritually grounded, informed and action-oriented community that provides hope for all beings and environmental equity through systemic action that stops climate change and environmental damage, and heals our planet.

Two major activities or accomplishments (July 2022 through June 2023)

1. Held monthly meetings and annual Earth Day service to grow membership and increase our visibility in the church and wider community. Topics included: How to reduce plastic use; **California's new solar equity law introduced by CA Rep. Chris Ward (Community Solar and Storage Act); San Diego River Park Foundation's efforts to clean up SD River and preserve its open space environs; County of SD's Regional Decarbonization Framework; advocacy work of SD Building Decarbonization Coalition; and Clean Energy plans of SD Port Commission.**
2. Helped organize annual Earth Day service with the Environmental Health Coalition and submitted weekly environmental actions for the Window and Social Justice News. Collaborated with groups such as Veterans for Peace, San Diego 350, San Diego Building Decarbonization Coalition, and Environmental Health Coalition on environmental actions.

How meetings have happened for past year:

We meet monthly on Zoom (except for August, November and December), usually on 2nd Sunday of the month, 3:30 pm. Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/1stUUClimateJustice>

Anticipated projects for next year:

1. Present Programs on topics such as: Should nature have legal rights?; fast fashion and its impact on the planet; are plastics really recyclable?
2. Collaborate with other organizations on various climate and environmental actions, e.g. Veterans for Peace No Military Air Shows movement; Environmental Health Coalition and San Diego 350 petition drive for mass transit; advocacy for SD Building Decarbonization Coalition; UU the Vote to support candidates for office who believe that the climate emergency is real and who will take leadership on this issue. We will continue to be both **educational and action oriented, and will attempt to resuscitate San Diego's UU Climate Cluster.**

Lay Leaders: Rhea Kuhlman and Armin Kuhlman, *Co-Leaders*

Social Justice Ministry Team

SOLACE Immigration Detention Visitation Action Group

SOLACE (Souls Offering Loving and Compassionate Ears) is a network of volunteers working to support and accompany those who are detained in our immigration system in our local region and beyond. As pandemic restrictions made in-person visitation nearly impossible the last few years, the group has shifted to focus on letter-writing as means of communication with detainees, although in-person visitations are slowly recently becoming possible once again. Pen Pal Program Manager Mayra Jones helps ensure that all who contact SOLACE in search of support can receive basic legal information. Others in the group’s leadership team, including Soledad (Cholé) Diaz, Jane Uhle, Rodrigo Ibanez de Sandi, and Kathy Smith, facilitate monthly informational workshops for community members to learn about the importance of supporting incarcerated persons in immigration proceedings from professionals and activists working in the field of migration, as well as from migrants themselves. SOLACE looks forward to further highlighting the needs of detainees, as well as the injustices of the immigrant detention system, in the coming years as border policies continue to shift and affect the makeup of the immigration situation in our border region.

Reproductive Justice

Reproductive justice focuses not only on access to safe and legal reproductive health care, but also the social, political, and economic inequalities across communities that historically have limited this access. As a voting member of the San Diego Coalition for Reproductive Justice (CRJ), our Reproductive Justice Group is an active partner with other community organizations working to **protect everyone’s right to make informed decisions** – free from government interference – about reproductive health. We also provide the church community with current and accurate information about the many issues related to this topic.



Major activities with the Coalition for Reproductive Justice (July 2022 through June 2023)

- ◆ Hosted the 50th Roe v. Wade Anniversary Celebration. The proceeds from this event allowed the CRJ to donate \$6,000 to La Frontera Fund. La Frontera Fund provides funding and logistical support to ensure those in the Rio Grande Valley--regardless of gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, race, class, immigration status, age, or religious affiliation--receive safe and compassionate reproductive care including abortion services.
- ◆ Held a membership event with 100% of the proceeds (\$3,500) going to Chelsea’s Fund, which provides abortion support to Wyoming residents seeking care in Wyoming and adjacent states.



Anticipated projects for next year:

The Reproductive Justice Group will continue to represent the church on the Coalition for Reproductive Justice; engage the church community and others in activities that broaden awareness about the many facets of the reproductive justice movement, and encourage action to create change.

Lay Leader: Karen Lamphere

Worship and Program Ministry Team

Music Ministry Team

Marshall Voit, *Music Director, Chalice Choir Director*

Lorelei Garner, *South Bay Music Coordinator, Women's Choir Director*

Andrea Spiero, *JUUL Tones Ensemble Director*

Tomás Acosta, *Collaborative Pianist*

Tony Bianca, *Handbell Ensemble and Children's Music Program Director*

Music Ministry

The 2022 - 2023 church year was the first full year of in-person music programming since the onset of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. All of our ensembles have been impacted by lingering uneasiness around in-person group singing, and all have former members who have not returned to participation. That said, all of **our ensembles have also incorporated new members that are contributing meaningfully to our congregation's musical life.**

Our year has featured some musical highlights! Last fall, we planned and delivered two Music Sunday services (one at each campus); together these two services featured performances from all of our **congregation's ensembles. In March, we welcomed vocal activist Melanie DeMore as our musician in residence; her wisdom, energy, and compassion reignited our community's enthusiasm for making music together, and the impact of her visit is still felt months later.** Our Easter Sunday service featured a combined choir of nearly 40 singers, who uplifted our congregation with an excellent performance. Finally, it should be said that you - the members of our congregation - are singing together beautifully! Our ministers and music team comment regularly on how meaningful it is for us to hear your voices fill our worship spaces. Thank you for singing with us.

This church year has also seen some adjustments made within our music staff team. In August, 2022, Tomás Acosta was hired as the congregation's Collaborative Pianist, and has grown nicely into the role over the last several months. Lorelei Isidro-Garner's role was modified in May, 2023, to allow her to focus more specifically on the music at our South Bay campus and her direction of our Women's Choir.

Below, you can read about each of our ensembles' activities over the past year. We are all looking forward to our summer choir program, which will feature Marshall, Lorelei, Andrea, and Tomás in conducting roles. And of course, we will be ready to fill our mouths and our hearts with song in the coming church year.

*Yours, in harmony,
Marshall Voit, Music Director*

Chalice Choir

This first full year of meeting in person has presented both challenge and opportunity, as we've readjusted to communal life, and as the choir and I continue to get to know each other as musicians and as people. Chalice Choir sings approximately twice per month at Sunday services. Our numbers are growing, from an average of about 12-14 singers per week last fall to about 20 per week lately. We hope to continue that trend and present a rich and varied program of choral music in the year to come. Chalice Choir rehearses on Wednesdays from 7 pm—8:30 pm in Bard Hall, and you are most welcome to join us!

Marshall Voit, Chalice Choir Director

(continued on next page)

Worship and Program Ministry Team

Women's Choir

The Women's Choir is going strong with Monday night rehearsals in Bard Hall, from 7 pm — 8:30 pm, and we average about one performance a month at Sunday services. During the year, we explored the possibility of a different name, but ultimately decided that "Women's Choir" best reflected who we are - a wonderful community of women with a passion for singing together. It is a joy to work with them and I am excited about the music we're going to make together in the upcoming year.

Lorelei Isidro-Garner, Women's Choir Director

South Bay Singers

Our South Bay Singers rehearse every Sunday at our South Bay campus, and sing monthly at South Bay Sunday services. During services, we lead the congregation in song and perform well-loved choral pieces. Sarah Erman has been a wonderful addition to the group as our accompanist. Sarah is a sensitive pianist, **amenable to learning new styles... having her on board is a delight!**

In addition to the fabulous South Bay Singers, many guest musicians have graced our South Bay campus with their talents, including Paul Tillery on bass, Aaron Irwin on percussion, Jon Garner on guitar, Charlie Chavez on percussion, Erik Hybertson on sax and clarinet, and of course, our whole First UU music team.

Lorelei Isidro-Garner, Music Coordinator

Handbells Program

The Handbell Ensemble has returned to indoor rehearsals in the Meeting House every Monday from 5:30 pm — 7 pm, and performed **bi-monthly at our Hillcrest Services. We've consolidated from two ensembles (one for beginners and one more advanced) to one in response to the reality that all the same "ringers" were participating in both groups.** This shift aligned well with our developmental goal of right-sizing our programming to meet the congregation's needs. With two new members joining us this year, the ensemble continues to be a fulfilling musical experience for those who participate, and adds to the richness of our diverse musical programming at First UU.

Tony Bianca, Handbells Program Director

JUUL Tones

During this church year, members of the JUUL Tones have, like many others, balanced our love of singing and togetherness carefully with health considerations for each other and our communities. As we have begun to be able to practice together again, and finally to sing for the congregation, our love for music-making has been re-invigorated. We are also resuming our efforts to prepare for and provide singing visits and song circles in circumstances where music can serve as a source of solace and/or support. We hope to begin offering site visits and other forms of musical service to the community again this fall.

Andrea Spiero, JUUL Tones Director

Children's Music Program

Our Children's Music program has been the slowest aspect of our music program to be revived since we returned to in-person services. Tony Bianca and program assistant Kate Collier have led sporadic children's music programming throughout the spring, but Tony, Marshall, and our ministers and music staff will be focusing on developing a robust music program for our Children and Youth in the coming church year.

Worship and Program Ministry Team

UU Men's Fellowship (UUMF)

Mission Statement for the Group:

Our mission is to support men in the quest for lives of compassion, integrity, responsibility, and balance. We are a caring, intentionally diverse brotherhood, committed to social justice, and offering opportunities for intimate sharing, personal growth, and spiritual deepening. The fellowship encourages men in their development as sons, fathers, and brothers.



Membership:

UUMF is an active and vital organization of men in our church, both members and friends, who participate in our many activities and who are committed and **aspire to do men's work. Anyone who identifies as a gay, straight, bi and transgender man is welcome.**

Leadership:

A Steering Committee is the organizing body of the group.

Activities:

- **Regular "Fourth Monday" meetings which include a potluck and a discussion on a topic pertinent to men.**
- **Special "Fourth Monday" meetings which include:**
 - An annual Yule Log meeting in January to acknowledge the men who have departed.
 - A Welcoming Banquet in February.
 - Three summer barbecue picnics, usually in Balboa Park.
- **UUMF sponsors Mens' Support Groups, of five to eight men, that meet at least twice a month in member's homes and at church. Currently there are fourteen such groups.**
- **Two Major Mens' Renewals. Note, these are called "Renewals" rather than "Retreats" because we are not retreating from our community. Our UUMF Fall Renewal Weekend is held in Julian, CA and our Spring Renewal is held at Camp deBenneville Pines. Attendance for the Fall Renewal is mainly from the immediate San Diego area and it draws about 45-50 participants. The Spring Renewal draws from a wider area and has drawn over 80 men in pre-Covid years.**
- **Renewal Planning:** Our planning sessions are held both in person and over zoom and they are open to all interested men. This is an activity of collaborative brainstorming regarding our topics and actual detailed hammering out the details of hosting our Renewals.
- Our steering committee meetings are open to all members of the UUMF.
- The UUMF patio table aids us in greeting new visitors to First UU and possible new members of the UUMF. We greet and welcome men every Sunday.
- Our mailing list of approximately 150 men and UU Churches within the Clusters serves as the primary communication link to the fellowship.
- The UUMF volunteers to help with the social hour after the Sunday Service on the first Sunday of each month.
- Our full mailing list for activities such as our Spring Renewal at Camp de Benneville Pines has about 345 men who have direct connections with First UU and other congregations in our San Diego Cluster, the Southern California region or who have participated in UUMF sponsored events such as our Bi-Annual Renewals.

Worship and Program Ministry Team

Integration with First UU Outcome Statements:

The mission and purpose integrates well with the many of the stated outcomes of First UU. Specifically:

- We are an intentionally diverse, multicultural and welcoming community where gifts can be discovered, nurtured, and shared.
- We provide programs that appeal to the hearts, minds and values of our members.
- We maintain respectful, caring safe spaces which foster individual and group growth in spirit, knowledge, compassion and service.
- We are generous with our resources of time, talents and treasures to First UU and to others in need.
- We recognize the importance of mutual support.
- We cherish the compassionate relationships that can be forged through a fellowship of men.
- We are committed to care for and support each other in times of joy and sorrow .

Support of our Strategic Plan:

As a caring, inclusive community, the UUMF compliments the overall work of First UU to provide welcoming opportunities for socialization and service. Our annual banquet and summer picnics often serve as a first introduction to our fellowship of men.

We have done work projects to maintain and improve the Hillcrest campus and to help Camp deBenneville Pine. We **have several men who support the work at the South Bay Food Pantry. We also provide peer support through our men's support groups.** Also, UUMF members have been strong financial supports of First UU and Camp de Benneville Pines.

The UUMF supports the work of the Welcoming Committee by having our UUMF Table on the patio after services and by greeting as many men as possible.

During our Renewals, we form into small "Kinship Groups" to facilitate confidential, respectful listening and sharing.

This means that we have a cadre of experienced Kinship Leaders, many of which volunteered as Listening Circle Facilitators, who can be asked to assist the ministerial team when needed.

The UUMF receives support through the administrative staff and the use of church facilities without cost but the UUMF does not receive any funds.

Goals for the Next 1 to 3 Years:

To work with the First UU Young Adult coordinator to see how we as "elders" can meet the needs of younger men. To continue outreach to other UU men in the San Diego cluster and encourage them to participate in UUMF activities. **To continue to assist other communities outside of the San Diego area when they seek to start or expand a men's fellowship in their community.**

Lay Leadership:

Co-Conveners for the Fellowship are John Keasler, Chris Guelich and Les Vivian. The steering committee includes Denny Braun, Mike Dorfi, Ron Evans, Andy French, Brandon Hall, John Holl, John Keasler, Armin Kuhlman, Bob Riger, Derek Staats, Les Vivian and Peter Woodbury. **The Mens' Support Groups are organized by Armin Kuhlman. The patio table is maintained by Mike Dorfi.** The 4th Monday meetings are coordinated by John Keasler, Chris Guelich and Les Vivian with technical support from Andy French and John Holl. The Spring and Fall Renewals are planned by a large planning committee and led by Mike Dorfi, Andy French, Brandon Hall and John Holl.

Worship and Program Ministry Team

Archives Committee

The purpose of the Church Archives is to preserve the history of our church community here in San Diego, and to make the material available for members and researchers now and in the future.

Activities or accomplishments (July 2022 through June 2023):

The major accomplishment of this year has been the continued transition of our Archival materials from binders into acid free storage boxes and the entry of items into a data base so that items can be found more easily.

The Second accomplishment has been working with the 150th Anniversary Committee to work on supporting activities to celebrate this year.

How our activities have happened for the past year:

In general work is done on the archives once a week. Transfer of material needs focus so is usually done by one individual. Research on items for the 150th team and other requests are often done by more than one individual.

Anticipated projects for next year:

We will continue our work of transferring materials and cataloging them. We will also continue to support anniversary plans.

Committee Membership

Liz Jones, *Chair*, Rev. Tom Owen-Towle



Worship and Program Ministry Team

UU Seniors

UU Seniors is a program designed by older adults to encourage living the senior years of our lives to the fullest. Each third Saturday of the month we gather at 10 am to learn about a topic of interest and to share experiences. Lively discussions in small groups contribute to a sense of community among attendees.

From practical everyday needs to spiritual and emotional support, we cover a range of topics for living our lives to the fullest. Topics from July 2022 through June 2023 included Understanding Inclusive Pronouns; Residential Housing Options for Seniors; Downsizing; and the Art of Leaving this World in Style. Other programs were conversations with Church ministers and leaders on **current church issues**. **Our page on the Church's website archives the video of each program so that folks who miss a program can view it online.**

After the past two years of hosting our programs on Zoom only, we decided to meet as a hybrid meeting with some folks at home on Zoom and others in person in Bard Hall. With the help of John Schaibly, we started hybrid meetings in November 2022. For most programs 50% or more attend on Zoom. In the coming year we will continue to use the hybrid meeting format to create programs that promote living life to the fullest. Program suggestions are welcome.

Throughout the past year, UU Seniors programs were planned by Marv Pulliam, Caroline Clark, Denny Braun, Roger Lundbohm, and Joan Helland who served as chairperson.



Worship and Program Ministry Team

Memorial Wall/Memorial Garden

The purpose of this committee is to: act as liaison between the artist, Jerry Thiebolt, and the church member, who purchases a brick for the Memorial Garden Wall and to maintain current and accurate spreadsheets for both walls. The committee, in concert with a staff member, oversees this process.

During the past several years brick sales have slowed down quite a bit for many reasons. In 2022 four bricks were purchased for the Memorial Garden Wall. Bricks for the Memorial Wall have been sold out since 2014.

Bricks may be purchased by current church members, for future use by themselves, or for members of their immediate families. Jerry installs bricks once a year shortly before Easter.

Just before Easter 2023, two bricks were placed on the Memorial Wall for Carole Newall and Bobbi Beer.



The projects and goals for the foreseeable future are:

1. Obtain executors names and contact information for members who have purchased bricks but have not yet died for the Memorial Wall.
2. Continue placing of bricks for members on the Memorial Wall.
3. Install bricks for members long passed. In the past Betty Boone has provided invaluable assistance in procuring information in accomplishing this goal. Her time and effort is greatly appreciated.

Contact: Elaine Durson
619-518-4383
eballerinad@gmail.com

Worship and Program Ministry Team

[UU Christian Study Group](#)

Purpose of Group:

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Christian Study Group. We are a community of non-creedal Jesus followers and the Jesus curious in the history and tradition of Unitarian Universalism. We are members and friends of this congregation who share a common respect for the message of unconditional love taught by Jesus in the Gospels and in the Christian tradition from which Unitarians and Universalists emerged. We study all aspects of the world's religious and spiritual traditions so that this light may better shine in our own lives and in the world.

Reflection on the Past Year:

While we were still meeting outdoors, we developed a workshop called "What's In Your Spiritual Toolbox." We examined and worked with traditional prayer, meditation and chanting, both Western and Asian, and the deep work of contemplation. We also explored the lives of the Desert Fathers and the Desert Mothers who so embodied the tradition of contemplative prayer and what it might have to say to us today. We then took a **very thorough look at the work of journalist Nicholas Wade in the "Faith Instinct" which examines the very controversial idea that religion is product of human evolution and how it is playing out in the conflict between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.** It was a joy to be back in the Welcome Center and The Meeting House. We honored two long-time members of our congregation who passed away this winter, Bill Kizer and Joel Johnson. Both Bill and Joel were 90 and had been active in the UUCSG for many years. Bill Kizer's daughters joined us and two months later Joel's cousins joined us for tributes that shared stories and insights into the lives of these two remarkable souls who we had come to know so well .

Looking Ahead:

A just and compassionate life and world is the very core of a Unitarian Universalist spirituality. The UUCSG provides thoughtful and challenging workshops and discussions to support individuals and the whole community in traveling this path with Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Jung and/or the Goddess. For the near future, we are planning on meeting just once a month. During the next three months, we will share and discuss what it's like to follow Jesus as a Unitarian Universalist in the 21st Century. We will consider the differences between following Jesus and following a "church" or a "theology." The first Jesus communities, before Paul and the emergence of what we know as the church, had a lot in common with the UU ideal of the Beloved Community.

Lay Leadership
Curran Jeffery







