



First
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Church of San Diego

FirstWords

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Our Sustainable Future: Go? Stay? Redevelop/Share?

by Jan Garbosky

One of the congregation's Developmental Goals is to "decide whether to remain in our Hillcrest campus or sell the property and relocate." That work had begun before the pandemic and has been on hold since 2020. The Board and Rev. Justine promised the congregation the discussion would be addressed this church year. As a first step, at a congregational meeting on January 28th, our ministers led us in a conversation where a third possibility was introduced—to redevelop the Hillcrest campus for joint use with another entity (which could be UCSD). The next step has been to establish a team to oversee/coordinate a process leading us to a decision.

On March 17, the Our Sustainable Future (OSF) Steering Team held its first meeting. Led by Rev. Justine, members include:

- Craig Darling
- Robie Evans
- Andy French
- Jan Garbosky
- Lawrence Hess
- Steve Howard
- Dave Hunt
- Armin Kuhlman
- Sue Marberry
- Sarah Ormond
- Stephanie Webber
- Carolyn Woodbury

At the June 9, 2024 Annual Meeting, the team plans on presenting the work that's been done to:

- Determine the true cost of staying by examining every system on campus to completely understand our deferred maintenance status—what needs to be corrected; what it will take to maintain our current buildings and grounds. (A company has been contracted to do this work.)
- Review our current property

usage/non-usage—by us and by outside entities.

- Survey the current real estate market prospects with the help of a commercial real estate professional.
- Investigate "redevelopment" possibilities by conducting a needs assessment to determine:
- What we need to be a better church living into and serving our mission.
- Who to approach to build a totally new, redeveloped campus (including new buildings) as one of three bids.

As we look to the future, it's of utmost importance to our health as a religious community to keep our mission as a congregation and our covenant with each other at the heart of all we do. Our individual and group discussions about the process, our assessments and findings, and our differences of opinion must be grounded in our love for First UU and each other.

The Steering Team is committed to providing clear, timely information on an ongoing basis and creating opportunities for input from individual congregation members and friends as well as Ministry Teams and their groups and First UU staff. A webpage including a form to receive feedback and questions has been established. We look forward to your thoughts and ideas as we move forward to a future that sustains us and our relationships for many years to come—regardless of if we stay, go, or redevelop our First UU Hillcrest campus.

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Interdependence

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

*We are one,
A diverse group
Of proudly kindred spirits
Here, not by coincidence—
But because we choose to journey—together...
~ Rev. Dr. Hope Johnson*

Our worship theme for April is Interdependence, a core principle of our Unitarian Universalist faith, that we're a part of the interconnected web of all existence. This principle of interdependence is as countercultural now as when it was adopted by the UUA General Assembly in the 1980s.

Independence is one of our nation's founding principles, and yet, the idea of independence really is a myth. Henry David Thoreau, who "lived off the land" at Walden Pond brought his laundry home to his mother—even Thoreau needed others to survive. There are countless examples of "self-made men," who have acquired great wealth through the unpaid or underpaid labor of others. We so admire creative entrepreneurship, but let's not fail to acknowledge the important contribution of everyday laborers who bring dreams into being.

In 1648, our religious forebears adopted the Cambridge Platform, which called for independent, autonomous congregations to be in covenant with one another, providing support, encouragement, and when needed, correction. We Unitarian Universalists love the "independent, autonomous" part of our covenant, but we often neglect the second part—to be there for one another within and beyond our own walls.

Congregations that were planted and encouraged into being by First UU are thriving today, and we continue to share resources, mourn together, and celebrate in times of joy. At First UU, we share responsibility for the work of the church. Hosting an interfaith shelter for two weeks required hundreds of hours of work to prepare and hundreds more to run the shelter. Because of our efforts, 12 people had a safe, warm, and welcoming place to call home. Our South Bay Food Pantry feeds over 400 families each week through the work of many volunteers. I marvel each Sunday, walking down to the Meeting House, at all the buzzing activity going on—at the preparations to welcome one another into a place and a moment of worship.

In a congregation of this size, it would be difficult for direct democracy to function, with everyone weighing in on every decision. You elect a board of trustees to capture and articulate your goals and vision. Then the board entrusts the ministers and staff to carry out the day-to-day operations.

In the coming weeks, we'll start determining the best way to remain a vital, financially sustainable community of faith in San Diego. Teams are forming to consider: the true cost of staying in this place, the possibilities for other properties, and the newly considered third option of finding a partner to develop this campus for mixed use, perhaps including housing alongside First UU.

You'll be asked to share your hopes and dreams and then be part of the decision we'll make together by early next church year (2024-25). I look forward to your full participation in discerning the best path for Our Sustainable Future.

We are, as Reverend Dr. King reminds us, "tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made."

Let us remain mindful of the power of our shared commitments lived out loud.

Peace and Love to you,

Justine

April Worship Schedule

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

April's Theme:

"Interdependence"

Throughout the month of April, we're exploring the spiritual theme of interdependence. Interdependence can be thought of as connection, mutuality, or symbiosis. A recognition that we belong to one another. The new proposed language in Article II talks about the value of interdependence in this way: "We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it. We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships." This month, join us to explore our connection to one another, and how that connection inspires us to live.

Sacred Witness

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



Last month I wrote about our Tenebrae service and, as I tried to describe the service in a sentence or two for advertising, I found it challenging to come up with a word to describe what the congregational experience would be. The usual words I'd use for a service like "worship" or "celebrate"

didn't really work because the content of "Tenebrae" is pretty grim, focusing on themes of lamentation, pain, and sorrow.

Finally, I landed on the word "witness" because I felt like that's what the service called us to do. There wasn't really a call to action nor a sense that one would leave feeling uplifted or nourished. Quite the contrary, one might leave feeling heavy-hearted, so it felt most appropriate to set people's expectations such that they'd be prepared for a service that ends without a resolution.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized the act of witnessing might be an appropriate way to describe other things too. Ideally, I hope everyone leaves a service, program, or event feeling like they got something out of it that's nourishing or sustaining, but I'm also aware not every experience is going to have that effect. In over four decades of doing church work in one form or other, I've certainly had my share of experiences that landed with a big "meh." There are songs I've sung that I don't particularly like, events I've attended (or even led!) that weren't my cup of tea, and rituals that didn't inspire me.

If that was my experience week after week, I'd certainly need to do some discernment about my relationship to the community. But, when those experiences have been less frequent, I've tried to reframe my experience and see it through the lens of witnessing. Let me explain.

Imagine you're at an elementary school recital (I've been to my fair share) and one of the children in the show is someone you care deeply about. You're likely not there for a first-rate musical performance or high-quality drama. Maybe you get some of that, but I suspect it's more likely that you're there for support, encouragement, and that feeling of deep connection you feel when you see someone you love taking a risk or doing something they've worked hard on. In other words, you're there as a witness.

Witnessing can be a sacred act, especially when we're acting as a witness to something that's important for someone else but not particularly so for us. Again, I don't think this should be our experience all the time, but in a diverse, multigenerational community, it's almost a given it's going to be your experience some of the time.

I'm reminded of a quote sometimes attributed to Dorothy Day: "Everyone wants a revolution, but nobody wants to do the dishes." When we think about the kind of community we want to build for the next generation, there will hopefully be a lot of excitement, celebration, nourishment, and joy, but there will also be quite a bit of spiritual dishwashing to be done—plenty of opportunity for witnessing.

So, I might challenge you, as we move into the spring and think about how we might participate in all the reawakening and rebirth, to look for opportunities to bear witness. Is there an event or activity in our congregation you might not otherwise attend? Maybe you'll consider going anyway, even if just to be another person there. And who knows, maybe you'll also be moved from witness to worship as you discover a new aspect of community you didn't know you needed. If not, rest assured you're doing the sacred work of being there for someone else who needs you.

Sue Marberry, Board Treasurer

by Nancy Fisk

Sue Marberry is our outgoing Board Treasurer. She came to First UU in the late 90's. She was inspired to be on the Board because she was interested in doing more for First UU because she gets so much being a member here.

After she retired, she was able to devote more time to First UU and became Board Treasurer. Her first term was from 2016-2018. She served a second term starting in 2021, at the request of Julie Forest. "I love being on the board because I love knowing what's going on in the congregation." She also appreciates being appreciated for her skills with financial data. "It's exciting to have a voice in decisions that are being made."

Her duties as Treasurer are to inform the board and the congregation about First UU's finances. She summarizes the financial statements she receives from the CPA consultant for First UU. A part-time bookkeeper keeps track of First UU expenses and pledges, and sends reports to Sue and Robie, our

Director of Operations.

The Board Treasurer also chairs the Finance Committee. Once a year, Robie and Rev. Justine, our lead minister, work out that budget with the finance committee, who then approve the budget, sending it to the Board for their approval. The congregation then approves the budget at the Annual Meeting.

Sue points out that her financial summaries are available in the Board packet posted online each month on the member section of the website, the Thursday before the Board meeting. The Board meeting is held on the 3rd Tuesday

of the month. Finance Committee meetings are open to any who wish to attend, although visitors are only allowed to observe the meeting and not to participate.

"I've found it so valuable to work on something that is extremely rewarding. It means a lot to make a real contribution to the future of the church."



Gay Hybertsen, Board member

by Nancy Fisk

40 years ago, when Gay and her husband wanted to get married, they looked around for a church they wanted to be married in, and found Rev. Tom Owen-Towle, who is First UU's minister emeritus. After the wedding, they decided to join the congregation.

Gay, a therapist, is active in the Memory Matters group. She's also a consultant for the Lay Pastoral Care Team and has participated in First UU's Looking Glass Theatre group. She's also played in the handbell choir.

Before joining the Board, Gay couldn't participate as a Board member because she had a regular work meeting on Tuesday nights. A year and a half ago, Cora Pendergast asked her to finish a term for a Board member who resigned before their term was up. "I liked it more than I thought I would," Gay says. She also says you get a sense of what the big picture is, how First UU is run. "It's worth doing. There's so much to work on."



One of the current issues the Board is working on is Conflict Resolution, which is near and dear to Gay's heart. She loves being a part of the congregation, especially since she's known some of the people here for 40 years. She likes being part of a church that doesn't adhere to a literal interpretation of the Bible, because that's now how she was brought up. She believes in living a spiritual life and not in one where you must believe everything by rote.

If your interest in becoming a Board member has been piqued by these two profiles, and we hope it has, talk to a Nominating Committee member when you next see them. They are Christy Anderson, Randy Brinton, Susan Riegel Harding, Mitch Mitchell, and Sarah Ormond. Let them know of your interest in being on the board.

For more information, send an e-mail to nomcom@firstuusandiego.org 858-449-0431.

Camp de Benneville Pines Annual Assembly meeting and Youth Conference

by John Schaibly

The Annual Assembly meeting for Camp de Benneville Pines will be held in Ventura, April 26 - 28th, 2024. The theme is Promoting Justice: Amplifying Voices at the Intersections of Race, Class and Environment. The Plenary speaker, Hop Hopkins, has been a catalyst, thought leader, and social change strategist for over 25 years. He's the former Director of Organizational Transformation for the Sierra Club. Another speaker will be Lucas Zucker, the Co-Executive Director of CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy). CAUSE creates grassroots power through community organizing, leadership development, coalition building, civic engagement, policy research, and advocacy to attain social, economic, and environmental justice for working-class and immigrant communities in California's Central Coast.

There will also be a Youth conference for the Pacific Southwest Service Area (PSWSA) at this meeting. This one-night/two-day event is overseen by amazing Camp Leaders, UU Religious Educators, Youth Advisors, and Adult Volunteers. The retreat is open to active UU youth currently in 7th through 12th grades. For more information, contact Marianne Swift-Gifford at cm@uucamp.org.

De Benneville Pines (dBP) is a camp in the San Bernardino mountains, above Redlands, owned by UU congregations of the Pacific Southwest Service Area. This includes not only San Diego Cluster congregations, but all other UU congregations in Southern California, Arizona, Nevada and Hawaii—many of which use dBP as a precious resource.

This conference is important to First UU because over 200 of our members and friends

attend Camp de Benneville Pines and volunteer at the camp in many roles. The business items will include the election of board members and the camp proposed budget, as well as director Janet James' annual report on the status of the camp and Pat Gordon's Board President's annual report.

In addition to the Annual Business Meeting (required by law), the Assembly will feature workshops, music, and entertainment. This year, Emma's Revolution will present a rousing folk music concert Saturday night and a songwriting workshop. The conference will give you the opportunity to meet other active UUs and share solutions to problems all congregations face. For more details, click [here](#).

Hosted by the UU Church of Ventura and supported by Chalice UU Fellowship of the Conejo Valley, home hospitality is available. You can room in the home of a fellow UU, which makes the trip to Ventura quite affordable. For home hospitality information, contact Michael Akseven (makseven@yahoo.com or 805-208-0344 text best) or Susan Franzblau (susan.franzblau@gmail.com or 805-276-6359).

First UU needs 10 delegates to vote on camp business. They can be present at the Ventura Church or be present on ZOOM. In recent years we've always filled our quota. If you'd like to be a delegate, please contact John Schaibly (johnschaibly@gmail.com). The only requirement is that you've been a member of First UU for over one year. Registration fees are very reasonable, using a sliding scale. In person registration \$85-\$110 and virtual attendance \$60-\$85. The price range accommodates your ability to pay. Registration is the same whether you're a delegate or not.

EMMA'S REVOLUTION

7:30 PM
FRIDAY
APRIL 26TH
2024

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

First Unitarian
Universalist Church
of San Diego
298 W Arbor St.
San Diego, CA
92103

"Fervent and heartfelt"
~The New York Times

Free admission.
Registration
required.
Tickets at

 Free parking
in our
accessible lot.

Funded by the
First UU Outreach
and Growth Fund



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 Rev. Kristen Kuriga, Assistant Minister
 Swamini Adityananda Saraswati, Intern Minister
 Rev. Lone Broussard, Affiliate Minister
 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Everett Howe, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey,
 Rev. Julie Forest and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Tony Bianca, Director of Lifespan Faith Formation
 Marshall Voit, Music Director
 Rose Littler-Riedel, Communications Coordinator & Chaplain Intern
 Lara Anderson, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator
 Kate Collier, Program Assistant
 Jazmine Ramanathan, Administrative Assistant
 Corina Macias, South Bay Ministry Assistant
 Pam Bates, Scheduler
 Andrea Spiero, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
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 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
 Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Minister Emeritus

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