



First
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Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

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Livestreaming: An interview with Ray and Robie Evans, Rose Riedel, and Tony Bianca

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Tony Bianca says that setting up a livestream for Sunday services is like creating a live theater stage and a television recording studio on campus, outside, every week. The setup takes a crew two hours before the service. Our first livestreamed, recorded service in three languages, was on November 21, 2021.

First UU staff have been researching doing a livestream long before the pandemic. In March 2020, when services could no longer be in person for an indeterminate time, the staff began their set-up in Rev. Tania's office, with each speaker, or musician, entering and exiting as their part was over. In the next iteration, the service was recorded in the Meeting House. Finally, the staff settled on a Zoom format, that allowed a director to have live portions of the ministers speaking from their homes, with the ASL interpreter, interspersed with recorded versions of hymns, choir performances, bells, storytelling, and captioning in Spanish. This required rehearsals during the week and recordings on Saturday to be projected on Sunday at the usual meeting time of 9:30 am.

Once we were able to meet on campus outside, recording a separate service on Saturday, to be broadcast on Sunday, and a live service on campus became double the work for the ministers and other participants. Taking Saturdays out of the equation for staff became necessary and needed.

First, the technology needed to be lined up. Fortunately, we have the Renewal and Growth Fund from an anonymous donor. This includes a technology fund, set up to improve the technology in the Meeting House and Bard Hall. For the livestream, the staff had to coordinate cameras, monitors, HDMI connectors and audio boards, computers etc. Ray estimates that 19 things need to be plugged in during every service.

Instead of setting up several small tables every week, Ray determined that a special table for all the technology should be built, that could be wheeled out onto the patio. Then a stage was built for the chancel, with room for the pulpit, the chalice and other pieces as needed. To hide the wires needed for the livestream, Ray built a flower box that goes in front of the chancel stage. Finally, a platform was made, with ramps, pulleys, and tie downs for a four-television array to be placed on every

week.

Then there was the staff required to make it all work. Ray runs the audio, Rose, our office manager, does the videos, and Robie is the director for the cameras. Tony assists with pre-recorded videos of hymns and anthems, created by the music staff and other musicians in the congregation. Others who assist with the setup are Jeff Pekarek, our main sound technician; Mark Epler, event coordinator; Joshua Morrison, our janitor; and Kate Collier, program assistant, who set up chairs and put up the curtain.



During the service, there are three cameras, all with specific functions. The first camera does a wide shot of the patio. The second camera does closeups of the ministers, the musicians, and the chalices.

Finally, the third camera is zoomed in on the ASL interpreter for the service. Two different audio outputs are needed for the patio and for online sound.

Something changes every week, according to Ray. The lighting of the ministers and worship associates has been adjusted. Shade cloths have been added to counteract the effect of direct sun. A trough for the wires was put down to run from the chancel to the tech table. Robie dreams of other changes: Putting titles of the speakers on the livestreaming, like the local news. Having our logo in the corner. Training others to take over the different positions eventually.

For now, this is a challenge the staff is enjoying meeting. "It helps that the four of us most involved have a theater background and are used to jumping in where we're needed," says Tony.

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Ever Turning, Ever Unfolding

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



Dear Ones,

We turn a page on our calendar this month, marking the end of a wild year and the beginning of another. While I'm becoming more and more dependent on my electronic calendar, I still love a good wall calendar. There's something satisfying in deciding on a theme for the year, focusing my attention on that from different angles each month. Beaches, labyrinths, Buddhist quotes, images from

Grateful Dead live shows, Van Gogh paintings, Mexican sugar skulls, interesting varieties of chickens, even a few homemade printed calendars from vacations—they've all graced my walls and offered me an invitation to wonder and wander without leaving my kitchen.

This month, our church will turn a page, as well, focusing our attention and intention on a year of exploration and healing. In December, we said goodbye to the Rev. Michael Brown, whose compassion and presence helped us all transition from the tumult of the summer to the comfort of routine and ritual of the winter.

Many congregants have participated in the first round of Listening Circles—the next phase of our restorative process. To further that process, we're delighted to welcome the Rev. Deanna Vandiver who will serve as Minister in Residence until mid-February. In addition, Rev. Deanna will lead this congregation in further restoration with the Rev. Denise Graves throughout the year. Their partnership, *Ever Unfolding*, will explore with us how to engage in creative and engaging pathways to forming strong, liberatory relationships and communities. To see an introductory video of this important work, please click [here](#).

As we turn the page and our experiences begin to unfold in front of us, may we take solace in the processes themselves. I'll admit, I've not yet purchased my calendar for 2022, but it's the right time to set my intention for the year. Perhaps I'll settle on "Goats in Trees." Why not? Some whimsy, a little playfulness, some balance in the face of the unknown—these all seem like good qualities for the upcoming year.

Rev. Dr. Omega S. Burckhardt
Assistant Minister

January Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Livestream Worship:

Sunday, 9:30 am

(ASL Interpretation)

<https://rsvp.church/r/0cQJU1PE>

<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/>

January's Transformational Theme is: "Contemplation"

January 2, 2022

"Two Seconds Braver"

Rev. Deanna Vandiver, *Minister in Residence*

January 9, 2022

"Epiphany!"

Rev. Deanna Vandiver, *Minister in Residence*

January 16, 2022

"Collective Liberation is for Everyone: Reproductive Justice and You"

Rev. Deanna Vandiver, *Minister in Residence*

January 23, 2022

"Volver y Renover"

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

January 30, 2022

"Palestine and Israel"

Social Justice Sunday

Do You See What I See?

by Tony Bianca, *Program Director*



My first thought as I sit down to write is a sense of fatigue. I'm not physically or emotionally stressed. If I'm being honest, I tend to thrive in these semi-chaotic times when we need to pivot quickly and think outside the box. I've rather enjoyed the need to think differently and create programming that takes

into account all the new variables that Covid adds to the equation.

What I am fatigued by, however, is trying to write yet another article that says essentially the same thing I've been saying for quite some months now: "We're doing great despite everything!" So this time, I'm not going to do that. Well, I'm going to tell you we're doing great, but I'm not going to qualify that greatness. I'm not going to pretend there's some other standard of what we "should be" doing if only we could. I know we've limitations on what we can do that we didn't used to have. I know there are things we're all missing and eager to get back to. But just for a moment, I'm going to pretend I don't know that and just revel in the greatness of what's going on right now without any qualifications. When I forget what "used to be" and just look around on a Sunday morning, here's what I see . . .

By 8 am (and even a bit earlier) there's a full complement of staff setting things up on the patio. Within an hour's time, they've set up the equivalent of a midsize outdoor theater. This theater has surround sound, lighting, decoration, and the ability to simulcast the production in three languages.

At around 9:15 am, I see a congregation begin to

arrive and, recently, it has been my great joy to stand at the foot of the ramp and watch them select a percussion instrument to play during the service. It nourishes my soul to watch full grown adults stand and debate with themselves whether they want the yellow or the pink tambourine. Or wonder if they should choose the maracas again this week or switch it up and take the rhythm sticks.

At roughly 9:45 am, I see the children and youth meet their staff and volunteer advisers, heading off to RE. They look really excited to get where they're going, whether that's to the youth room to do a science experiment, or to the children's room for a story and some art. And they also look happy to see each other.



Finally, around 10:45 am, I see a group of people gather on the lawn to play ukuleles together. They are a truly multi-generational bunch, spanning about six decades of life experience. Some of

them have a little bit more . . . let's say "energy" . . . than others, but they're all very patient with each other and with themselves as they learn new chords and play along with each other.

That's what I see on Sunday morning. On other days of the week, I see listening circles happening, the men's fellowship meeting together, wisdom circles gathering to share with each other, handbells rehearsing, and a staff that is (and I'm admittedly biased here) quite amazing.

I know there are big problems and challenges we need to overcome. Some of those challenges are imposed on us from the outside world, and others are issues and situations we've created for ourselves. And I'm not suggesting we ignore any of that. But I do find it helpful, every now and then, to act as if I don't know things could or should be any different. And when I do that, it helps me see some of the really great things I might otherwise miss.

E-Bikes for the Environment

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

People are becoming evangelical and excited about ebikes at First UU. The three ebike owners I interviewed were Steve Gelb, Bella Furth, and Laura Ball. Steve may be the most dedicated—he hardly ever goes in a car anymore, except to accompany his wife. The furthest he’s gone on his ebike is 42 minutes from his home to Ramona. Bella rides hers to the South Bay food pantry, to First UU, and to La Mesa. Laura rides hers primarily down to the office where she works downtown.

Steve and Bella own Gazelle bikes. The bikes are built by the Royal Dutch Company, which has been in business since 1892. The Gazelle is a Class 1 Ebike, with no throttle, you have to pedal when riding. It has a hub drive, an electric bike motor right in the middle of the hub or wheel, typically in the rear wheel. The motor receives some power from the controller, causing the motor to start turning, extending to the spokes and tires to eventually propel the entire bike. While you can use the engine to assist the bike, the power will cut out after you are going 20 miles per hour, for safety reasons. You can also decide how much assistance you want, from Level 1 to level 4.

Laura rides a Blix Avery. It’s more of a cruiser, commuter bike. It’s less powerful than the Gazelle with a mid-drive and 5 speeds. A mid drive motor is in the middle of the bike, between the pedals at the bike’s bottom bracket and is designed to drive the cranks or pedals and transfer the motor’s power to the rear wheel via the chain drive. Laura prefers to stay at Level 3, which has a speed of about 15 mph.

Steve has put about 3,000 miles on his bike since he bought it in March 2021. He’s on his bike, 1-2 hours a day, and rides out to Ocean Beach, Mission Bay, and La Jolla from his home in Mission Valley. He’s also become an advocate for safer bike routes that go throughout San Diego county. He’s given public comments on the Bike San Diego Regional Transportation plan, which brings more attention



Steve Gelb's ebike

to active transportation. He also likes the San Diego Bicycle Coalition, which talks about quick build bike lanes, where they install plastic bollards for the lanes instead of concrete. He feels that ebikes are better for the environment than electric cars, because there’s much less waste involved and people are outdoors and getting more exercise.

Bella rides her bike about 5 times a week, within about 10-15 miles of home. She enjoys it as an alternative to driving and likes that her ebike can let her choose the route, giving her a boost to get uphill, instead of having to avoid hills. She finds it a pleasant way of getting around and enjoys going through neighborhoods. She took street riding classes from the San Diego Bicycle Coalition to improve the safety of riding her bike in San Diego County.

Laura’s ridden 1,200 miles since buying her bike in April. She likes the fact that she can speed up in traffic, which keeps people in cars from becoming impatient with her. A ride from her house in the College area to downtown takes about 40-50 minutes. She’s able to take her bike on the elevator and leave it in her office, which she admits is a luxury others don’t have.

All three of them say ebikes are fun, and a good way to exercise, regardless of the motor on them. It takes less effort to ride up the hills and they can go longer distances. It’s also a way to live their values as UUs by protecting the environment and using fewer resources to accomplish their transportation needs.

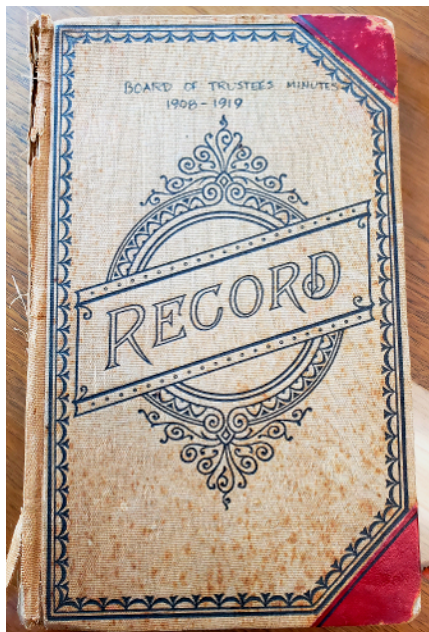
The 1918 Influenza Epidemic and our Congregation

by Liz Jones, Archives Committee

A comment on a Facebook post led me to do some local research. A friend posted that in a workshop he attended, the facilitator noted there seemed to be nothing written by the churches about the 1918 pandemic.

This comment led me to wonder how the 1918 influenza epidemic affected our congregation. We don't have newsletters that go back that far, but the archives do have Board minutes from that time.

Here's what I discovered:



Our minister at the time was the Rev. Howard Bard. He'd been in San Diego for five years by that time (of the 32 years he served as our minister). The year before, in 1917, he agreed to run and serve on the city council. Direct mention of the epidemic was minimal in the minutes. There

was a closure of all the churches in town. The closure was disruptive to most of congregational life and there was a significant financial impact. Once churches were allowed to be opened again, we chose to begin adult services, but held off on children's Religious Education to begin with.

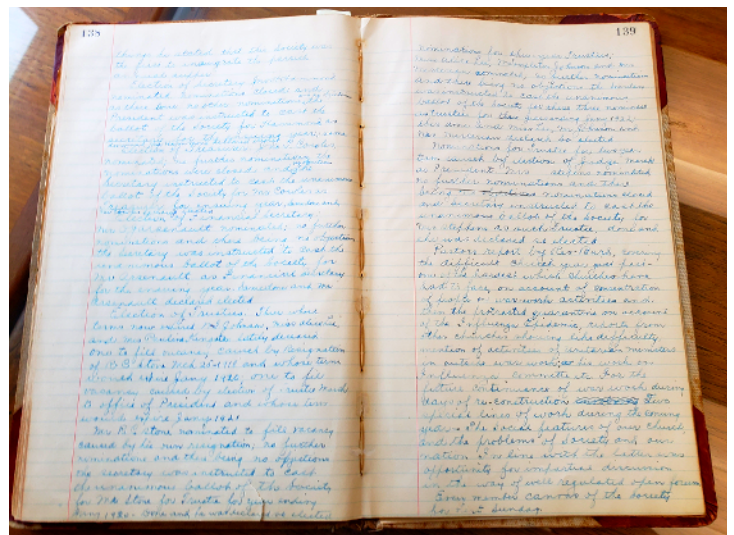
In reading the annual reports from the congregational meeting in January of 1919, I discovered that Rev. Bard served on the city's pandemic committee. He reported that 1918 was the hardest year the congregation had faced. The reports included references to the congregation's

involvement in Red Cross and war work during the days of reconstruction.

These brief notes led me to do some quick research online. The San Diego Union Tribune website has an article from March 15, 2020, which relays several pieces of information that helped complete the picture. The epidemic led to quarantines, food stockpiling, and event cancellations. The city ordered a five-week shut down of all schools, theaters, movie houses, gymnasiums, pool halls, libraries, and churches. People were told to wear gauze masks when outside their homes.

I found it interesting that newspaper editorials scoffed at mask wearing. The Chamber of Commerce downplayed the threat and a letter to the Editor dismissed the whole thing as propaganda. A City order mask mandate carried with it the threat of 30 days in jail or a \$100 fine (quite a lot in those days). According to the report, hundreds of the "I Won't Wear 'Em Club" were brought to court and fined small amounts.

Finally, it was fascinating to realize how much of what we've been experiencing in recent years reflects what our community went through over 100 years ago!



South Bay Food Pantry Sets Course for Growth at Chula Vista Campus

by Maureen McNair

Our congregation has had a campus in Chula Vista for over a decade. I attended Sunday services in Chula Vista before the pandemic. I think congregants there really enjoyed the small Sunday worship service and social hour. One thing our campus lacked, however, was a strong presence in the wider community. We didn't even know our neighbors in the strip mall where our suites are located.

Generally, our suites were locked and empty except on Sundays. The other strip mall tenants were open Mondays through Saturdays. Now, volunteers use our suites most days each week. In addition, I'm not sure how many people who lived in Chula Vista, or nearby, even knew we existed. Our South Bay Food Pantry has changed our community profile. Many hundreds of individuals have been to our campus! We know other local pantry managers. The City of Chula Vista honored us with two public service awards.

The pantry's attracted broad groups of people from the wider community. We've attracted a lot of community volunteers. Those volunteers donate their labor, goods to distribute, and funds. The pantry enjoys regular volunteer labor from people who don't need our services. Like many existing First UU members, those community volunteers are well-educated, middle class couples and individuals who don't use our free food distribution services.

They donate items they know our clients would like to receive. Some people who've never been on our campus and who weren't previously members or friends, have also made one-time and on-going financial

contributions to the pantry. Maybe they'll like First UU too.

People who do use our food and diaper distribution services also show up to volunteer with the pantry on Saturdays. They're at South Bay as early as 8 am for a food distribution that doesn't start until 11 am. They stand outside, count, and bag fresh produce. They lift and carry heavy boxes. They put tables outside before the food distribution. They direct traffic.

Some of them don't speak English. Some of them have difficulty reading our short application in either English or Spanish. We don't know their immigration status. But, they trust us enough to work beside us and take charge of some tasks.

In short, volunteers at our South Bay Food Pantry are living the UU dream of doing social justice work in a multi-cultural, intergenerational group of people—diverse and harmonious. Those volunteers are the source of our future growth.

Our food pantry wants and needs the love and labor of all these people from the wider community. Some of them are going to want to check out our worship services and social hour when we eventually reopen. It seems the coronavirus has us working through a Greek alphabet of variants, so I have no idea when that will be.

When the group of congregants who attended services prior to the pandemic return and meet the volunteers who show up, we'll all need to live our aspiration to be people with open minds, loving hearts, and welcoming hands.

The Millson Book Room

by Caroline Clark

The Millson Book Room, next to the Meeting House, was built in the early eighties, with money from Charlotte and Wally Millson. Long-time members, they felt our congregation would benefit from a Book Room. And benefit we have! It's where first-timers choose to go after the service, where our own congregants gather to chat, browse the shelves, and purchase—for a minimal price—books of their choosing.

Before this, books were on a cart in Bard Hall, and this cart was wheeled out each Sunday, where congregants could look at and buy a book. All the ordering, pricing, and sorting happened at the Millsons' home.

Carol Williams, a former Book Room Chair, created the Children's Corner, with a small rocking chair, stuffed animal cushions, and plenty of interesting children's books. Her portrait hangs on the wall near that corner. It's a well-used space on a Sunday morning.

The books and magazines in the Book Room are donations. The pricing is standard for all books; hardbacks are \$3, and paperbacks are \$1. The exception is the over-sized coffee-table books, for \$5. If you make a donation, the books should be clean, with no notations, or high-lighting; not be textbooks; or printed before 2010. There are exceptions to this, and it is decided "in the moment."

Magazines are priced at 35 cents each, or three for a dollar. They should be no older than three months, and be clean, not torn, or marked up in any way. To allow for newer issues, magazines are changed out frequently. CDs and DVDs are also accepted and sold.

The newest books are separated onto Fiction and Non-Fiction carts and left unalphabetized and wheeled outside on Sundays. Inside the Book Room, the books are shelved, the fiction by

author, alphabetically, and non-fiction, by subject. When the carts cannot hold any more books, the "oldest" ones are brought into the Book Room and put among those books already on the shelves.

Traditionally, on a Fifth Sunday, the Book Room has a special sale on books. This might be BYOB (bring your own bag) and for \$2, you can fill it up and take it home. At other times, there's a give-away, when all the books on a particular table are free.

UUA books will no longer be available in the Bookroom. For a particular book, it must be ordered directly from the UUA.

Reactions to the bookroom have been enthusiastic:




- "The Book Room is my favorite place to go. I meet my friends there and find new ones. The books are also a draw for me."
- "This is my first time here, and this Book Room is a haven for me! I'm with people, and though I don't know them, I can listen, while others ask questions of me, and it doesn't feel like an intrusion. We have the books in common!"

Adrienne Kaplan, Gail Edwards, and Caroline Clark, are the current leaders of the Book Room, and there is a crew of around sixteen members—all of whom are eager to be working in the Book Room, once again. Once we reopen, the bookroom will need eager carpet-removers, shelf-sanders, and painters—and maybe someone who can "polish" the concrete floor. If you're interested in being a part of the Book Room Crew, please e-mail Caroline Clark: uucaroline@cox.net

Sue Marberry, a former chair, has stepped down, and she will be missed, as will her gift of keeping track of ordering, and keeping the necessary information up to date.

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 Rev. Deanna Vandiver, Minister in Residence
 Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, Assistant Minister
 Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Löne Broussard, Affiliate Ministers
 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey, Rev. Julie Forest and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Rose Riedel, Office Manager and Scheduler
 Tony Bianca, Program Director
 Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator
 Käthe Larick, Youth Programs Coordinator
 Kate Collier, Program Assistant
 Marshall Voit, Music Director
 Chase Pado, Pianist
 Lorelei Garner, South Bay Music Coordinator
 Andrea N-L, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
 Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Joshua Morrison, Janitor
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
 Revs. Dr. Carolyn and Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti

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