



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

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Dining for Dollar\$ 2024 – New Semi-Annual Format

by Robie Evans, Member, Dining for Dollar\$ Team

Eighteen years ago, we started this amazing fundraising auction extravaganza at First UU. Over the past several years, we've raised as much as \$60,000 annually towards First UU's general operating budget. But, that's not the best part. The social and community-building aspects of the events hosted by First UU Members and Friends far outweigh the fact it's a major fundraiser.

It gives us a chance to:

- work with others to dream up, organize, and co-host events;
- meet new people;
- deepen existing relationships while attending events with friends;
- do things we've never done before; and
- find ways to ensure everyone is able to participate on some level, regardless of family or financial issues.

This year, after hearing from many of you, we're trying a new semi-annual format! For the first of two auctions this year, we'll offer events happening between June 2024 through December 2024.

Bidding for the first auction starts May 5th and continues through May 19. We'll continue to use our online bidding website, which is available 24/7. We'll have trained volunteers to help you register and bid in person after Sunday worship services in May.

Now through April 15, we're accepting events happening from June 2024 through December 2024. To host an event, find the online event hosting form, with more information and ideas for events on our [D4\\$ webpage](#).

In November, we'll ask for events for the second auction, covering events taking place between January 2025 through May 2025. Bidding for the 2nd auction will occur in December 2024. This gives hosts and bidders a better idea of what their schedules will be next year!

Don't miss this opportunity to host an event and participate in what has become a fun tradition for this community!

Here are just a sample of the Dining for Dollar\$ (D4\$) Auction events hosted last year!

- Mexican Wine Tasting
- Small Group Karaoke Session
- Champagne Flights and Culinary Delights
- Four Day Stay in Love Shack: Island Cottage in British Columbia
- Make your own Instant Pot Greek Yogurt, Kefir and Sprouts
- Mardi Gras Gumbo Singalong
- Birding at Santee Lakes

Hope to hear from you soon!

Your D4\$
Auction Team:
Laurie Crehan,
Robie Evans,
Dave Hunt,
Sylvia Ollinger,
and Dan Paul



*Staff Singalong,
Spaghetti and
Sundae Supper,
Jan. 2024*



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Transforming Conflict

by Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*



I was excited to see so many faces on the zoom screen for the 5th Tuesday Board Meeting with Journey Toward Wholeness in January. At that session, Rev. Justine and I facilitated a workshop on the first two chapters of the book *Transforming Conflict: The Blessings of Congregational Turmoil* by Unitarian Universalist Minister Rev. Terasa Cooley.

Members of the Board, Right Relations Team, Journey Toward Wholeness, and other lay leaders came together to learn. We started by sharing insights and questions from the chapters. We then had time for self-reflection on our personal relationship to conflict and practiced deep listening skills in pairs. We explored a tool called “The Ladder of Inference,” and talked about ways we can walk ourselves down the ladder in times of conflict. As we came to the end of the session, we engaged in embodied spiritual practices to help settle our nervous systems so we can be more present during difficult conversations.

The energy was engaging, thoughtful, and even fun! You may have a hard time imagining learning about conflict can be anything but difficult, but I left that first session together feeling uplifted and excited. There was a resounding eagerness to continue this work together. Rev. Justine and I will be leading sessions on the rest of the book over the coming months and we invite you to join us. You can find more details in *The Window*.

I look forward to continuing this work because I believe this is one way transformation happens; when we learn together, equip ourselves with new skills, and support each other to live into new practices. This is a concrete way we’re embodying our covenant, the promises we make to another in beloved community

This is the third time I’m leading workshops on the material in this book: first with my congregation in Washington, and most recently in a five-part series with our First UU Staff. What’s emerging from our learning is a greater comfort with engaging when we disagree, shared language, new tools and skills, and a creativity that I believe will nourish the health of our community. Let’s keep learning together!

You are welcome to join us even if you couldn’t make the first session. Before each session, please read the chapters and bring a quote with you to share. Each session will be on zoom and will be co-facilitated by Rev. Justine Sullivan and myself: <https://zoom.us/j/7434659479>

Session 3: Chapters 5-6, March 12, 6:30-8:00 pm

Session 4: Chapters 7-8, March 26, 6:30-8:00 pm

Session 5: Chapters 9-10, April 9, 6:30-8:00 pm

March Worship Schedule

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

March's Theme:

"The Gift of Transformation"

Throughout the month of March we are exploring the spiritual theme of transformation. Transformation is about change, growth, metamorphosis, and emergence. We are a faith that claims truth keeps revealing itself, and because of this, we are committed to lifelong learning. The proposed revision to Article II of the UUA bylaws names transformation as one of our core values as Unitarian Universalists: “We adapt to the changing world. We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.” Together, we’ll explore the gifts of both inner and outer transformation, and the role we play in it.

Shadows

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



As I've shared before, I grew up Catholic and, as a kid who didn't quite fit in with his peers, church was one of the places where I felt valued and respected as my authentic self. I was also a kid who, from a very early age, had what my great-grandmother called "a flair for the dramatic," so it's not surprising I was also attracted by all the theatrical rituals and liturgical accouterments. I loved the music, the formality, the robes, the decorations, the incense . . . all the "smells and bells," as we used to call them.

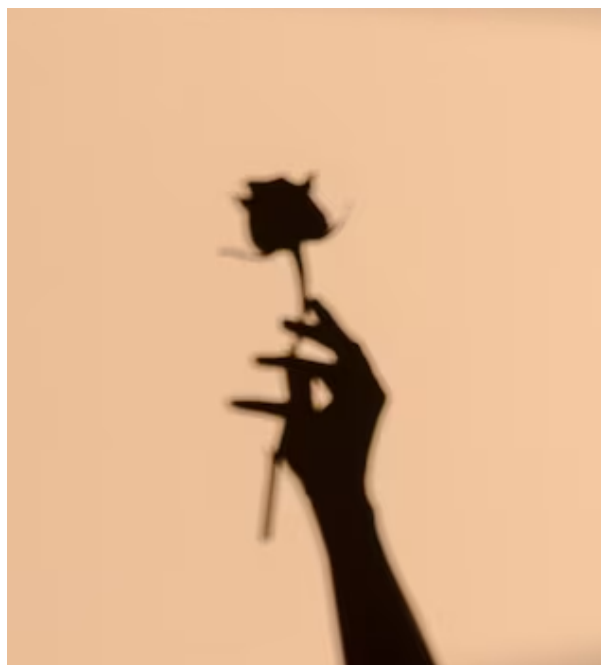
One of my favorite times of the year was Holy Week, the week that begins with Palm Sunday and goes through the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday) and ends with Easter Sunday, because this was a week of high liturgical drama! But my absolute favorite service also happened during Holy Week and, this year, we're going to do a UU version of that service on March 29th at 7:00 pm: Tenebrae.

The word "tenebrae" means "shadows" or "darkness" and dates back to the 9th century when it was celebrated as part of the morning and evening prayers in the Liturgy of the Hours. Over time, the service took on a life of its own and is now a stand-alone service, typically held on one of the evenings in Holy Week. But, "What is it?" you might ask.

Tenebrae focuses on the temporary victory of darkness over light. Structurally, it's a service of alternating readings and songs much like the Christmas season's Lessons and Carols but, as the name suggests, with a much darker mood. The service starts with a number of candles lit in a candelabra. After each reading, one of the

candles is extinguished (and in more modern spaces, the lights are dimmed) until, by the end of the service, the congregation is in darkness. The service concludes with (my favorite part!) the "strepitus" ("great noise") symbolizing an earthquake or clap of thunder. The strepitus can be created in any number of ways (we once piled all the furniture in the robing room and knocked it over at the appropriate time!) and is accompanied by the congregation repeatedly banging their hymnals on the pews (soooo dramatic!).

Drama aside, though, I always appreciated Tenebrae for its unapologetic embrace of lamentation and sorrow. It's the liturgical equivalent of a Shakespearean tragedy or that movie we watch simply because we need a good cry. In the larger context of the Easter Season we, of course, know that (spoiler alert) the light returns, but Tenebrae invites us to temporarily forget that and to momentarily sit with sorrow and appreciate the beauty of the shadows. I hope you'll join us at 7:00 pm on March 29th to experience Tenebrae with me.



Possible New Home for South Bay Campus

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

At the January 28th Congregational meeting, Rev. Kristen Kuriga shared some exciting news. For years, the South Bay Task Force has been looking for a new home for the South Bay campus in the Chula Vista area. The Task Force is composed of leaders from the South Bay Campus, the Food Pantry, and the Hillcrest Campus, with the support of Rev. Kristen.

The current location offers extremely limited access to parking during weekdays, daytime, and evening. This means that outside of Sunday morning worship and Saturday morning food pantry distribution, the space is difficult to access for weekday gatherings, potlucks, etc. The Task Force engaged a realtor to see if a more appropriate space (with parking!) could be found for both the worshipping community and the Food Pantry.

The Task Force has had difficulty finding a suitable property for several reasons. The space needs to have a conditional use permit (CUP) for assembly for Sunday morning worship and other meetings. It also needs the number of parking spots required for a CUP lease.

After six months with almost no properties to view, the Task Force expanded its criteria to increase the geographic range and square footage, and to open the search to rent or buy. The agent they are working with found a property of 3,500 square ft, designed for use by a church, with a full kitchen in an excellent location—directly across the street from Southwestern Community College and

two blocks from Bonita Vista High School. The site is visible from the street and accessible by public transportation.

Zoned for a church, the property has an existing conditional use permit for 40 parking spots, and ample street parking on weekends. There are also strong possibilities for social justice partnerships. This information was shared with the Executive Team at First UU, and a viewing was held a few days later with South Bay Task Force leaders and staff. Key information about the property has been shared at a South Bay Leadership meeting and with the Board.

The Task Force believes this location can support both the South Bay Campus and help the Food Pantry to grow and thrive. One person said, “This is the most promising permanent home for South Bay we’ve seen in the last 10 years of looking.”

The asking price is \$1.5 million. The Task Force will continue to work with the real estate agent to answer any questions, as well as assess the condition of property and any needed repairs. It will also work with the Board to determine the feasibility of buying the property, including financing possibilities.

It is a short timeline if we would like to make an offer, which is why this information is being shared now. Ultimately, we will need a congregational vote with 2/3 approval to purchase this property, as is required by our constitution. For more information, contact [Rev. Kristen Kuriga](#).

Stay, Go or Share

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Another issue revisited at the congregational meeting was whether First UU should stay where we are right now, or accept UCSD's offer to buy the campus and relocate. A third option offered at the meeting was the possibility of sharing the campus with UCSD or another 3rd party. What followed was an exercise led by Rev. Kristen Kuriga and Rev. Justine Sullivan.

When asked whether we should stay or go, congregational members came up with the pros and cons for each option. Follow this link for a full set of the responses: [Stay, go or share](#).

When discussing the reasons for staying, it was felt we should stay because the Hillcrest location is our spiritual home. We have memories here. We have scattered ashes in the canyon, and we have a memorial wall for all those who have gone before us. We are known in the community and people can find us easily.

Some of the problems with staying are, we're not visible to the community in our space. There is much maintenance to be done to aging buildings. Our technology needs to be upgraded. Our current location is hard to find, and there's too much traffic. When UCSD relocates its entrance and parking garage, we may lose the revenue from our parking lot. Eventually, we'll be walled in by the hospital and the construction. We'll have little room to grow.

In another location, we could serve more diverse communities. We'd have more financial security, by accepting UCSD's offer to buy the campus. We could start fresh, have

better designed facilities. We could live in an inviting and diverse neighborhood.

On the other hand, finding a new location would be hard. We already have a beautiful campus. For some, a new location might be too far to travel. Some asked, "Do we have the energy to start from scratch?" In the transition from moving from this campus to another location, we would lose members and possibly income.

Finally, Tony Bianca talked about what other churches have done in our situation. St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Hillcrest sold some of their property and built senior housing with the money. We could consider sharing the campus with UCSD or some other 3rd party. For this section of the exercise, many questions were raised.

- What are the possibilities of working with UCSD to design a campus that supports both of us?
- Would we be renting buildings from the University?
- Are there other redevelopment options? Other investors to consider?
- Can we maintain ownership of the property? Can we lease the land?

These and other questions will be answered as we explore the possibilities of whether to stay, go, or share. Reverend Justine and the board will be assembling a team to consider these three options and communicate what's learned with the congregation. Contact a Board member or Reverend Justine if you have questions, or if you are interested in serving on the *Our Sustainable Future* team.

Right Relations Committee: Try A Softer Tone

by Rick Hanson, *PhD*

Excerpts from *Try a Softer Tone - Rick Hanson, PhD*

The Right Relations Committee is charged with finding and creating training materials to help the congregation become more skilled in addressing conflict and communicating more skillfully. Truly, each one of us can come home to the dignity, authority, and courage to stand in the truth and speak from the heart with passion and power, free from the flames of anger. The following is one of those practices from Rick Hanson's blog:

"Linguists like Deborah Tannen have pointed out that most communications have three elements:

- Explicit content – "There is no milk in the refrigerator."
- Emotional subtext – Could be irritation, blame, accusation
- An implicit statement about the nature of the relationship – Could be one person gets to criticize and boss around someone else

Many studies have found that the second and third elements – which I define in general as tone – usually have the greatest impact on how an interaction turns out. Since a relationship is built from interactions, the accumulating weight of the tone you use has big effects...

- ...Be mindful of tone – Be on the lookout for needlessly negative tone: your own and others. And when it's there - including in mild ways like an eye roll, exasperation, or subtle put-down – notice the results. Also, track the results of neutral or positive tone.
- Consider your true purposes – In an interaction, ask yourself if you're there to be right, show the other person how he or she is wrong, vent, or work some covert agenda; these underlying priorities will lead to a problematic tone. Instead, try to ground yourself in more positive purposes, such as finding out what really happened in a situation, speaking from your heart, being empathic, strengthening the relationship, or solving a practical problem.
- Lay a good foundation – First, try to establish a frame of relatedness and goodwill, and that you are not trying to boss the other person around. You do not need the cooperation of the other person to unilaterally center yourself, clarify in

your mind what it is you want to say, open your heart, find good wishes, and take a little time to get into a relationship before launching into your topic.

- Be careful about anger – I think there is a place for anger – it alerts you to wrongs and energizes you to deal with them – and for letting others know you're feeling annoyed or just plain mad. But how you express your anger can have a lot of unwanted impacts...

...So slow down, do a few l-o-n-g exhalations to calm your body, put the situation in perspective, and try to feel down to the gentler and more vulnerable feelings beneath anger. Then choose your words carefully, and name what you're feeling beneath the anger without blaming the other person (e.g., "When there is no milk in the refrigerator, I feel like you are not thinking about the effect on me of taking the last of the milk"). Remember that dumping your anger on others – including via little barbs – harms you, too, and sometimes more than them....

- Gentle your body – Relax your eyes, throat, and heart. This will naturally soften your tone.
- Don't use inflammatory language – Exaggerations, accusations, fault-finding, words like "never" or "always," insults, swearing, alarming threats, pathologizing (e.g., "you've got a personality disorder"), and cheap shots (e.g., "you're just like your father") are like gasoline on those hot coals. Instead, use words that are accurate and not provocative. Imagine that you are being videotaped and people you care about will be watching it later; don't say anything you'll regret later.
- Say what needs to be said – A reasonable and civil tone actually promotes honesty and assertiveness because then you don't need to fight side battles or backtrack to clean up a mess. But if a softer tone replaces sticking up for yourself, that's not good for anyone. So keep communicating."

The Right Relations team hopes that this has been helpful. For any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the team: Tony Brumfield, Marla English, Bill James, and Dan Paul, and assisted by Rev. Justine Sullivan.

Five Board of Trustees Positions to be on June Ballot

by Mitch Mitchell, *Member, Nominating Committee*

On Sunday, June 9, First UU members will have the opportunity to vote for five candidates in the running to fill soon-to-be vacant positions on the congregation's Board of Trustees. You might be close friends with some of the potential candidates, be casually acquainted with others, or just know one or two by sight. One thing you can be assured of is that all of them will be solidly qualified for and eagerly willing to be entrusted with the leadership of the congregation.

The Board consists of nine members, elected by the congregation in June to serve varying terms. They promote the congregation's vision and mission in setting policy and providing oversight, leadership, and support for the activities and administration of the church. The Board meets monthly—typically via Zoom—throughout the course of the year.

The Board President serves a two-year term (the first year as Vice-President). The Treasurer serves for one year, and the Trustees-at-Large serve staggered three-year terms. The terms begin on July 1.

This year will see four returning Board members: Vice-President Valerie Jaques (who will become President), and Trustees-at-Large Steve Howard and Leland Beck. Trustee Karen Lamphere will be on the June ballot, as she has agreed to run for the one-year Vice-President position (and become President the next year).

Qualified congregants are being sought to fill the one-year Treasurer position and the remaining three Trustee-at-Large positions.

The chief qualification is for a congregant to have been a First UU member in good

standing for at least a year at the time of election. The Nominating Committee wants to have a diverse slate of candidates that includes more underrepresented groups on the Board, including South Bay members.

These are exciting times for our congregation with lots of big decisions about our future looming on the horizon. Being on the Board gives you the chance to have an “insider” role in the decision-making and vetting the other policies, issues, and actions necessary to govern a dynamic institution such as First UU.

If your interest has been piqued—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 direct information about serving on the Board, contact Valerie Jaques, incoming President; Karen Lamphere, incoming Vice President; and Board Trustees-at-Large who are continuing on, Leland Beck and Steve Howard.

The Board members whose terms end in June are President Everardo Aguilar, Treasurer Sue Marberry, and Trustees-at-Large Rosalba Ciampi and Gay Hybertsen. They'll tell you how spiritually invigorating and personally rewarding their terms on the Board have been.

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

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 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
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 Marshall Voit, Music Director
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 Lara Anderson, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator
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 Jazmine Ramanathan, Administrative Assistant
 Corina Macias, South Bay Ministry Assistant
 Pam Bates, Scheduler
 Andrea Spiero, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
 Tomás Acosta, Collaborative Pianist
 Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
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Board of Trustees FY 23-24

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 Leland Beck, Rosalba Ciampi, Steve Howard, and Gay Hybertsen —Trustees

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