



First  
Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Diego

# FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

September 2022; Vol 16 No. 7

## Introducing Our New Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Lara Anderson

by Lara Anderson, *Youth and Young Adult Coordinator*

**“When we choose to love, we choose to move against fear, against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect, to find ourselves in the other.” (Bell Hooks)**

It is an honor and a joy to be welcomed into the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego community as a Youth and Young Adult Coordinator. It is with humility, respect, and deep care that I am here to serve alongside you.

My background and education are in Psychology, Education, School Counseling, and Restorative Justice Practices. I have served myriad roles as an educator, a counselor, as a student and a practitioner of restorative justice work. I have respect and reverence for the depths of our human capacity to: seek, love, create, grieve, and adapt; I am constantly surprised how much I “do not know.”

I have a loving husband and three children—ages 10, seven, and four; each family member feels like a unique and sacred miracle to me.

Finding First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego has had the impact of feeling like I found an anchor and a home in terms of my



values and aspirations. I am in awe at how exquisitely this space fits my way of being in the world. For as long as I can remember I have dedicated my life to being in right relationship with others and the planet we share. I am acutely

aware that my perspective is limited because I am one person living in a particular moment in time; I believe we each have something to offer one another if we are courageous enough to listen with a tender heart. I believe history is important and requires consideration when understanding another and that relationships can be messy because we are all imperfect.

I am grateful to be working alongside brilliant practitioners who seek meaningfully, reflect, and model the eight guiding principles of the Unitarian Universalist faith. I am eager to get to know more First UU members and to consider creative ways to build a program that lives up to its highest ideals.

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# I'm So Glad to be Here With You

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



*We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been – a place, half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. ~ Starhawk*

I'm so glad to be here with you. I arrived in San Diego with my beloved Dale and our dog Callie in mid-July, and I started here at First UU on August 1st.

Before I entered seminary, I consulted with congregations in conflict. I mediated disputes, offered board retreats, and conducted exit interviews with ministers who were leaving congregations. So I've had a good opportunity to see lots of different dynamics at work in congregations. When I finally said yes to my call to ministry, I knew I wanted to serve congregations in transition, and I've been especially drawn to congregations who find themselves experiencing pain and conflict.

I know that over the last few years at First UU, there's been pain, conflict, and big questions that you need to answer—all alongside a global pandemic that has changed life as we know it. Any one of these challenges might have been overwhelming to this system, and yet you've persevered, and in many beautiful ways you've flourished. When it became impossible (due to COVID safety concerns) to hold worship at the South Bay meeting space, you started a food pantry that now feeds over 250 families each week and is creating community.

You found a way to create meaningful, soulful worship, first virtually and then both virtually and in-person on your patio. You now offer worship in both Spanish and English with live ASL during the Hillcrest services. Carefully following the science around COVID, you quickly pivoted between virtual and in-person gathering. And through all these pivots, you continued to care for one another. So much to honor and celebrate.

Your staff and volunteer leaders have worked tirelessly to help keep this community not just surviving but thriving. Blessings abound.

Yes, I've seen glimpses—more than glimpses, even--of community in this beautiful place. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve you, to serve with you, and to join in the song.

I close with these words from Starhawk:

*"Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done."*

In Faith,

*Justine, Lead Minister*

## September Sermon Schedule

**September's  
Transformational Theme is:  
"Belonging"**

**Hillcrest Worship Time:**

Sundays, 9:30 am

Hillcrest Patio & **Livestream** Worship

**September 4, 2022**

**"Song"**

Rev. Justine Sullivan

and Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt

**September 11, 2022**

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

**September 18, 2022**

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

**September 25, 2022**

**"Draw The Circle Wide"**

Rev. Justine Sullivan

and Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt

**South Bay Worship Time:**

Saturdays, biweekly, 4 pm, Suite 104

**September 10, 2022**

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

**September 24, 2022**

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

# The New Congregational Year

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



I remember those first days of school when all the students would return looking so much bigger than they had the previous spring. In a way, I feel that way about our Lifespan Program now—it's grown over the summer!

In June, we returned to Camp de Benneville Pines after a few years away and had an amazing time with First UU campers ranging in age from 3 to 80! We laughed, sang, shared meals, danced, played games and had a collaboratively led Worship Service that was extremely inspiring. It was a great way to both wrap up First UU's circle of seasons the year and kick off summer.

We also hired a new staff member, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Lara Anderson. It's been exciting to begin planning for the Youth Group to start up again and to begin exploring what kind of programming we'd like to offer for Young Adults.

We've also begun preparing to offer Our Whole Lives programming again. Just last month, Program Assistant, Kate Collier, and I completed the training to become OWL Facilitators for junior and senior high school students. Our goal is to begin offering OWL for those age groups in this year as we continue to get trained to facilitate the other grade levels.

We've also begun a new Adult RE program—a monthly, Zoom Speaker Series grounded in the work of the 8th Principle. Our first session, “Dismantling White Supremacy One Insight at a Time” with Peter Bolland was a huge success with over 90 people registering. Peter will return on September 15th, 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm to offer the next session, “Why It's So Hard to Talk About Racism.” To register for this webinar, visit

[www.firstuusandiego.org/adult-faith-formation.html](http://www.firstuusandiego.org/adult-faith-formation.html)

Our Children's RE program has continued throughout the summer months and, in recent weeks, we've seen a gradual increase in the number of children attending as families return from summer break and in-person services have resumed.

After a summer of returning and growing, I'm excited to kick off our 2022-23 church year and am humbled to have been asked to join First UU's Executive Team as the newly-titled Director of Lifespan Faith Formation. It's been a joy to continue connecting and journeying along with so many of you over the summer, and I look forward to the year to come.



# The Unitarian Universalist Men's Fellowship - Then and Now

by John Keasler, *Co-chair*

*Part of a series honoring the 150th anniversary of First UU this year, reviewing the history of different groups at First UU.*

The Unitarian Universalist Men's Fellowship (UUMF) founded in the early 1980s by the Reverend Tom Owen-Towle, with Paul Bruce and Nathan Clark, seeks to "support men in the quest for lives of compassion, integrity, balance and responsibility." They are an affiliate organization of the church and meet on fourth Mondays to share food, engage in meaningful discussion for personal growth, reflection and to promote spiritual deepening.

Shortly after its inception, the UUMF held renewal weekends at the Sierra Club Lodge in the Laguna Mountains. In 1991, they convened at Camp de Benneville Pines each spring and at Camp Stevens in Julian in the fall. This provided an opportunity for deeper confidential sharing and discussion of issues affecting physical health, personal relationships, and mental wellness. Weekend themes have included "Quest for Meaning," "No Man is an Island," and "Self-Care in Times of Crisis." One man said his spouse did not mind him going away for these weekends because he always returned a little happier and easier to live with. The UUMF is currently planning their Fall retreat for Camp Stevens in Julian, October 21-23, 2022.

The Fellowship currently has about a dozen closed, committed, active support groups. These autonomous groups meet twice a month at members' homes. There are members who have met together since the founding of the UUMF.

In February, there is a "Brotherhood Banquet" welcoming new and old members at the start of a new year. Past banquets have included a Western theme, open mic Stand Up Comedy, and member musicians singing and performing.

Each spring, the UUMF presents a monetary gift to the young men of First UU who have recently graduated high school. The gift is to help them on whatever path they are about to embark on.

During the summer, the UUMF gather at a "Picnic in the

Park" at Morley Field in Balboa Park. This includes sharing a meal, games of catch, bocce ball, bean bag toss, and giant Jenga. As darkness falls, the men gather around a fire ring to "check-in" and share current highlights and challenges.

Ritual has a strong role in UUMF traditions. In December they host the "Yule Log" celebration. This ceremony has its roots in the ancient pagan custom of lighting fires during Winter Solstice to bid the sun to return. As individual candles are lit by each man they look back on the past year, remember those who have been lost or who are in crisis, and declare their hopes for the future.



Early in the COVID 19 lockdown, the UUMF embraced the technology of online group video meetings and now have continued with hybrid meetings. With precautions, they resumed renewals at de Benneville Pines in the fall of 2021 and held a Brotherhood Banquet in February 2022.

At the suggestion of member Ron Evans, the UUMF produced the Summer Hootenanny with the Outreach and Growth Fund Committee at First UU in July 2022, which turned out to be the largest "return to normal" social event so far.

This September the UUMF will resume their decades-old service project of helping the First UU Kitchen Manager prepare and serve Sunday morning refreshments every first Sunday of the month.

Their next gathering in September will be inside the Welcome Center, for the first time in over two years. After dinner, founding member Reverend Tom Owen-Towle will present a program on "Three Questions to Ask During Our Homestretch."

The group maintains a Facebook page as "Unitarian Universalist Men's Fellowship UUMF." Andy French and John Keasler are the current co-convenors of the UUMF. Besides Reverend Tom Owen-Towle, the UUMF would like to acknowledge the years of service and leadership of Mike Dorfi and John Holl as well as that of many other strong and compassionate brothers who have made the organization what it is.

# Front Street Productions Presents!

by Robie Evans, *Outreach & Growth Fund Committee Member*

In April, 2021, First UU received a large anonymous designated gift in the amount of \$2,000,000 known as the Renewal and Growth Fund (RGF). This fund consists of four parts:

- Gift Allocation for Debt Relief - \$700,000: To pay down First UU debt as a matching fund only through a capital campaign
- Gift Allocation for Technology - \$300,000: To upgrade audio-visual technology for the Meeting House and Bard Hall
- Gift Allocation for Personnel - \$120,000 per year for five years = \$600,000: To hire personnel, such as Outreach Events Coordinator, Social Media/technology specialist, and upgrade other staff roles
- Gift Allocation for Outreach and Growth Fund (OGF) - \$80,000 per year for five years = \$400,000: To establish a Board committee to identify, invite, and fund speakers, music, events, and groups to our campus.

The OGF committee members are Laura Ball, Robie Evans, Susan Riegel Harding, Sue Marberry, Sarah Ormond, Cora Pendergast and Louise Titlow. The OGF committee submitted the following Charge to the Board on October 19, 2021, which was approved:

"The Outreach and Growth Fund Committee as a subset of the Renewal and Growth Fund consists of two members of the Board and three to seven members of the Church community which report to the full Board. The Board members on the committee will select the other members of the committee.

The OGF Committee administers the gift allocation from the Renewal and Growth Fund to bring in speakers, music, groups, and events to our campuses, and to promote greater ethnic, racial, class diversity among members and attendees. The person(s) responsible for producing and promoting the events, need to have the skills and abilities to know what is current and timeless, to find suitable speakers and groups, and to promote and budget."



*La Jolla SummerFest Community Concert*

*Photo Credit: James Christenson*



*Audience enjoying the Hootenanny on the Hillcrest Patio*  
*Photo credit: Ron Evans*

The intent of the Outreach and Growth Fund is to make First UU a more happening place with the expectation that these events over time will result in more Sunday visitors, church members, pledges, and donations.

The OGF Committee felt it was important come up with a production name for these events that would attract our wider community. Years ago, a former staff member came up with the name Front Street wedding and receptions for our brochures. So, we talked about this and liked the idea of "Front Street Productions." So, anytime you see, read or hear "Front Street Productions Presents," you'll know this is an event brought to you and funded by the Outreach & Growth Fund. By the time this article is published, we'll have already produced two hugely successful events on our First UU campus, the Hootenanny and the La Jolla SummerFest Community Concert! And there are more scheduled. We're trying to bring you at least one event per month this year and here are some upcoming offerings:

- Friday 10-07-2022 **La Chimi Flamenco** 7:30 pm to 9 pm
- Sunday 11-13-2022 **Saxations' Motown Show** 7:30pm to 9 pm
- Tuesday 12-13-2022 **Afro-Cuban Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble/Grossmont College Music Dept.** 7:30pm to 9:30 pm
- Thursday 12-22-2022 **"Winter Schminter Concert with Yale Strom** 7:30pm to 9:30 pm
- January, tbd - **Tasha Smith Godinez, harp with viola and percussion "Out of the Desert"** 7:30 pm to 9 pm
- Saturday 03-04-2023 **Melanie DeMore Concert** 7:30 pm
- Saturday 03-11-2023 **Los Bordershop / Barbershop Harmonies** 7:30 pm to 9 pm
- TBD **Author's Talk with Natalia Molina "A Place at the Nayarit – How a Mexican Restaurant Nourished a Community"** 7:30 pm to 9 pm
- Thursday 05-11-2023 **Middle East Ensemble/Grossmont College Music Dept.** 7:30 pm to 9 pm
- **Event days/times are subject to change**

The best thing of all is the OGF Committee plans to produce all of these as FREE events for this first year. So, please spread the word and, also, please attend as your schedules permit. We're grateful for your help in getting the word out about how wonderful First UU is!

# Summer 2022 at First UU - A Story in Pictures




# Summer 2022 at First UU - A Story in Pictures



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 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  
 Tony Bianca, Director of Lifespan Faith Formation  
 Rose Riedel, Office Manager  
 Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator & Congregational Assistant for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
 Lara Anderson, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator  
 Kate Collier, Program Assistant  
 Pam Bates, Scheduler  
 Marshall Voit, Music Director  
 Lorelei Garner, Music Coordinator  
 Andrea Speiro, 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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