



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

October 2022; Vol 16 No. 8

Tomás Acosta, Our New Collaborative Pianist

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Tomás was born in Los Angeles but raised in Ensenada, so he has dual US/Mexico citizenship. He lives in Ensenada, and travels across the border two or three times a week, to go to his various jobs here. Besides playing at First UU on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, he teaches piano and voice in Riverside County. He's able to stay in Ensenada Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

He started playing piano at 11. His father is a mariachi and to help him follow in his father's footsteps, his mother offered him music lessons. He studied piano and sang in choirs at school.

The university he attended, Universidad Autonoma de Baja California, did not have a school of music at first. A degree in Music was not available until 2003. Tomás was one of the first graduates with a degree in Music from that university. In 2019, he received his Master's in Choral Conducting from Universidad Veracruzana.

He is well known in Baja California for his choral conducting. In fact, after receiving his Master's, Tomás wanted to work with choirs and began doing that in February 2020. Then the pandemic hit. He hopes to have a private adult choir in Mexico in the future.

Most of his career he has collaborated with the Catholic church, playing for ordinations and saints' days. The church has a liturgical calendar that he is

accustomed to, with the same songs and pieces coming up at certain times of the year. His challenge at First UU is learning new pieces every week. We're also his first experience with Unitarian Universalism.



He is very interested in learning what Unitarian Universalism is and how it differs from his other experiences with religion.

Tomás found out about the accompanist position at First UU from Marshall Voit, our Music Director. He met Marshall in a singing group called Common Ground Voices: La Frontera. Now, he belongs to the group Marshall started called Los Bordershop Quartet, a bilingual barbershop group. Barbershop is not practiced in Mexico, so they have fun translating songs for the group into Spanish.

In his spare time, he goes to restaurants in Baja California with his fiancée. They both enjoy good wine and food. He also arranges music and records vocals for musician friends. Welcome to First UU, Tomás!

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Something Happens When We Gather

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



*Oh, we are each other's angels.
And we meet when it is time.
We keep each other going.
And we show each other signs.
~ Chuck Brodsky*

I've been here about two months now, and in that funny way of time, it both feels like I've been here longer than that and it seems like I just got here. I'm enjoying getting to know you—some I've met with in person or on Zoom, many of you I get to chat

with on the patio after worship, and there are many more of you whom I've yet to meet. I aim to do something about that. Starting in October, I'll be having monthly circles on the patio at Hillcrest and monthly chats on Zoom for those not able to attend an in-person gathering. I need to book the patio through our scheduler, so once I have that set, I'll publish the details in The Window and on our website.

This past Sunday in worship we welcomed several new members, folks who found and joined us over the nearly three years of this pandemic. Some started attending worship just before things shut down and some others actually started attending online! Imagine—finding us online and still feeling the warmth of connection across those crackling lines.

If I had to write a sermon in five words, it would be this: "Something happens when we gather." Something happens when we gather, that crackle of energy between and among us, the shared laughter, sometimes tears, that feeling of belonging. Over these years of the pandemic from the complete shutdown to this in-between time when things are starting to return to a new normal, through this time, we've learned there are many ways to gather. Nothing can substitute completely for a warm embrace or a fist bump or a gentle hand on a shoulder, but we've found ways to connect deeply even without touch, even over shaky internet connections. Let's keep using all the ways we have (and more we might invent) to stay connected to one another. And, if there's someone you've been missing, give them a call or a text or an email or write them a note. Let one of your ministers know there's someone you've been thinking of and worried about. We need one another, and with both Reverend Omega and me being new to this community, we welcome your help in reaching out to those who are missing.

In Faith,

Justine

October Sermon Schedule

**October's
Transformational Theme:
"Courage"**

Hillcrest Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am

Hillcrest Patio & ***Livestream*** Worship

October 2, 2022

"Days of Awe"

Marshall Voit, *Music Director*

October 9, 2022

**"Celebrating Abundance:
Annual Pledge Drive Kick off"**

October 16, 2022

"Why We Give"

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

October 23, 2022

**"United Nations Sunday:
Displacement and Human Rights"**

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

October 30, 2022

"Honoring Our Ancestors"

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

South Bay Worship Time:

Saturdays, biweekly, 4 pm, Suite 104

October 15, 2022

"Why We Give"

Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

October 29, 2022

"Honoring Our Ancestors"

Rev. Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

The Courage to Get Involved

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



In October, the Soul Matters theme we'll be using as a focus for our Religious Education (RE), Worship, and other Programming is "Courage," so I've been thinking about how courage plays a part in our Lifespan Programs.

Our Adult RE Speaker series has been a place where, in my opinion, we've begun what I hope to be a year-long, courageous exploration of what it means to live the 8th Principle and work to dismantle systems rooted in racism and white supremacy culture. These'll be conversations that challenge us and, in some cases, may awaken feelings of anxiety or fear. Those moments require courage to persevere in the work of our own transformation and the transformation of our congregation into the kind of community we aspire to be.

Our children and youth are also showing a lot of courage lately. We have several new families joining us and some families returning after a significant time away. Our children are navigating what this new community will be, just as we all are. They wonder how they belong, and how the new and the familiar will work together. They adjust to new adult leaders and new friends and, if I'm

being honest, they adjust to what it means to have old structures return to their lives after years of not having them there.

There'll also be a certain kind of courage necessary to create new programs and ways of being a church. Rev. Omega and I recently visited the Kumeyaay Cultural Center in Barona to explore how we might deepen our congregation's relationship with the indigenous community and move toward a more accountable relationship that we speak about in our Land Acknowledgement. We plan to return there this fall with a group (or several groups) from our congregation to begin doing that work.

Finally, I'd like to encourage (literally) all of you to get involved in the work of our Lifespan Faith Formation Programs. Attend Adult RE programs, come to some of the community-building events we'll be offering throughout the year, or volunteer to help out with the children and youth on Sundays. Building the kind of community we hope to be requires that individuals have the courage to get involved.



COURAGE

Developmental Goals for First UU San Diego

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*

Many of you have asked about our congregation's Developmental Goals—be still my ministerial heart! Here are the goals and some resources for additional information about Developmental Ministry. These will also be found on the First UU website. As always, I welcome your questions, ideas, and concerns.

These goals were proposed by the Board of Trustees and chosen by the members via a survey. In order of importance to the congregation per that survey from the fall of 2021, here are the goals:

1. Rebuild trust and community through a re-covenanting process that defines how we want to be together as a congregation.
2. Develop a plan for ensuring the financial sustainability of the church.
3. Develop infrastructure (such as a revitalized Good Relations Committee) for people with conflicting ideas and needs to safely engage in conversation and resolution.
4. Live into the 8th Principle by becoming a fully welcoming and inclusive community.
5. Evaluate our governance structure and revise as needed to support our congregation's diverse needs and goals.
6. Right-size our programs and staffing.
7. Decide whether to remain in our Hillcrest campus or sell the property and relocate.
8. Explore how to build deeper connections between our two campuses.

Resources

This is a links-only version of the UUA Transitions handbook. See the section on Developmental Ministry for more information.

www.uua.org/files/2020-11/Transitional%20Ministry%20Handbook_Links%20Only.pdf

This UU World article from 2015 describes Developmental Ministry, using the UU congregation in Boulder, Colorado as an example.

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/what-developmental-ministry>

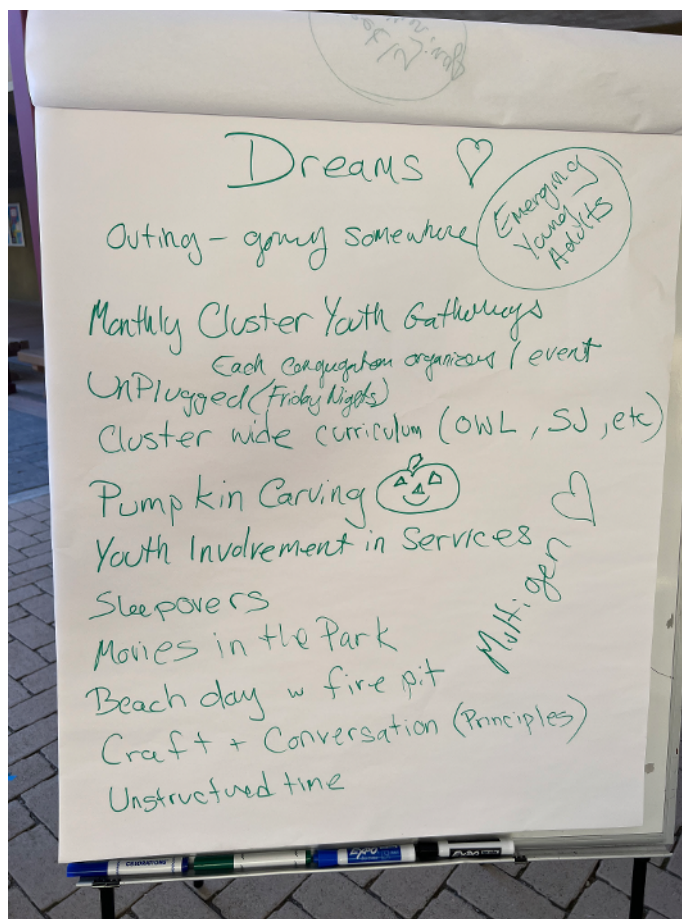


Constellation Youth Summit

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*

This past summer, UU Religious Education leaders from across the country met several times on Zoom to discuss how things were going in our congregations. Almost universally, youth groups everywhere were struggling to come back after COVID shutdowns. As a result, Eric Bliss and the regional staff organized The Constellation Youth Summit — a space-themed gathering of youth from across the Pacific and Mountain time zones. Youth would gather at regional hubs (First UU was one of the Southern California Hubs) to share their hopes and dreams for a Youth Program, and, at several times throughout the day, all of the hubs would Zoom together to connect with their peers.

After a month of planning, 16 participants gathered on our Hillcrest Campus on September 24th. Both youth and Religious Education (RE) staff were present from First UU, Summit, Camp deBenneville Pines, and San Dieguito, with Mary Carter-Vail, the Director of RE at Summit, serving as the facilitator for our hub.



The morning started with a Zoom roll call, during which a youth from each church had a chance to introduce their congregation to the youth at the other hubs. After an opening worship service and some activities designed to allow the participants to get to know each other, we took time to envision what our ideal Youth Program would be like (see photo). First UU youth gave a tour of our campus after dinner, and then the

day ended with a closing worship service and another chance for connecting with all the Pacific Western Region's hubs on Zoom.

After a full day of connecting and planning, all involved seemed excited to plan more events with our cluster congregations. We hope these seasonal cluster events can help provide a broader community for those youth whose congregations are not yet back to previous attendance numbers. It also makes sense to share resources and provide opportunities for deeper connections throughout the region.

Adult RE Speaker Series

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*

As we looked at ways to reboot our Adult RE Programs, Jan Garbosky came to me with an idea: host a speaker series in which we invite prominent speakers from the national UU and non-UU community to speak about topics related to the 8th Principle. Apparently, many of our members have come to like Zoom because it allows them to attend events without the time and logistical challenges of travel. This Zoom webinar model of Adult RE also allows us to host prominent speakers from across the nation without the financial costs of travel and lodging. The idea seemed like a win for all involved, so Jan and I went ahead with the planning.

Our first speaker was Peter Bolland, the Chair of the Philosophy and Humanities Department at Southwestern College. Peter has an established following among our congregation and we thought he would offer an excellent introduction to the anti-racist, anti-oppression work we wanted to engage in. His two sessions, “Dismantling White Supremacy One Insight at a Time” (Aug 18th) and “Why It’s So Hard to Talk About Racism” (Sept 15th) did just that. Peter led us through an examination of the racist systems and thinking that have, for too long, plagued our history, and helped us define terms and the context of the work we’ll be doing for the remainder of the 10 sessions.

The goal of these 10 remaining sessions will be to further the work of the 8th Principle by inviting UUs of color to lead us in an exploration of topics that are of interest to them. We are incredibly grateful to the Helen Meyer’s fund for providing a grant to make it

possible for us to invite high-quality speakers from across the nation.

On October 27th, 6:30 pm — 8:00 pm, Rev. Michael J. Crumpler, the UUA’s LGBTQ & Multicultural Programs Director, will lead a webinar entitled “What About Us?” in which he’ll explore how we can create spaces that remember and reflect BIPOC in majority white communities. Because I’ve received some questions about this webinar, I want to clarify that it is intended for all members of our community. The goal is to help both white people and people of color create spaces that are welcoming to and reflective of all.

On November 17th, Rev. Dr. Natalie Fenimore, Minister for Lifespan Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY, will lead us in an exploration of the recommendations in the Committee on Institutional Change’s report, “Widening the Circle of Concern.”

We’re still in the process of scheduling our December leader. As part of our 150th Anniversary year, on January 26th, Aisha Hauser, the President of the Liberal Religious Educator’s Association, will be with us to talk about religious education and connect to our own congregation’s roots as a Sunday school as part of our 150th Anniversary year.

We hope that you can join the over 130 individuals who have taken part in this series so far. For more information about the series or to register for the next installment in the series, visit the Adult Faith Formation page of our church website: www.firstuusandiego.org/adult-faith-formation.html

La Chimi Flamenco Show

**Friday
October 7th
7:30-9 pm**

Flamenco dancer Lakshmi Basile "La Chimi" radiates sensuality, strength, and emotion.



Join us for a magical evening of traditional and fusion dance, singing and guitar featuring belly dancer Gloria Lanuza, Jeff Basile on Bass, David Morales on violin, Kambiz Pakan on guitar and a very special guest from Southern Spain, Pepele Mendez.

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Free! Registration Required
Reserve your seats at
FirstUUSanDiego.org

► Free parking in our lot 

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