



First  
Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Diego

# FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

December 2023; Vol 17 No. 10

## Coming of Age Service at First UU December 3

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

For the first time in many years, First UU is hosting a Coming of Age Service on December 3, 2023. This service will acknowledge the changes taking place in the lives of seven youth maturing through adolescence. Each youth will share a short reflection to the church on their relationship with faith as well as who they aspire to be as they emerge through adolescence.

Following these reflections, parents will share a blessing for their youth, highlighting how their child (or children) in this program have enriched their lives. Finally, Reverend Kristen Kuriga and the Board President, Everardo Aguilar, will share a few words to honor the youth who elected to participate in this service.

In previous years, this service has been offered to youth in seventh grade as a rite of passage as they entered the youth group. This year, the age range was extended from sixth grade to senior high to make space for those who were unable to experience this rite of passage during the COVID pandemic. Youth involved in this program were assigned a mentor or a member of the congregation who was willing and able to offer their time and wisdom these past few months. The mentors were asked to support youth as they answered questions such as, "Do you believe in God?" or "What do I value and how do I aspire to live out these values?" The mentors for the youth this year were Tony Brumfield, Nancy Fisk, Steve Howard, Maggie Marshall, Keith Mescher and Marge Wurgel.

While the youth are meeting with their mentors, the parents were also meeting as a group with other congregation members, guiding them through the

challenges and joys of being a parent to elementary and high school youth in the present moment. The mentors for the parents were Sean Bohac and Patty Hinojosa.

Both groups have experienced sessions where they talk about the history of the Unitarian Universalist faith, the guiding values and how these values shape or anchor our lives, culminating in an overnight experience, where they played games and worked on their reflections.

This year's service was inspired by Mindy and Sebastian Hochesang, who are moving to Uganda in January. Mindy wanted Sebastian to experience Coming of Age before they left. Lara Anderson, the Youth and Young Adult coordinator, worked with mentors, parent educators, parents, and Liz Jones, the former Religious Education Director at First UU, to create the program that the youth and their parents experienced this fall.

This service is ever changing to adapt to the current moment, as an example of First UU's commitment to the youth of our congregation. We hope you will join us in witnessing these seven youth, as they participate in this time honored UU tradition on December 3rd. There will be a reception for the youth during the social hour following this service.

### In this issue:

- Challenges and Revolutionary Acts by Rev. Justine Sullivan Pg 2
- Fa-La-La-La-La by Tony Bianca Pg 3
- Valerie Jaques, Board Vice President by Nancy Fisk Pg 4
- Generosity Offerings in January by John Schaibly Pg 5
- Christmas Cookies & Chaos Performances by LGT Pg 6
- First UU Holiday Calendar Pg 7
- Art & Collectibles Online Auction Pg 7

# Challenges and Revolutionary Acts

by Rev. Justine Sullivan, *Lead Minister*



*Among other wonders of our lives,  
we are alive with one another,  
we walk here in the light of this  
unlikely world  
that isn't ours for long.*

~ *John Daniel*

Over the past month, the world's been especially full of challenge and strife. In our own community, we've experienced a huge loss with the death of Rev. Carolyn Owen-Towle. We all mourn the loss of life in Israel and Palestine, in Ukraine, and many other places in the world. At times I feel weary and overwhelmed, wondering how I'll find hopeful things to say that feel true. Then Sunday morning arrives and I get to be with all of you.

I hear your voices raised in song, see your faces, and I am restored. This was especially true when we welcomed the president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to lead worship with us. The Meeting House was packed. We zoomed in beloveds from South Bay and Summit, and many of you logged in to join worship online. I saw you and our beautiful campus through Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt's eyes, and felt so proud and happy at the community you're building and rebuilding.

For 150 years, you've shone a light for all to see, a beacon of liberal faith in a world that so needs messages of healing and hope. As Rev. Sofia reminded us, to be a community of care is a revolutionary act.

Recently, I joined members of our congregation, from teens to elders, traveling to the border wall, where we spoke with folks who traveled to the United States, seeking safety, only to find themselves literally stuck between two walls. Each day, people are seriously injured trying to scale those walls. We offered sandwiches and hot drinks and prayers. I think of the lovely people I met, and I pray for them - and the many more I have not yet met- that they will find refuge, safety, respect, and dignity. I hope to be part of many more such trips, and that those of you who're able to will join me in offering comfort and companionship to our beloveds who travel here seeking asylum.

As stated in the Talmud, "Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

I look forward to entering a new year with you and I wish you all the blessings of this holiday season.

Peace and Love to you,

*Rev. Justine*

## December Worship Schedule

### Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

### South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

### December's Transformational Theme: "The Gift of Mystery"

Throughout the month of December, we are exploring the spiritual theme of mystery. Mystery, that which we cannot fully understand or explain. In Unitarian Universalism we may refer to that which is larger than ourselves as the Great Mystery. In this congregation when a member dies, we say these powerful words: In mystery we are born, in mystery we live, and in mystery we die. What is your relationship to mystery? When have you encountered it, and what did it teach you? This month we will tell stories of encounters with mystery and explore the spiritual practice of not knowing and a beginner's mind. Join us as we uncover the gifts of mystery!

## Fa-La-La-La-La: Because I Couldn't Think of a Catchier Title

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



Quite a lot's happening in Lifespan Ministries this December! December 3, at our Sunday Service, we'll be celebrating the culmination of our Coming of Age Program with seven (yes, seven!) youth coming of age this year! The youth have spent much of October and November working with Youth and Young

Adult Coordinator, Lara Anderson, several volunteer program leaders, and their individual mentors preparing for this day.

During the Service, the youth will be introduced by their mentors, receive a chalice necklace as a sign of this new stage in their spiritual journey, and present their Credo Statements - statements of their own personal perspective on their beliefs and spirituality. I hope you'll be able to attend the service as we celebrate and honor these amazing youth!

On Friday, Dec 15, at 6 pm, we'll have our annual Tree Decorating Party, Potluck and Holiday Sing-Along in Bard Hall. We gather to share community, food and song as we approach the winter holidays. Bring a dish to share, come help craft ornaments for our First UU Tree and, of course, gather around to sing some holiday favorites or just listen as Drew Massicot leads us from the piano.

On December 24, we'll celebrate Christmas Eve but, this year, we'll add a little peppermint twist! Because Christmas Eve is on a Sunday, we'll have our traditional Family Service a little earlier - it will be our 10 am Sunday service that day. During that service, we'll have our traditional "No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant" when people of all ages can choose a costume from

those provided and join in our Christmas tableau. We're also planning to incorporate some new additions to the service and I'm hard at work perfecting my best Grinch impersonation!

Later on the 24th, we'll have our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service starting at 6:30 pm with a half-hour, pre-service concert of seasonal music featuring our Handbell Ensemble, the Penny Whistlers and other First UU musicians.

I hope you can join us for some or all of these events as we celebrate community, love and hope this December.



# Valerie Jaques, Board Vice President

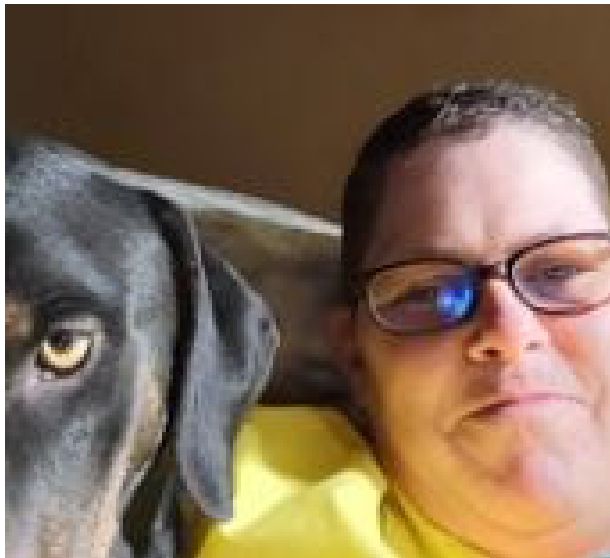
by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

When asked how long she's been a UU, Valerie says, "My grandmother was a member of First UU, my mother, Katie Jaques, was a member of First UU and then there's me. I'm a third generation UU." Valerie is known for her extensive volunteer work at First UU, including singing in the Chalice Choir and Women's Choir, playing in the Bell Choir, picking up food for the South Bay Food Pantry, and until recently, she was on the core team of Journey Towards Wholeness. She left the core team to become Board Vice President this year.

When asked why she became Vice President she says, "I heard my mother in my head saying, 'You know you have to do it.'" Another advantage for her was that she can work with a variety of people, and she's attended enough board meetings to understand Board work is "easier than most people think it is."

She thinks one of the major challenges First UU will face this year is deciding if we should take the offer from the hospital. It is a large sum of money UCSD is offering First UU. If the congregation doesn't take the offer, there are still aging buildings that need renovation. We will need to figure out what it will take to remodel those buildings.

Right Relations is another major area to work on. The congregation will be working with the Right Relations Team on how to deal with conflict, and how to have deep conversations where individuals don't always agree, without having it affect the relationships between those individuals. Valerie hopes we might find a formula or a system that we can use to approach challenging conversations and feel okay about our differences.



When Valerie was growing up at First UU, even though her mother was a member, it was accepted practice for parents to let their children attend other churches. Valerie did this with friends and decided she couldn't believe in a God that would condemn her parents to eternal damnation for not believing in a particular deity or creed.

She married her husband, Mike, at First UU and Carolyn Owen-Towle officiated at the ceremony. When Mike retired from the Navy, he had time to attend church on a regular basis again. They came back to First UU with Valerie's children, Cora and

Penny. Valerie started playing in the Bell Choir at that time. She found it was a nice departure from her regular life, which included being a farrier (someone who trims and shoes horses) and riding horses.

She now raises Malabar Arabian horses on her ranch in Descanso. She also does endurance riding, an equestrian sport based on controlled long-distance races. Valerie has ridden 50 mile and 100 mile endurance races, and has won an award for distance ridden in a single year.

Valerie likes being a UU because "We're a creedal faith that's more about how we are with one another." She appreciates that as a faith community, we are open to learning new ideas. The freedom of the pew also appeals to her; she doesn't have to agree with everything the ministers present. The congregation is free to discuss different subjects and share ideas. Finally, she feels the people at First UU are able to hold her in a way that doesn't happen in the rest of her life.

Valerie will be Board President in 2024-2025.

## Generosity Offerings for UU organizations in January

by John Schaibly

Each Sunday in January the generosity offerings will go to different UU organizations typically outside our local congregation. This year's recipients are the following organizations:

**January 7: Camp de Benneville Pines** is Southern California's UU camp in the San Bernardino Mountains. Each dollar received will be matched by generous First UU donors to fund the camp's 2023 Bear Hugs One-Time Gift Campaign to help camp survive the lean winter months and make repairs to aging facilities.

**January 14: Journey Toward Wholeness** is a First UU program addressing racism and marginalized populations within our congregation.

**January 21: The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee** is the social justice/disaster relief arm of the UU Association aiding international and domestic projects and programs. Help UUSC rush resources to grassroots Haitian leaders as they address their country's dire social and humanitarian emergency.

**January 28: Partner Church in the Philippines** program supports elementary and high school children in the remote farming village of Malingin. Our funds have also helped them repair their UU Church and homes due to typhoon damage.

Please support these larger UU organizations. You can donate at Sunday morning in-person services, on the church website (<http://firstuusandiego.org/donations>) or write checks to the church specifying the name of the organization(s). Watch for more details in January's weekly newsletters. Thank you for your generosity.



# Christmas Cookies & Chaos Performances December 8, 9 & 10

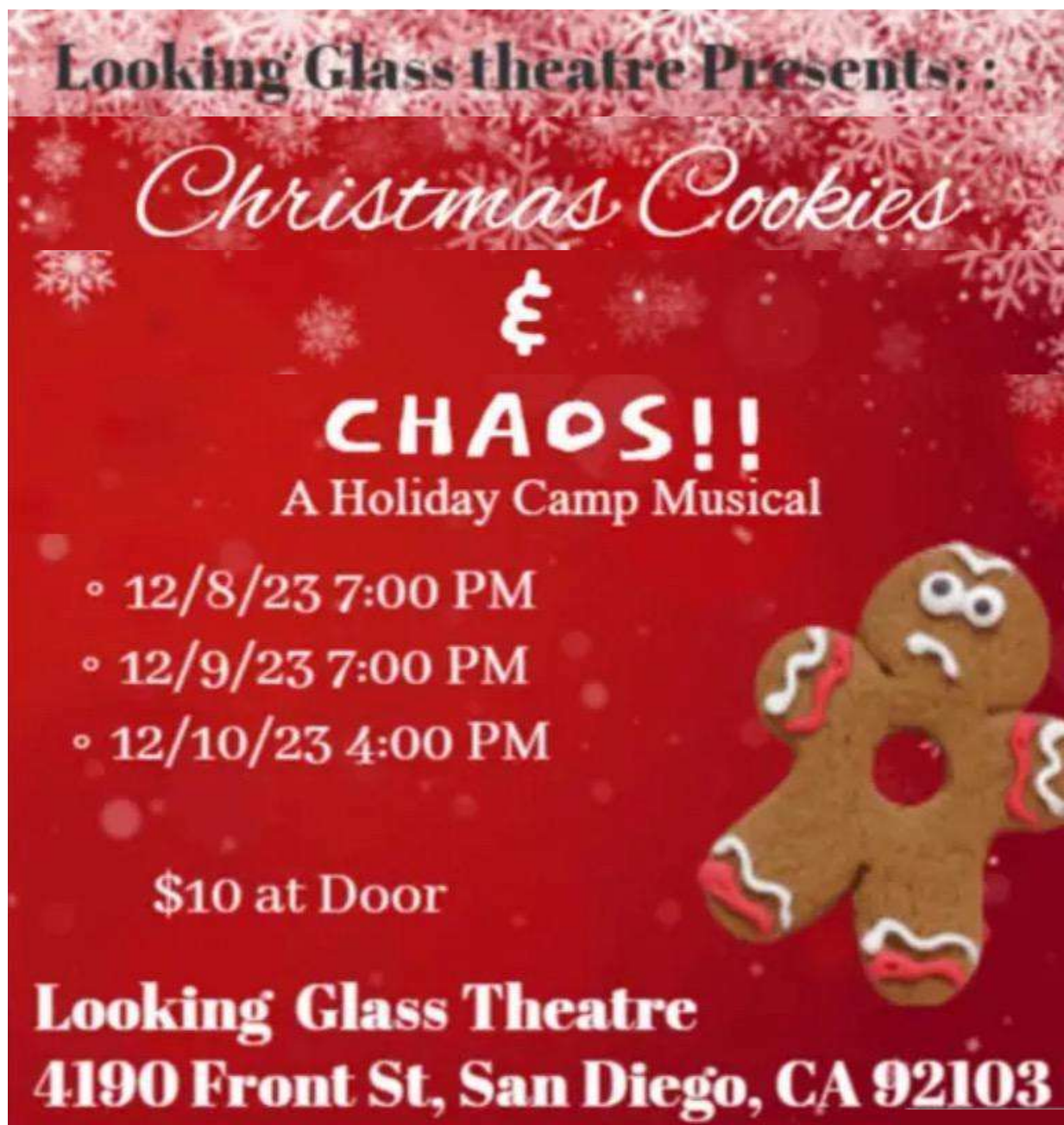
by Looking Glass Theatre

Do you love Hallmark movies? Do you love to make fun of Hallmark movies? Don't miss the world premiere of Christmas Cookies & Chaos: A Holiday Camp Musical!

Rachel Brown is a big city executive who is forced to go back to her hometown during Christmas to take over a local coffee shop... Will Rachel remember her small town values? Will the Townies fall in love? Come find out!

**Friday, December 8 @ 7PM      Saturday, December 9 @ 7PM      Sunday, December 10 @ 4 PM**

\$10 at the door or pre-pay on Square (just show proof at the door!) Performances will be held in the Meeting House of First Unitarian Universalist Church. Free parking! [www.lookingglasssd.org](http://www.lookingglasssd.org)



**Looking Glass theatre Presents:**

*Christmas Cookies*

**&**

**CHAOS!!**

A Holiday Camp Musical

- 12/8/23 7:00 PM
- 12/9/23 7:00 PM
- 12/10/23 4:00 PM

\$10 at Door

**Looking Glass Theatre**  
**4190 Front St, San Diego, CA 92103**

## 2023 FIRST UU SAN DIEGO HOLIDAY CALENDAR

### CHRISTMAS COOKIES & CHAOS

Enjoy this original holiday camp musical. \$10 donation at the door.

DECEMBER 8, 7 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### POSADA SIN FRONTERAS

Join us for this historic binational event that has been a First UU tradition for over a decade! Check the Window for more info.

DECEMBER 9, 2 PM

"WHISKEY 8"

### CHRISTMAS COOKIES & CHAOS

Enjoy this original holiday camp musical. \$10 donation at the door.

DECEMBER 9, 7 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### CHRISTMAS COOKIES & CHAOS

Enjoy this original holiday camp musical. \$10 donation at the door.

DECEMBER 10, 4 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### BLUE HOLIDAY SERVICE

Join us for an online reflective vespers service. Find link information in the Window.

DECEMBER 12, 7 PM

ZOOM

### ART GUILD RECEPTION - WINTER HOLIDAY SHOW

Bring a festive snack to share. The artists will be discussing their works.

DECEMBER 14, 6 PM

BARD HALL

### TREE DECORATING AND SING-ALONG

Bring your favorite holiday foods to share or just come along and join in the holiday cheer.

DECEMBER 15, 6 PM

BARD HALL

### CHRISTMAS CHOIR REHEARSALS

DECEMBER 18 & 20, 7 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### WINTER SCHMINTER CONCERT

Yale Strom's Hot Pstromi explores celebrating the winter solstice through the folk music. Register at [firstuusandiego.org](http://firstuusandiego.org).

DECEMBER 21, 7 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### CHRISTMAS "EVE" WORSHIP

Join us for a family friendly Christmas Eve Worship Service during our regular Sunday Worship time.

DECEMBER 24, 10 AM

MEETING HOUSE

### CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING WORSHIP

Join us for Sunday Worship service of carols and stories at South Bay.

DECEMBER 24, 10 AM

SOUTH BAY

### CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Join us for our annual Candlelight Service at 7 PM. Arrive at 6:30 PM to enjoy the pre-service concert!

DECEMBER 24, 6:30 PM

MEETING HOUSE

### CHRISTMAS DAY POTLUCK LUNCHEON

Bring your favorite holiday foods to share and join in the holiday cheer.

DECEMBER 25, 1 PM

BARD HALL

# Art & Collectibles Online Auction

Sponsored  
by the  
**Dining4Dollar\$  
Team**

## Bid on Amazing Items

Our members are travelers and collectors! Don't miss this rare opportunity to find unique gifts for art lovers and pick up antiques and collectibles with no dealer markups for the holidays. All proceeds go to the First UU general fund. The auction is now open! Please peruse the [catalog](#) and Bid, Bid, Bid! Bidding closes Dec 9th.

**Staff**

Rev. Justine Sullivan, Lead Minister  
 Rev. Kristen Kuriga, Assistant Minister  
 Swamini Adityananda Saraswati, Intern 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  
 Marshall Voit, Music Director  
 Rose Littler-Riedel, Communications Coordinator & Chaplain Intern  
 Chris Chambers, Social Justice Coordinator  
 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  
 Tomás Acosta, Collaborative Pianist  
 Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper  
 Ray Evans, Maintenance  
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator  
 Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti

**Board of Trustees FY 22-23**

Everardo Aguilar, President  
 Valerie Jaques, Vice President  
 Sue Marberry, Treasurer  
 Karen Lamphere, Secretary  
 Leland Beck, Rosalba Ciampi, Steve Howard, Gay Hybertsen  
 and Paula Johnson —Trustees

**ONLINE email & Web Addresses**

**First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk:**  
[nfisk1@juno.com](mailto:nfisk1@juno.com)

**To be added to the E-mail List:**

[firstwords@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:firstwords@firstuusandiego.org)

**Scheduling of Church Property Requests:**

[schedule@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:schedule@firstuusandiego.org)

**The Window submissions (Church bulletin):**

[window@firstuusandiego.org](mailto>window@firstuusandiego.org)

**Care Network:** [carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org)

**First Church Web Sites:**

**Main Website:** <http://www.firstuusandiego.org>

**South Bay Campus:**

<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/south-bay-campus.html>

**To view sermon video casts, click on these**

**YouTube or Vimeo buttons:**



**Giving:** <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving.html>.

**Click on these Amazon Affiliate or iGive buttons for your online shopping and First Church receives a portion of the sales.**

**Secure and private.**



**First**  
**Unitarian Universalist**  
**Church of San Diego**

4190 Front Street (GPS use 298 W Arbor Drive)  
 San Diego, CA 92103-2098

**Phone:** 619-298-9978

**E-mail:** [mail@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:mail@firstuusandiego.org)

**POSTMASTER:**

Send address changes to:  
 First Words, 4190 Front Street,  
 San Diego, CA 92103