



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

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Dining for Dollar\$ 2024—Bidding Opens May 5th - 19th

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

- Chalice Ranch BBQ; Ranch Trail Ride with Wine Tasting
- Vacation in Colorado or Utah; go on a Motorhome Adventure
- Pizza and Rummy; Farm to Tummy; Behind the (Coffee) Bar
- Formal Family Portrait Session
- Show Tunes Singalong; You're the DJ.
- Give rhinestone painting, lawn bowling, hiking, birding, or desert geology a try.
- Enjoy savory gourmet meals from around the world or join others in folk dance classes.



These are just a sample of the Dining for Dollar\$ (D4\$) events being hosted this summer and fall! In the past, we've raised as much as \$55,000 towards our church's annual 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 major fundraising.

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 can participate, regardless of family or financial issues.

You won't want to miss bidding on a fun time with the great people in our church community.

Bidding is online and starts Sunday, May 5th at 12:01 am and continues through midnight on Sunday, May 19th.

Past bidders should've already received an email invitation at the beginning of April at the email address on file from last year's D4\$.

To participate, go to that email and:

- Click the link in the email to complete your registration and set your password.
- Click on the 'Click here to confirm your email and complete your online registration.' You'll be asked to create a password.

If you didn't receive an email invitation, check your spam or junk email and move it to your inbox. Then check with the D4\$ table in Bard Hall after Sunday service and make sure the correct email address is on your account.

If you're a new bidder, register online through the link on the First UU website under the Giving tab, clicking on Dining for Dollar\$. Stop by the D4\$ table if you need assistance.

If none of these options work, please email [Dave Hunt](#) or [Robie Evans](#).

Once you're registered, preview the Catalog online and start bidding! If you need help bidding, proxy bidding sheets will be available at the D4\$ table after each service on May 5th, 12th, and 19th. We'll have trained volunteers to help you register and bid after worship service.

When the bidding is over, you'll be notified by email if you win one or more items, or if you're outbid. For the best chances of winning your items, use the 'Buy It Now' feature.

Then, pay for your items online, or arrange manual payments with Robie Evans.

Note: Because the system doesn't allow multi-tiered pricing, family discounts will be applied on the back end. Those who bid on Family Prices events, please do not pay invoices online until you get an adjusted invoice.

Bid early and bid often. Just be sure you and your family don't miss out on the fun!

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Living Our Values

by Rev. Kristen Kuriga, *Assistant Minister*



Over the last month, I've been moved to see us living our values as a congregation in deep and meaningful ways. For the first time in four years, we hosted a two-week rotation of the Interfaith Shelter, providing housing and food for ten guests, including two families. Volunteers and staff cooked meals, stayed overnight, shuttled guests to the laundromat, went shopping, organized, washed bedding, cleaned, and accompanied. It was a huge undertaking! As guests finished their time with us, they shared that they felt welcomed, safe, and respected. Our Unitarian Universalist values in action.

I recently gathered shelter volunteers for a reflection session over zoom. It had three purposes: to make meaning of our experience, document best practices, and assess our capacity for next year. As I reflected on my own experience, I realized what was most meaningful for me were the relationships; the opportunity to get to know our guests and volunteers, play games before dinner, or provide pastoral support. I was reminded that we engage in justice work because we are connected, and we belong to one another. And when we come together, we also have the opportunity to learn, grow, and be changed in the process.

The shelter is only one example of how we're living our values as a congregation. I see it in the commitment of our pantry volunteers who distribute food to an average of 550 families per week. I saw love in action at our booth for Día de Niños/Day of the Child in Chula Vista, watching members of the South Bay Campus connect with families while planting seeds, making paper flowers, and coloring chalices. I see it in the climate justice volunteers out with their petitions working for public power in San Diego.

We're not just people who believe in love, justice, and equity. We're putting our most deeply held values into action. I'm so proud to be doing this sacred work alongside you!

May Worship Schedule

Hillcrest Worship Time:

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

South Bay Worship Time:

Sundays, 10 am, Suite 104

May's Theme:

"Pluralism"

Throughout the month of May, we're exploring the spiritual theme of Pluralism. Pluralism is the idea that there are different pathways to spiritual wisdom, and that we learn by being in relationship across differences of identity, lived experience, and theology. Pluralism is central to who we are as Unitarian Universalists and is named as one of our core values in the proposed revision to Article II of the UUA bylaws: "Pluralism: We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with love, curiosity, and respect." Join us to explore how we can individually and collectively live more deeply into the value of pluralism.

Experiencing the Beauty of Polarity in Arizona

by Tony Bianca, *Director of Lifespan Faith Formation*



As I write this, I'm in the car (not driving, of course), returning from a week away in Arizona where I spent some time seeing things that humbled me by the immensity of their scale, in both time and space. The Grand Canyon took millions of years to form and is so large that, while looking at

it, one can't comprehend that the opposite side is ten miles away. At the Lowell Observatory I saw the telescope through which Pluto—a body only half the size of the United States over three billion miles away—was first seen by human eyes. I also wandered through Native American Pueblo sites where dwellings built hundreds of years ago still stand.

While taking in these magnificent things, I thought about the recent work we've been doing as a staff and at Board meetings around managing polarities as we work through Teresa Cooley's book *Transforming Conflict*. In particular, I thought about the 1st and 7th Principles: "The inherent worth and dignity of every person," and "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence." I don't think there's a fundamental polarity between these principles, but there may be something there to explore if you think about it in a particular way.

Standing in front of the Grand Canyon or contemplating the immensity of the interdependent web of all existence, it's easy to be overcome with a kind of awe that makes my individual life, problems, accomplishments—the

entire "me-ness" of me—seem spectacularly insignificant. And, yet, I also believe that my life—all lives—are inherently and uniquely meaningful. The tension between these polarities—the fact that I'm both insignificant and, also the center of my own, private universe—is what, for me, creates that sense of wonder and awe I experience as "the sacred."

I also see this polarity at play in much of what makes up the life and work of our congregation. Take our Journey Toward Wholeness work, for example. At the macro level, we recognize and



work to address sweeping, systemic injustices that have plagued humanity for centuries, if not millennia. Yet, it's also true that individuals who, from that macro level view, might fit the textbook definition of "privilege" have their own, personal challenges and hardships equally worthy of our empathy, compassion, and care. Similar to that wonder and awe I experienced in Arizona, that polar tension between the systemic and the individual need not trick us into either/or thinking. On the contrary, I'd argue we're called by

our Principles to manage that polarity with grace, in other words, to be a "both/and" people.

I may have mentioned before that Galileo is an individual who I sometimes reflect on as a source of inspiration. I'm reminded, in this instance, of a quote that's attributed to him: "The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do." We live in an amazing world full of wonder, mystery, and, at times, beautiful polarity, as Carl Sagan called it, "an in-between universe." And after being away for a week, I'm happy to be back.

Angela Garcia Sims, South Bay and the Origins of SOLACE

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*



Angela Garcia Sims joined the South Bay congregation when they moved to their current Broadway location. Her origin story with First UU includes social justice and immigration. In 2009, SB 1070 in Arizona, an extreme immigration law that allowed law enforcement to question

and ask for the papers of anyone taken into custody, was passed. In response, San Diego County Immigrant Justice Project organized a caravan to Phoenix.

Mar Cardenas, the South Bay Coordinator at the time, organized a group from South Bay to go to Phoenix. They were put up at a house and met UUs from all over the country. Angela took a friend with her who was not a UU. 150,000 people marched in the summer heat in Phoenix to protest the passage of SB1070.

The week following the protest, Mar organized a meeting with Alliance San Diego, UCSD, and San Diego Organizing Project. Angela attended this meeting and it was then she decided “These are my kind of people; they care about justice.”

Angela has never been a “churchy” person. She didn’t believe what she was taught as a Catholic, except possibly the admonition “Forgive others who trespass against us.” She believes we’re socialized to do what we do through our experiences.

She met Connie Mack, a South Bay member, at a meeting of the Women Educators Association, and discovered that Connie was a UU member and an atheist. She was intrigued by a church that accepted atheists. Angela came to a sermon on Social Justice and realized she was in a place with intelligent, educated people who shared her values.

After joining First UU, Angela attended the discussions on Immigration as a Moral Issue, a resolution from the UU Association General

Assembly. In the final discussion, participants brainstormed what actions they could take because of their discussions. The idea that took off was SOLACE, (Souls Offering Loving and Compassionate Ears). This is a visitation program that comforts and supports persons held in immigration detentions, letting detainees tell their stories and advocating for humane immigration policies.

The Otay Mesa Detention Facility was asked about allowing volunteers to talk to a few of the detainees. The facility began by allowing visitation weekends. Four detainees signed up to talk to the volunteers on the first weekend. The program continued for a year. Many of the detainees were isolated; having SOLACE there affirmed their humanity and let them know someone cared about them.

After Angela reported to authorities that one woman had experienced sexual abuse at the facility, ICE, (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) stopped the program and required the volunteers to sign a liability release form. In addition, volunteers were told not to disclose what they heard.

When Mother Jones magazine reported that ICE was gagging the visitation program, the volunteers were allowed to come back. However, they went from face-to-face visitation to meeting behind locked doors and talking over phones in a glass box. The good news is the program is still going strong to this day, despite the setbacks they have faced.

Although it’s been a while since she volunteered with SOLACE, another interest of Angela’s that keeps her involved with First UU is singing. She belongs to a group called Rondalla de San Diego, established in 2013. They sang at the Hillcrest campus and to celebrate South Bay’s quinceanera. She has sung with South Bay singers, enjoyed working with Lorelei, and found the group friendly and supportive. Angela is currently on the committee to find a new home for South Bay, and is excited about the possibilities, now that they’ve expanded the range of where the congregation can rent or buy a new place.

Draft Covenant of Right Relations

by the Right Relations Committee

In its work to support our congregation's ongoing goals toward building a more beloved community, your Right Relations Team has drafted a "Covenant of Right Relations" that will be presented for adoption at the congregational meeting on June 9th. We ask that you review it and offer any ideas or suggestions you may have at firstuusandiego.org/connections.

I. Purpose

The goal of this Covenant is to provide a clear statement about how our values and principles can best be demonstrated through our actions. The well-being of our congregation depends on a sense of fellowship among all within our community—members, friends, children and youth, minister, and staff—whenever and wherever we worship, interact, or work together.

II. Our Covenant of Right Relations

In practicing our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes and with Love as our guide, we covenant to:

- Welcome the newcomer.
- Encourage and support one another.



- Honor our diversity.
- Ask questions with an open mind and heart.
- Listen deeply and non-defensively to seek understanding.
- Speak and act compassionately.
- Trust one another to remain in community.

III. How We Will Live in Covenant

In the interest of building beloved community:

- In written and spoken communication, we will strive for compassionate candor and a space for reflection, safety in relationships, reverence, and the growth that comes with faith-in-action.
- We will refrain from negative gossip and the spreading of rumors.
- We will each do our part to minimize destructive competition and maximize cooperation.
- When conflict arises, we will name it and work through it together.
- We will speak from our own experience and seek to understand the experience of others.



Steve Howard, Board Member

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Steve Howard was raised in a UU church. His parents founded the UU Fellowship in Flagstaff, Arizona, when he was seven or eight. He attended Unitarian Sunday School, and then went to the Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) group when he was a teenager.

He moved to Pasadena after college and attended Neighborhood Church occasionally, but never really felt welcome there. When he moved to San Diego after a divorce, he realized he needed a community and came to First UU looking for that community.

He began with being a member of the Looking Glass Theatre, which he participated in for two-three years. He then joined the young adult group Odyssey, where he met his wife, Beverly Brown. He occasionally attends the retreats put on by the Men's Fellowship.

He decided to attend a leadership school, given in the summer, sponsored by the Pacific Southwest UU District (PSWD). There he developed the confidence to take on more leadership roles at First UU. He joined the Board in the 90's and became Board President for a year.

After suffering a heart attack in March 2021, he took time to recover and then decided he'd like to give back to the congregation again. He

joined the board again for a three-year term. He says he likes knowing everything that's going on. The Board talks about things that are important for the future of First UU.

He appreciates that the focus of the Board at this time is to think of our goals in relation to First UU's mission, that we are considering who we want to be in the future. He also enjoys

spending time with the ministers and staff, finding them not only good at worship but that they are knowledgeable about the nuts and bolts of running a congregation. "Being on the Board is not a horrible task. We don't have big fights. We can talk about the important questions on campus and do it by working through our conflicts." Steve will be on the Board for one more year.



He was on the committee that recently hired a new social justice/membership staff member, who will start work in a few weeks.

Steve was glad that First UU was there when he needed it. He says, "It's a comfort to hang out with people I know." He also feels an obligation to welcome newcomers and make First UU welcoming to others. He wants our liberal religious community to be there when the next person needs it.

Our Sustainable Future (OSF): Update on Go? Stay? Redevelop/Share?

by the OSF Steering Team

On April 23rd, the OSF Steering Team held its second meeting with updates shared. The Steering Team is committed to:

- providing clear, timely information on an ongoing basis and
- creating opportunities for input from:
 - individual congregation members and friends,
 - Ministry Teams and their groups, and
 - First UU staff.

Deferred Maintenance Update:

Work has begun on a spreadsheet of room-by-room information to assess our deferred maintenance status. Once completed, a Facilities Condition Assessment will take place—sometime in May.

Real Estate Update (part of both “Go” and “Redevelop/Share”):

The commercial real estate professional used for our Stay/Go process in 2019 has been contacted and will work with us again. In addition to seeking potential new locations for us to consider, commercial developers will be contacted to get their input on interest in working on a redevelopment process with the congregation.

Two team members will meet with St. Paul’s Project Manager prior to approaching the developer of their project. Additionally, the OSF team will reach out to non-profit organizations who may be interested in partnering with us.

Use/Non-use of First UU Facilities:

A review of our calendar has been completed to understand the level of use and non-use of our facilities and begin thinking how we might make better use of our rooms/facility if the

decision is to stay. What are our actual needs? How can we use our space more efficiently throughout the week?

Ensuring South Bay’s Needs Are Considered:

Folding in information about South Bay’s needs is an important aspect for the team to include in its work.

As we look to the future, it’s of utmost importance to our health as a religious community to keep our mission as a congregation and our covenant with each other at the heart of all we do. Our individual and group discussions about the process, our assessments and findings, and our differences of opinion must be grounded in our love for First UU and each other.

We look forward to your thoughts and ideas as we move forward to a future that sustains us and our relationships for many years to come—regardless of if we stay, go, or redevelop our First UU Hillcrest campus.

To submit your questions, comments, and feedback, use the form at the bottom of [our webpage](#).

Led by Rev. Justine, OSF Steering Team members include:

- Craig Darling
- Jan Garbosky
- Dave Hunt
- Sarah Ormond
- Robie Evans
- Lawrence Hess
- Armin Kuhlman
- Stephanie Webber
- Andy French
- Steve Howard
- Sue Marberry
- Carolyn Woodbury

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 Rev. Kristen Kuriga, Assistant Minister
 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
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Tony Bianca, Director of Lifespan Faith Formation
 Marshall Voit, Music Director
 Valeria Aguilar, Membership and Social Justice Coordinator
 Rose Littler-Riedel, Communications 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
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
 Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Minister Emeritus

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

To view sermon video casts, click on this YouTube button:



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

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