



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

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RISE UP!



Imagine arriving in a strange land with only a plastic bag full of clothes, several children in tow. You can't speak the language or read the street signs. You don't know how to take a bus, or how the currency works, and you have no idea how you'll feed your family. Many refugee women forced to leave their homes due to war or famine face these soul-crushing problems daily, and often they are head of household with no means of support. [Women's Empowerment International](#) (WE), a San Diego based non-profit, has partnered with the International Rescue Committee to help impoverished refugee women and other poor women in San Diego work their way out of poverty by starting small businesses.

On Saturday, April 16 at 7:30 pm, the [First UU Women's Choir](#) will perform a concert themed "Rise Up!" (from the [poem](#) by Maya Angelou), to benefit the refugee and other poor women aided by WE. The concert will be held in the Meeting House, with an unusual reception to follow in Bard Hall.

Choir director Lynn Mendoza-Khan explained, "We want to make beautiful music which also inspires people, and serves a higher purpose. WE's efforts to help marginalized women in our society are a great fit with UU values."

During the concert, you'll hear from some of the women WE has helped. Their stories are mesmerizing. Before-hand and at the reception, you'll have the opportunity to meet these women and browse their wares including colorful clothing; intricate beaded jewelry; shea butters and creams, soaps, and oils from natural ingredients that celebrate traditional African and Amerindian methods of body care; and lovely imported scarves, décor, and jewelry. Bring your curiosity, and be prepared to purchase some of the wonderful items offered by these courageous women.

First Church has a long history of involvement with WE, which partners with [IRC](#) locally, and with microloan institutions around the world, to help poor women gain their independence. Beloved deceased member Ed Law co-founded [Grameen de la Frontera](#), a microloan program in Sonora, Mexico which was later supported by WE. This church made the [WE STAR Center of San Diego](#) (Support, Training, and Assistance for Refugee women) the recipient of our generosity offerings several years ago. WE STAR, established in 2006, has helped refugee and other poor women in San Diego start or expand over 400 small businesses.



Many First Church members continue to support the work of WE. The church's [Reproductive Justice Group](#) is co-producer of this concert, and the [Art Guild](#) is donating a portion of their art sales to WE during the month of April.

The First UU Women's Choir, Reproductive Justice, the Art Guild, and WE supporters of First Church invite you to join them on April 16 for an evening of uplifting music, heartwarming stories, delectable food and drink, and exotic and useful wares. A tax-deductible donation of \$10 in advance, or \$15 at the door, is requested. You can register [online](#), get your tickets on the patio, or send a check to Brenda Garcia in the office with WE Benefit Concert in the memo line. Rise up!

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BECOME A CONSCIOUS PARTICIPANT

BY REV. KATHLEEN OWENS, LEAD MINISTER

One of the things I most enjoy on the Hillcrest campus is the smell of the citrus trees in bloom. To me, the scent is delicious and it's one of the reasons I enjoy spring so much the budding of flowers, the fragrance, the feeling of a fresh start. I also know it can be hard to feel the joy and pleasure of springtime when it's also a presidential election year and the primaries are feeling so harsh, to put it mildly. How can we enjoy the beauty that exists in our world when our media focuses so much on all that's harsh, dangerous, hateful, and frightening?

Here we are, a people of faith, trying to be okay with all of this. it's not easy to stand in the middle of the paradox. It's important to take care of ourselves in the midst of such frightening times. When the big, national picture is too overwhelming, I find it helpful to focus in a bit more locally, to try and find those things I can do that make a difference.

It's important for you to know there are things you can do, such as having clarifying conversations about your values, about what's most important to you, and then brainstorming ways to act on those values. For example, you can support a livable wage—[which will be on the ballot in June](#). There's a lot we can do to spread the word that all workers deserve a livable wage.

We can volunteer to help another in need. From time to time, Jan and I have been eating breakfast at [The Huddle](#)—a local restaurant that also [delivers meals](#) to people living with life-threatening illnesses. They not only deliver healthy food but also provide information on how to cook good meals and then make sure folks have the groceries to do that. Being involved locally helps us all and gives us inspiration and energy to work on the larger level, too.

it's not easy being a conscious and active participant in our democracy. You have to make the decision to take care of yourself by volunteering, engaging in meaningful conversations, and attending to your spirit through worship and small groups. First UU Church of San Diego has multiple ways to support, engage, and sustain you for the long haul. it's good to know we can make a difference together.

Faithfully,
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

April Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30a and 11:30a
(ASL Interpretation)

South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30a
(Intergenerational, Bi-lingual [Spanish, English])

April's Transformational Theme is Salvation

April 3, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"In Need of Salvation - Part 1"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

"Bigger on the Inside: The Possibility and Call of our UU Movement"

Rev. Ian W. Riddell,

Minister of Music and Worship Arts

April 10, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"In Need of Salvation - Part 2"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

"I've Been Saved!"

Rev. Jennifer Channin, *Assistant Minister*

April 17, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"I've Been Saved!"

Rev. Jennifer Channin, *Assistant Minister*

South Bay Service—

"In Need of Salvation"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

April 24, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"Bigger on the Inside: The Possibility and Call of our UU Movement"

Rev. Ian W. Riddell,

Minister of Music and Worship Arts

South Bay Service—

"Anyone Can Ask, Anyone Can Bless"

Kristen Kuriga,

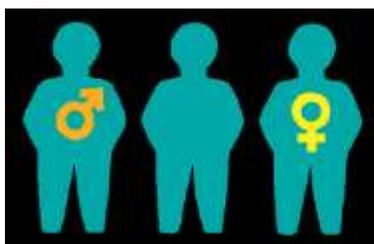
South Bay Ministry Team Coordinator



GROWING OUTSIDE THE GENDER BINARY BOX

BY DR. MELISSA JAMES, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Being a kid these days comes with unique challenges and many unique blessings. One of the fastest moving aspects of the experience of children and youth today is around gender. Like many important social movements, children and youth are leading the way in a revolution breaking apart the gender binary (boy/girl, woman/man, and that is it) to create space for people of all genders as well as for those who consider themselves agender (not identifying with any gender) to live fully and be respected. Despite forward movement, trans*children and youth experience significantly higher rates of harassment, violence, and suicide than their cisgender peers (those whose gender identity matches the one they were assigned at birth.) Yet, we know all of our children in all of their gender expressions deserve dignity and respect in the realness of their identities.



Last fall, I committed to head up a two year trans* children and youth initiative as an extension of my role as Director of Children and Family Ministry. This was made possible through the generosity of one of our members. I've been thrilled at the response and the progress we've been able to make in this short time. As with everything we do as a church, it's important to ask the question: How does this fit with our mission and strategic plan?



The 3rd goal of our strategic plan is to raise awareness to identify and remove barriers to full participation in our congregation. Whether a family includes a gender creative child or not, our families rightly come to a church like ours because they know their children will be formed in a way that respects them fully and teaches them how to respect others fully as well. This initiative allows us to intentionally equip our children and youth leaders, parents, and, frankly, all of us, to be welcoming and supportive of all children, youth, and adults of all genders. In

February, a team from our congregation made up of parents, board members, OWL ([Our Whole Lives](#)) and youth leaders, and staff attended the [Asterisk Trans* Conference](#) hosted by the [UC Riverside LGBT center](#). It was an excellent opportunity to learn and reflect about how we as a community

might lean forward into our commitments to supporting transgender and gender creative children and youth.

Our initiative also helps us reach our second strategic plan goal, to challenge systemic oppression to transform San Diego into a region that is more just, equitable and compassionate. We're fostering our reputation as a safe, welcoming place and a strong ally to organizations who serve with and within the transgender communities. As a result, this winter we became the host site for [Transforming Family](#), a family support group which is "a supportive environment for children, adolescents, and their families to explore issues of gender identity."

Finally, I've been named one of three national Fahs Research Fellows through the [Fahs Collaborative](#) at Meadville Lombard Seminary in Chicago, IL. These competitive fellowships support religious professionals as they connect scholarship with innovation in faith development. I begin the "silent phase" of the fellowship this month and conclude with publicly presenting my research and resources at the 2017 General Assembly. I'll be offering various opportunities for our community to be a part of the research and share the findings throughout the year.

I'm grateful to be serving in a congregation committed to innovative and creative ways to care for and empower children and youth and their families. If you're interested in being involved in the trans* initiative or simply want to know more about it, be in touch at melissa@firstusandiego.org.

FAIR TRADE CHOCOLATE AND COFFEE AT FIRST CHURCH

BY NANCY FISK

As part of First Church's social justice efforts, First Church sells fair trade chocolate and coffee on the patio. Julie McKane, the current coordinator, took over the job in 2009, when the previous coordinator started attending services in South Bay.

Fair trade means the company we work with, [Equal Exchange](#), contracts directly with small farmers, sourcing coffee beans and the cacao beans for chocolate without going through a middle man. They do this to improve working conditions and provide economic benefits directly to those on small farms and in cooperatives. As their website states: "Equal Exchange's mission is to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers and to demonstrate, through their success, the contribution of worker co-operatives and Fair Trade to a more equitable, democratic and sustainable world." Equal Exchange has been in operation for over 25 years, and beginning with a co-op in Nicaragua, is now sourcing from over 40 small farmer organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the United States.

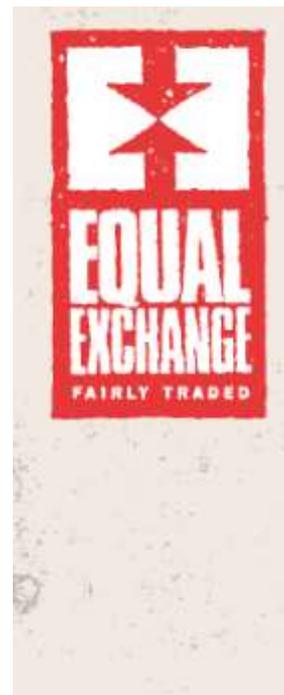
At First Church, we buy wholesale from the company and sell at a slight profit to provide partial scholarships for social justice work. Some scholarships have gone towards trips with the [Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry](#) in Sacramento, as volunteers learn about environmental justice and water rights. Julie consults with the [UU Service Committee](#) representative at [First Church](#), Kathy Smith, about those scholarships.

At the patio table, coffee, tea and chocolate are sold in various forms. The flavored chocolate bars come in raspberry, orange, peppermint and

lemon zest ginger. There is also unsweetened cocoa and hot chocolate mix. The coffee comes in different strengths, whole bean regular, whole bean decaffeinated, ground decaf, and French roast.

If you're interested in trying the coffee before you buy, the Social Hour committee at First Church contracts their coffee from the fair trade table, making Equal Exchange's breakfast blend and breakfast decaf.

The table is staffed on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, before the 9:30 service and between services. There aren't enough volunteers to staff the table more often. If you'd like to volunteer to help, please contact Julie McKane at jmckane38@gmail.com. Julie is also looking for someone to become the new table coordinator, keeping track of the table staffing needs and ordering supplies from the company as needed. If this interests you, Julie would be happy to tell you more about the responsibilities involved.



“CRUEL OPTIMISM” AND THE POWER OF PRESENCE

BY MEGAN DOWDELL, INTERN MINISTER

Observations from My First Experience at Otay Mesa Detention Center

On February 19, I had my first in-person encounter with the system of immigrant detention in California, and with the interfaith visitation program, [SOLACE](#) (Souls Offering Loving and Compassionate Ears). A group of First Church members, staff, and friends went on a tour of the newly opened [Otay Mesa Detention Center](#) in order to learn about the center’s conditions and treatment of the individuals detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement ([ICE](#)) and awaiting to see an immigration judge.

While several visitors remarked that the new facility was greatly improved upon the one that closed in 2015, there was general agreement that the facility retained its basic function and mood-containing and moving people through an inhumane system in a cold, impersonal, and prison-like setting. Prison-like is an appropriate term; Otay Mesa is operated by the [Corrections Corporation of America](#), the largest for-profit prison company, [traded](#) on the NY Stock Exchange.

As we entered through a double set of gates, the visual violence of the architecture made an instantaneous impression— there are rolls upon rolls of 2 foot razor wire coils. After ushering us through metal detectors, the staff presented us with a slideshow about the new facility’s space and capacity and the medical care program, as well as the demographics and origins of those detained there and other aspects of running the facility.

Members of our tour group inquired about how long a person sits in detention without being seen in court. Individuals officially have up to three weeks to see a judge, but our volunteers have spoken with individuals who have been waiting to see an immigration judge for much longer. Detainees are not entitled to legal representation or support, only a limited time in the law library without assistance.

In an icy structure in an unfamiliar location, vulnerability and isolation persist and persist and persist. I was reminded by a concept called cruel

optimism – a “technology of patience” in which a for-profit corporation creates a system that thrives upon wearing someone out in their present conditions, in order for their personal attachments to the possible future to wane. SOLACE volunteers play a role in helping people cope and withstand the uncertainty.



In the hallways, lines of individuals wear jumpsuits of different colors that define a risk level, according to the reasons for their detention. On at least one occasion, we heard the detainees referred to as “bodies” by detention staff. Not people, not detainees. Bodies. Bodies. It rang in my ears louder than the alarms and the buzzes of each heavy prison door we passed.

The tour day was filled with contradiction: A new and improved facility that serves the same old inhumane function; the hope for better futures and the despair of the present; the privilege of voluntary witness and my body’s need to take a nap. As we stood together in a circle near the center’s parking area to debrief our tour, I felt instantly more connected to those who joined me on the tour. The need for human connection is indisputable. We must keep meeting each other’s eyes.

Trained SOLACE visitors provide a friendly, compassionate presence to individuals detained at Otay Mesa and learn about how each person is treated and enduring life within the facility. If you’d like to get involved with the work of SOLACE, attend the orientation on Sunday, April 17th at 1:30pm at the Hillcrest campus. RSVP to Erica Mesa (solace@firstuusandiego.org or 619-410-7652).

Newcomers are also welcome at the monthly volunteer meetings on the second Tuesday of every month. The next volunteer session is on April 12 at our South Bay campus and May’s meeting will be held in Hillcrest.

THE BIG BAD MUSICAL: A LOOKING GLASS THEATRE PRODUCTION

BY NANCY FISK

The next production of Looking Glass Theater (LGT) is *The Big Bad Musical*, book by Alex Strum, music and lyrics by Bill Francoeur. It will be performed on April 29-30 and May 6-7 at 7:30pm in the Meeting House. The LGT chose this play because Bill Francoeur wrote the music and lyrics for another LGT production, "Beauty and the Beast," and it includes UU values of justice and the inherent worth and dignity of the individual.

This musical's main premise is that several fairy-tale characters who have been wronged by the Big Bad Wolf are now suing him. There's a special twist to the ending: The audience, acting as the jury, will be asked to determine if the Big Bad Wolf is guilty or innocent! The actors will perform an ending based on the decision. If the audience is split on the decision, the outcome will be a hung jury, in which case, the actors have prepared yet another ending to the play.

The characters suing the Wolf (played by Miles Lubert) are: Little Red Riding Hood (Ingrid Brinton); the Three Little Pigs (Everardo Aguilar, Eduardo [Eddie] Reidel and Rosalie Reidel); and the Shepherd Who Cried Wolf (Rile Grant). The Lawyers are the Fairy Godmother (Andrea Newall) and the Evil Stepmother (Maxine Levaren). The Judge is Jeff Duncan.

Other characters in the play are Grandmother Riding Hood (Kia Bordner), the Woodsman (Mike James), and the old Shepherd (Grant Ferrier).

The co-directors are Gay Hybertsen and Les GrantSmith, both members of First Church. Gay previously directed one act of "Life Slices." This is her first direction of a full play. Les has directed two Reader's Theater productions for LGT, "Eight" and "Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde." The decision to use in-house directors was intentional. LGT's mission is to build intergenerational community, using people who understand UU values.



LGT also chooses plays that promote UU values. Les GrantSmith says, "There is a good UU message about the inherent worth and dignity of the individual. Also, not to judge people according to stereotypes." From the lyrics of a song in the show, "When the tale has ended/And everything's looking splendid/You'll find it's not that simple/Justice is never black and white/And things may not always be as they seem. "

No musical is complete without a band. Returning on the saxophone is Eric Hybertsen, with Ardath Schaibly on the piano. In addition, Jason Votaw plays banjo, and Dierdre Lonergan is on guitar and cello. The Wolf has a back-up singing group called the Wolfettes, Kate Webb, Crystalinda White and Sierra Gore. Finally, Rev. Ian W. Riddell, First Church's Minister of Music and Worship Arts, is assisting with this production, sharing his past experience with musical theater.

The [California Wolf Center](#) in Julian will have a table with information at each performance. They are dedicated to the recovery of wolves in the wildlands they once roamed, through conservation, education and research. A dinner with a speaker from the Center is being planned for one of the nights of the play.

For ticket information, go to www.LookingGlassSD.org.

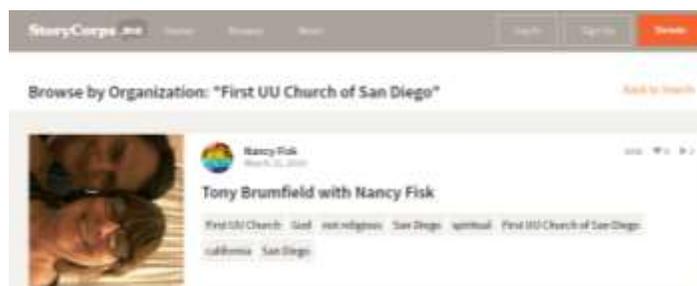


A STORYCORPS INTERVIEW WITH TONY BRUMFIELD

BY NANCY FISK

What does “spiritual but not religious” mean to you?

Today, a lot of people are saying, “I’m spiritual but not religious.” And they’re saying it in a way that says they’re proud they don’t belong in any way to an organized religion. I don’t feel that way. I’m proud of the affiliation I have with Unitarian Universalism. I really don’t believe that one can be fully spiritual without being religious.



But what I discovered was, that the people in my religious community came through for me. They gave me a place to live, helped support me until I could find work, actually gave me some part-time work, and enabled me to get back on my feet.

Part of my spiritual growth is through my participation in my religious community, in my Unitarian Universalist church. What I mean by that is, I really cannot become a fully spiritual person by walking in nature or meditating, being by myself, thinking about things. To me, spiritual growth really involves working with others who are different from myself, to change the world, to make the world a better place . . . that requires me to love them in a way that’s not easy, to accept them, to listen to what they have to say, and to work together. This requires spiritual growth on my part. That means that I don’t always get my way. Together we can do things to make life better.

Did you ever have a profound spiritual moment in your life? Can you tell me about it?

To me the most profound spiritual moment in my life was when I was about 30 years old, working as an engineer. I saw things coming to an end in that first job, so I took a job in another city, in Atlanta, Georgia, clear across the country. That job only lasted a few months and they also had a layoff. So I found myself without a job. I lost my house [in San Diego], because I sold it to move across country. I couldn’t afford to move back with my stuff, so I sold or gave away almost everything that I owned to come back to San Diego. My wife at that time, could not deal with all of the stress and she left me. So I was down to absolutely nothing. It was a difficult time for me, I didn’t know what I was going to do.

Can you tell me your thoughts about God?

I have really struggled with this my whole life. I remember back in the days when I was a Christian, I used to go around San Diego State and talk to people about Jesus and God. Even back then, when I’m supposedly evangelizing, I still kept coming back to this phrase in the Bible that says “God is love.” And that really resonated with me. It made the whole world make sense to me. So for me, God is love, God is another name for goodness, God is another word for the universe, for nature, for the truth and beauty. So when I speak of God, I’m not talking about a particular spirit or person overlooking me, guiding the universe. I don’t pray, because it just doesn’t make any sense to me. For me, God is the mystery of the universe, everything that is good. I use the word God for that.

You can find the rest of this interview online at <https://storycorps.me/interviews/tony-brumfield-with-nancy-fisk>. For other StoryCorps interviews, go to <https://storycorps.me/organizations/first-unitarian-universalist-church-of-san-diego/>.

If you’re interested in recording an interview about your experience with First Church or Unitarian Universalism, and posting it at StoryCorps, please contact Nancy Fisk at nfisk1@juno.com.

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