

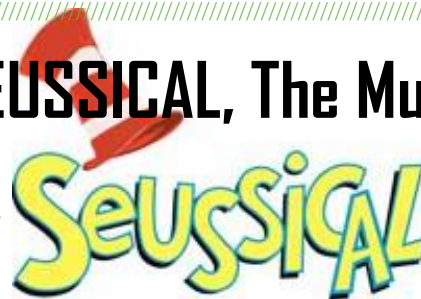


# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## Looking Glass Theatre presents SEUSSICAL, The Musical

By John Wead



Now one of the most performed shows in America, "Seussical" has been called a fantastical, magical, musical extravaganza! Brought to life are all of the favorite Dr. Seuss characters, including Horton the Elephant, Gertrude McFuzz, lazy Mayzie and a child with a big imagination--Jojo.

"Seussical" is Looking Glass Theatre's thirty-fifth production as it celebrates its twentieth-fifth anniversary at First Church this year! The show will be presented on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of April.

The story centers around Horton the Elephant, who finds himself faced with a double challenge--not only must he protect his tiny friend Jojo (and all the invisible Whos) from a world of naysayers and dangers, but he must guard an abandoned egg, left to his care by the irresponsible Mayzie La Bird.

Although Horton faces ridicule, danger, kidnapping and a trial, the intrepid Gertrude McFuzz never loses faith in him, the only one who recognizes "his kind and his powerful heart." Ultimately, the powers of friendship, loyalty, family and community are challenged and emerge triumphant.

"Seussical" is directed by Marylen Haines with musical direction by Kelly Mustain and choreography by Amanda Haines. Elsie Sleeter is Production Manager.

This intergenerational cast of thirty-three ranges in age from five years old to eighty. Horton is played by Shane Jost who was the lead last year in LGT's "Honk!". Julia Starkey performs Jojo and Kate Collier is Gertrude. They also had leads in "Honk!". Jordan Fraser belts out a wonderful Mayzie while Casey Sawyer is the irrepressible Cat. These two

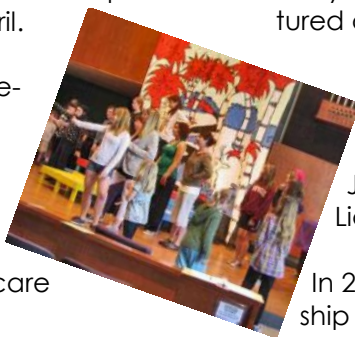
actors are new to our stage.

LGT's first production, the West Coast premiere of "Alice in Blunderland", an antinuclear – big business musical allegory ran for two years traveling throughout Southern California. In April 1986 one of the premises of the play came true with the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Looking Glass was featured on several local television news programs.

In recent years, LGT has performed Broadway favorites such as "Music Man", "Wizard of Oz", "Oklahoma!", Ayn Rand's "Night of January 16th", Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion", "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Oliver".

In 2008 Looking Glass formed a cultural partnership with San Diego LGBT Pride. In the summer during Pride Week the group has presented LGBT themed theatre. In 2008 "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" was staged. In 2009 they presented "Jeffrey".

Tickets for "Seussical", April 8, 9 and 15, 16 at 7:30 p.m., are available at the door or on line at [www.LookingGlassSD.org](http://www.LookingGlassSD.org). Tickets are also on sale in the church patio between and after services. For a special family discount, contact Elsie Sleeter, [gordonandelsie@cox.net](mailto:gordonandelsie@cox.net).



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## Putting It All Together

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

*Excerpts from a forthcoming book on theologies of Unitarian Universalism*

In Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones*, there is a character by the apt name of Parson Thwackum...He [Parson Thwackum] says, "When I speak of religion, of course I mean the Christian religion. And by the Christian religion, of course I mean the Protestant religion. And by the Protestant religion, of course I mean the Church of England!"

Parson Thwackum represents the view of religion most common in the Western world. By this definition, a religion is defined by a unique set of beliefs in certain intellectual propositions, for example, a belief that God is one but also in three persons. As this book has explained, Unitarian Universalists don't have just one belief. We have many beliefs and many different ways of spiritual practice.

Surveys of theological beliefs by Unitarian Universalists, whether they are conducted from time to time by the Unitarian Universalist Association, or by individual congregations, find that there is no majority theological position among Unitarian Universalists. Whether Humanist, Liberal Christian, Nature Mystic, Buddhist or Earth Centered, no one way of belief and practice defines religion for anything greater than a plurality of us... In my experience, those who do find themselves firmly in one theological camp often experience themselves as a beleaguered minority. But every theological position within Unitarian Universalism is a minority position....

...But each theological or religious position also has a unique nuance and emphasis. If seeking the lowest common theological denominator is the bad way to address Unitarian Universalism's theological diversity, what would be a better way? A better way would be for Unitarian Universalists to become theologically multi-lingual. If we did, it would mean that we could appreciate more of the truth and value a greater depth of human experience....

...This covenant of those dedicated to freedom, reason and love has never been more needed in the world. The people who have died in the last year because of religious and political differences may number in the millions. Because of the vast availability of lethal force and lethal words due to modern technology, sectarian divisions threaten the very existence of human civilization. We humans are capable of unbelievable selfishness, cruelty, willful ignorance and murderous aggression. Fortunately, we

## April Sermons

**Celebration Times:**

**Hillcrest Campus:**

Sunday, 9:30 and 11:30 a.m.

**South Bay Campus:** Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

April's **Transformational Theme** is **Freedom**

**Sunday, April 3—Hillcrest Campus**

**"Compassion"**

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

**Sunday, April 3—South Bay Campus**

**"The Garden of Mystic Lovers Has No Boundaries"**

- Rev. Jim Grant (pre-recorded)

**Sunday, April 10—Hillcrest Campus**

**"Shall Be Human Yet ..."**

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

**Sunday, April 10—South Bay Campus**

**"Compassion"**

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (pre-recorded)

**Sunday, April 17—Hillcrest Campus**

**"Virtue: Transcendence and the Necessity of Freedom"**

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)

**Sunday, April 17—South Bay Campus**

**"Shall Be Human Yet ..."**

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (pre-recorded)

**Sunday, April 24—Hillcrest Campus**

**Intergenerational Easter Sunday with Wheel of Life**

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

**Sunday, April 24—South Bay Campus**

**Intergenerational Easter Sunday with Wheel of Life**

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)

humans also have the capacity for great love, creativity and community. Unitarian Universalists have chosen a path for the soul and not an unyielding stance. We have chosen to honor and learn from our differences. We have chosen to trust free individuals. We have chosen rational thought and conversation. We have chosen tolerance that matures into love. It takes courage, discipline and determination to live this way. And by making this choice we can change the world.

View the entire chapter on the Minister's Blog at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/ministers-blog>.



# Involve Trainings

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

The Involve Trainings were developed and are led by Sally Patton. The trainings focus on how to incorporate children and youth with special needs in our religious education programs. Sally has developed these programs to help UUs become aware of their attitudes, develop a sense of radical hospitality toward individuals with special needs as a spiritual discipline, and teach particular skills that will assist in the incorporation of all children and youth into existing programs. In early March I attended an Involve Training at the Monte Vista Congregation in Montclair.

The training included one activity which helped us begin to understand to a small extent what it might be like for an individual with special needs to be in a setting like our congregations. If you would like to try this activity for yourself, find a piece of paper that is blank on both sides. Label the top of one side of the paper with the word 'Deficits'. Label the top of the other side with the word 'Gifts'. On the side with the word deficits, write 3-4 traits of yours that you feel are your deficits. On the side labeled gifts, list those things that you feel are your gifts. You do not need to create an exhaustive list, just give yourself a few minutes on each side.



Sally Patton

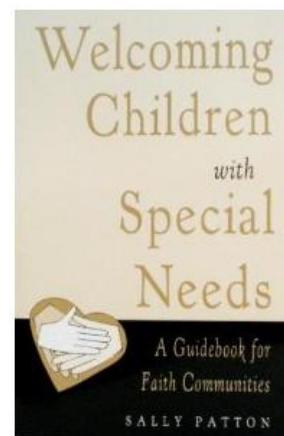
Now, hold the piece of paper up to your chest with the deficit list facing out. Imagine what it would

be like if everyone you met related to you based only upon these characteristics that they can see. How would it feel to be related to based only on your deficits? Take a few minutes to really let that feeling sink in. Now, turn the paper over and do the same thing with your gifts side. How different does that feel? Being related to based only on what someone sees as our deficits, no matter what those hidden gifts might be is the way some individuals with special needs face the world each day. Imagine how that might feel.

What would we need to do to engage in a spiritual discipline of radical hospitality to people with special needs? How can we engage people based upon their gifts?

Sally Patton wrote a book published by the UUA called Welcoming Children With Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities, available from our First Church on line book store at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/book-room#Parenting>.

We have several copies of this book in the Religious Education library. The introduction of this book and the first few chapters are a wonderful foundation for how congregations can become truly welcoming to individuals with special needs. The later part of the book has chapters with information for teachers and parents on specific needs, in the areas of learning differences, cognitive limitations, emotional and behavioral difficulties, and physical and sensory limitations.



In addition to this book, Sally has written an implementation guide for the inclusion of children and youth with special needs into the 'Our Whole Lives' sexuality Classes. We will be working to provide this information to all our trained Our Whole Lives facilitators.



Changing Our Minds About Ourselves And Our Children

Sally has a website [www.embracechildspirit.org](http://www.embracechildspirit.org). Her new book Don't Fix Me I'm Not Broken: Changing Our Minds about Ourselves and Our Children is soon to be released.

Liz

# Letters from the Philippines

BY Len Pelletiere

March 23, 2010

Dear Len,

First of all I would like to greet you a happy nice day! Before you read my letter I have a something to say to you about grace, a meaning of grace. I say you the keys of beauty is simplicity but grace. Like

a beauty and simplicity that's a meaning of grace. Thank you because you gave me a ball pen and your card and I have them. Be-

cause I miss you I invite you to my birthday on May 28 and to my cousin's on June 12. The Philippine Independence Day is her birthday. I hope that you can come. I will be waiting for you to come my birthday, but I don't have food. I hope you come back to Philippines. I promise you I will be finish my study. I will happy because you are not bad you a hopefully of (sic.) me. I will prepare a chicken that the one a good of my birthday. You a good man for me thank you very much Len, because you help me to speak English. I have a small letter for you and I will invite you to my graduation on March 29, 2010, but you don't have to come. That's okay because (there is) a big, big sea of water. I wish you will be my sponsor some day Len because you a good man and for me think you and I hope you keep my letter and remembrance for you. That's all. I love you so much and take care always.

You keep my letter Len and I will keep your letter for me. Smile before you read my letter and once again good morning.

Love and respect,  
Shaina Grace Hinuta (Grade 6)



August 2010

Dear Shaina Grace,

After a five-month journey, your letter finally arrived a few days ago. I was delighted, but not very surprised. Why? Because I knew that although we only spent about a half hour together last March, reading two books, something special had happened. We bonded. In the little village of Aquino I had found a very special person, a sixth-grade girl with deep, penetrating eyes, sensitivity, humor and wisdom beyond her years. Yes, a beauty and simplicity, a Grace.

Of course I could not come to your birthday on May 28 or your graduation. We're very, very far apart in miles and time. But I love your inviting me, and next time I eat chicken I will imagine you cooked it for me.

So now you're 13, a teen-ager. And going to middle-school? Elaine tells me her church is sponsoring all the kids in Aquino, and that would include you. On July 8 I had a birthday too; I'm 83 now. Wow. That's old. So old that I can't promise that I'll live long enough or be healthy enough to come to see you again next March when my minister, Rev. Arvid, and other UUs will come. But that's beside the point. What will last is that I will never forget you, and you will never forget me. You will continue to read books, think for yourself, be nice, work hard and be a good UU. We can talk to each other in our dreams and imaginations. Perhaps Myrnalyn will help you to e-mail. And if there is something I can do to help you I will, because I miss you too, and I know you want to grow up to be the best person that you can be.  
Your American friend,  
Len

*Len Pelletiere and a group from the UUA went to Philippines in March 2011.*





## Searching for matzoh ... and meaning

BY Sue Magidson

With the arrival of spring comes my annual search for the elusive (but tasty!) organic whole wheat matzoh, not to mention gefilte fish, horse-radish, macaroons, and other special foods of the Passover season.

For those of you unfamiliar with this beloved Jewish holiday, the Torah instructs Jews to relive the ancient story of the Exodus, in which Moses leads the Hebrew people out of slavery. The Passover seder, an elaborate and lengthy ritual meal, gives Jews the opportunity to retell the story, sing songs, and eat symbolic foods, layered with meaning. Eating matzoh (unleavened bread) reminds us of the Hebrews' hasty departure from Egypt, with no time for their bread to rise. At the same time, eating only unleavened food for eight days is humbling, reminding Jews to beware the puffed-up places in our lives, places where our own sense of importance – or ego – can get in our way. Similarly, eating bitter herbs symbolizes spring and the bitterness of slavery, while a paste of fruit and nuts symbolizes the mortar Hebrew slaves used to build the pyramids, as well as the sweetness of freedom.

The Torah instructs Jews to imagine ourselves in the story “as if we, ourselves, had come out of Egypt” and different groups find creative ways to bring the story to life. I know one family with small children who purchased several dozen tiny plastic frogs – when the plague of frogs was announced, the children threw the frogs up in the air and they came raining down.

One of the most meaningful seders I've attended used a technique called bibliodrama. Each partici-

pant chose one “character” from the Exodus story. In addition to the human roles, participants were invited to embody the Red Sea, matzoh, hail, and so on. I chose Nachshon, a little known Hebrew who dared to walk into the sea (even though he couldn't swim) rather than return to slavery. Some say that it was Nachshon's courage that persuaded God to part the waters. At the seder, I imagined myself standing at the edge of the sea with the Egyptians close behind. What would I do? Would I return to the painful familiar or step into the frightening unknown? How deep would I go? to my knees? to my waist? to my chin? I was at a turning point in my life and re-enacting Nachshon's act of faith helped me find the courage to step into my own Red Sea.

Another interpretation of Passover says that all the characters live within each of us. We ask, “In what ways am I Pharaoh, hardening my heart to others in need?” “How am I Moses, trusting in something bigger than myself and leading others forward?” “How am I an Egyptian soldier, participating in an unjust program because resistance is fatal?” “How am I Miriam, offering joyous celebration as well as life-sustaining water?”

Passover connects Jews with our ancient past as well as the present day. We identify with marginalized people the world over, recommitting ourselves to fighting slavery in its many forms. We know that as long as some are enslaved, none are truly free. Eating dry matzoh inspires us to work for freedom – of body and spirit. Happy Passover!



## Nominating Committee

Every year, the Nominating Committee has the pleasure of discovering members who show strong leadership skills from other members, staff and Ministers. We are charged with preparing a list of nominees for the Board and other church positions. The board members represent the congregation in governing the church. The Board is primarily focused on visioning and how to achieve that vision through its actions and policies. Working within a policy governance structure, the Board has general oversight of all of the affairs of the church.

The Nominating Committee's list of candidates will be announced on Friday, April 15, 2011.

Election of Board Members, Officers and other church positions will be at the Annual Meeting in June. Officers to be elected include a Vice President, Treasurer, and two additional Board Members. The Vice President serves for three years (VP, President, and Past President). The Treasurer serves for one year, and the additional Members serve for three years. Occasionally a resignation may require a replacement member to complete another's term. All members in good standing of at least one year's duration are eligible to be nominated. There is a petition process for others who might wish to serve on the Board in one of the above positions. Petitions will be available on April 15, 2011 in the church office. They are due back in the church office by May 6, 2011, at 4:30 P.M.

Thank you, Kathleen

If you have questions you may contact a Nominating Committee member: [Tom Dowdy-Winslett](mailto:tomwins1@att.net) (tomwins1@att.net) at 1-858-522-9413; [Kathleen Garcia-Horlor](mailto:juukhorlor2@cox.net) (juukhorlor2@cox.net) at 1-619-251-3331; [Ann McDonauld](mailto:amcd92119@earthlink.net) (amcd92119@earthlink.net) at 1-619-464-1937; [Gail Edwards](mailto:gnedwards62@aol.com) (gnedwards62@aol.com) at 1-619-303-8939; Julia Childs at 1-619-243-4482; Janet Dray at 1-858-335-4453. We welcome your interest and participation.

# A Journey Towards Wholeness Reflection

BY Sara Morrill

*From the Journey Towards Wholeness Service on Jan. 17, 2011*

The Golden Rule admonishes us to treat one another as we ourselves would like to be treated.

While this is an admirable start, the problem with the Golden Rule is that it asks us to assume that others are drawing on the same body of experiences we have, that they value the things we value and that they enjoy the things we enjoy. However, the diversity of people that we so intentionally honour and affirm in our spaces - those of all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual and affectional orientations, and physical and mental abilities - necessarily means that we are dealing with others who are not exactly like us, and who may hold different values and expectations of life and those around them.

It's easy for those who hold the privilege of being considered normal by American society at large to buy into their own normalcy, and to believe that others are mostly like themselves. Because most of them [the privileged] consider themselves to be good people, they generally do good things, and act in good faith.

Except, as these skits illustrate, even the best intentions cannot mitigate the pain of marginalization, and even good people make mistakes that do harm to others. In attempting to treat others as they would wish to be treated - in assuming that others are mostly like themselves - they [the privileged] have overwritten and erased the lived experiences of those they may consider close friends.

This can be a painful thing to hear, particularly when one has had the very best of intentions. It can be easy to retreat into defensiveness, and accusations of oversensitivity or wanting to play the victim. Going that route, however, does further harm to a person who has already been hurt. After all, it takes more than simply the courage of one's convictions to stand up and say, "This has hurt me;" it takes a willingness to make oneself vulnerable,

trust that one's pain will be taken seriously, and faith that the relationship is strong enough. Feeling dismissed or invalidated breaks that trust, eschews that faith: and even if later forgiven, it may be very difficult to forget. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice ...

As people of faith, we are called to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to strive for justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. So you see this isn't about political correctness: it's about respect, and living our faith. It's about choosing to trust in the goodness in others and to speak up when we have been hurt, yes, but it's also about listening deeply and with compassion when we are told that we have done harm. It's about exploring and validating each other's experiences, and remaining in community through periods of difficulty; it's about working together to discover and implement ways to truly integrate and make the best of our differences.

We can start by replacing the Golden Rule with what Nehwyr calls the Platinum Rule: that is, to treat others as they wish to be treated. By doing this, we validate and affirm each other and our experiences, and begin to tread the paths of true equality.



“ it's about respect and living our faith ”



**John Stende**

*There has been quite a bit on the news recently about the founding of the Peace Corps, so I thought it appropriate that I ask someone who's been there, done that. Here is John:*



"Since this is the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, let me tell you a little about my experience as a volunteer from 1968-70. I served in North-eastern Brazil in a small town called Cicero Dantas. I lived with

a Brazilian Catholic priest and I taught English three nights a week in exchange for my students teaching Portuguese literacy three nights a week. Through the Peace Corps I was able to supply curricular materials for the literacy classes and these groups became the core group through which I applied my energies. Since the town didn't have running water, I had two truck shipments of water filters delivered that students could purchase at cost on an installment basis. In addition we built about 40 outhouses through a self-help project with building supplies paid for by the Lutheran Church that I had grown up with in Minneapolis. I also volunteered one morning a week with the health clinic in Cicero Dantas when an itinerant medical doctor was present.

I definitely felt that my Peace Corps experience was a positive one. I served during the Vietnam War and I felt this was a more genuine way for me to serve my country. Living in a foreign country taught me to respect others, different yet similar to me. It also gave me some distance from the United States, to see other ways of viewing the country I grew up in.

## An Interview with John Stende

BY Robert McMahon

Growing up in Minneapolis, I was most influenced by living with an older sister who was mentally retarded. My parents chose to keep her at home and they became involved in the parent movement to develop community opportunities for my sister. I later decided to become a special education teacher and taught for 35 years in the Grossmont Unified High School District. It was a good fit for me.

I met my wife Linda at the University of Buffalo, New York about six months before I left for the Peace Corps. We will have a big party to celebrate 40 years of marriage later this month. I have been very fortunate to have Linda as my partner. We have three lovely daughters who are all married. We have one grandchild, Chloe, and a second grandchild on the way. Linda and I definitely enjoy being grandparents.

My friend, Jay Richen, who has been a long standing member of First Church encouraged Linda and me to join First Church shortly after Tom and Carolyn Owen-Towle became ministers. We were involved with the youth programs when our kids were younger and most recently we have been members of the JUUL Tones which we thoroughly enjoy. Many of our friends today are members of First Church."

*In case you've never heard John sing, let me just add that he plays a sweet guitar, sings just like John Denver and he is one of the sincerest people I know. Those Brazilians he taught were truly blessed.*

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

to create community  
to nurture spiritual growth  
to act on our values  
to help heal the world

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Sermon audio podcasts and subscriptions:  
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