



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Water Works! Update

Great News for the Future of Camp de Benneville Pines

By John Schaibly

Dear Camp Supporters,

Did you know that the very existence of Camp de Benneville Pines is threatened by the imminent failure of its underground water delivery system? [Click here](#) to read all about the potential loss of our irreplaceable mountain retreat, so important to the future of our Unitarian Universalist faith.



The good news is that one of our own, who chooses to remain anonymous, has offered a \$100,000 challenge matching donation to help us save our camp. All donations received between October 1, 2010 and January 31, 2011, up to a total of \$100,000 will be matched by this generous donor. In addition, if we do not meet our goal of direct donations during this period, all pledges received before January 31st will be matched dollar for dollar as the revenue from these pledges is received (until the total from this challenge reaches \$100,000). If we collectively meet this challenge, we will be more than halfway to our overall three-year Water Works! water system replacement campaign goal of \$450,000.

You can visit the de Benneville website (<http://www.debenneville.org>) to donate using your credit card or personal PayPal account or to make a pledge to our \$100,000 challenge campaign online. Please be sure to fill in your church or other group affiliation on this form, so that if your church or organization is participating in this campaign (and we hope that all churches and other supporters in the District will participate), your pledge or donation will be counted toward your organization's goal.

Tom Thorward, President
Camp de Benneville Pines
Board of Directors

If you would like a donation form mailed to you, please contact John Schaibly (858) 453-5990, john@schaibly.com.

Friends of de Benneville Pines encourages all members and friends of First UU Church to make a tax deductible donation to help save our camp. You can also make a pledge by January 31 to take advantage of the matching funds. Please send all donations directly to de Benneville Pines.



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The Busiest Season

BY Rev. Kathleen Owens

Welcome to what can feel like the busiest season of all. And to help us prepare for it, we celebrate and slow down in the season of Advent. It is a time to go inward, to reflect and find comfort in the dark. It's a time of preparation for the coming joy of the season – the return of the light. Even in the deep dark, we hold out the hope and expectation of the return of the sun and longer days.

Here at First Church we have been preparing for years (literally) for the construction that will soon happen on our Hillcrest campus. With all the meetings, plans, conversations and more, soon, in this busiest of seasons, a fence will go up, deconstruction and construction will begin. During this time we will be stretched and our intentions and assuming of good will will be challenged. We need to remember the season of advent and the time of reflecting, of gathering our resources and strength to help us deal with and face the inevitable challenges that will come our way during this busiest of seasons. We need to be reminded of our Covenant of Good Relations which spells out how we are together, in all seasons. This Covenant is the work we all get to practice – members, friends, ministers and staff. It is a way of living, not just some piece of paper framed on a wall in our various meeting rooms. When tensions and frustration build, I am personally grateful for the reminder this Covenant provides. It calls me to my better self as I take a breath and reconsider my words before I speak. In this busiest of seasons, in the hustle and bustle, in the desire for good cheer and not feeling it, I appreciate the gentle and insistent message of our Covenant.

I personally like the depth of the dark and the season of Advent; I need the time to prepare and invite you into a time of intentionality around this season. Taking some time in the early onset of night to light a candle, to pause for a moment can help make this busiest of times more a season of light and joy.

See you in church, Kathleen

For a list of all holiday activities at First Church, including Christmas Eve services, December 24: Family service at 5:30 and Candle Light service at 8:00, please visit our website [Holiday Event Listing](#).

December Sermons

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

December's **Transformational Theme** is **God**

December 5—Hillcrest

Lighting Our Way Home: Living Our Faith in a Time of Fear

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)
- Includes New Member Blessing

December 5—South Bay

Reconsidering the "G" Word

- Sue Magidson (live)

December 12—Hillcrest

**Annual Service of Music:
"Ring Out, Sing Out"**

For details, visit our website [event listing](#)

December 12—South Bay

Lighting Our Way Home: Living Our Faith in a Time of Fear

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)
- Includes New Member Blessing

December 19—Hillcrest

How Unitarians and Universalists Invented Christmas

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

December 19—South Bay

Building a New Way

- Mar Cardenas, South Bay Ministry Team Coordinator, and Lay Leaders

December 26—Hillcrest

**Planting Dreams in the Dark—
Intergenerational Service**

- Sue Magidson (live)

December 26—South Bay

How Unitarians and Universalists Invented Christmas

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



We're hearing a lot about bullying these days. Not that bullying is anything new. I suppose there have always been bullies, but bullying has changed. Technology has made bullying nearly inescapable.

The media has brought to light the cases of suicides caused by such inescapable and public bullying. Members of our congregation are working with California Faith for Equality to support LGBT youth and others who face such bullying. Working as part of a coalition to advocate for changes in our schools and through laws is an important part of what we can all do to make a difference.

At the same time, we need to know what to do and how to respond when we or our children are bullied. We also need to know how to respond when we witness incidents of bullying. The U.S. Government has a Web site called Stop Bullying Now, which is designed for both kids and adults (parents, teachers, and individuals who work with children and youth).

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/default.aspx>.

The site has many wonderful resources. One I highly encourage everyone to look at is the page on cyber-bullying. Many of us were not raised with the technology our children and youth use so easily and it's hard for us to comprehend exactly what bullying might look like in this area (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/cyber-bullying.aspx>).

Another really helpful page is designed for adults with tips for stopping bullying on the spot. <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/tip-sheets/tip-sheet-30.aspx>.

An Internet search on Bullying Prevention will bring up these and many other sites such as

Bullying

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org), which has some wonderful information for teachers, the Bullying Prevention Initiative (www.bullyingprevention.org), and even a parent's page on Nickelodeon (<http://www.parentsconnect.com/parenting/bullying.html?kw=bullyingatschool&xrs=paid-google-ChildBehavior-Bullying-SchoolBullying-bullyingatschool>).

I discovered a site called Open Circle (www.open-circle.org) that has a wonderful children's literature resource guide that includes books that deal with issues of teasing and bullying that would provide a wonderful opening for starting a conversation on the topic with children. (http://www.open-circle.org/files/OC_Childrens_Literature.pdf) In addition, the Webisodes on the Stop Bullying Now site provide a starting place to talk about or reflect on issues of bullying.

Bullying is not reserved for children or teens, nor is it only a schoolyard issue. Bullying among adults in the workplace, in meetings, or on the internet is just as prevalent. Bullying can happen in our homes, at work, on E-mail or on social networking sites and even here at church. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Usually, it is repeated over time. We need to become aware of our own actions, and the actions of those around us. Are we being bullied? Are we bullying without even being aware of what we are doing? Are some of the interactions we observe in person, on E-mail or on the Internet bullying? We need to learn what we can or should be doing to stop such behavior.

Join me in becoming more aware of bullying, stepping up and acting when we observe it, and in working to make institutional changes that make our society a safer place for all of us.

Liz Jones

The Christmas Blues—and Reds and Greens

BY Sue Magidson, Intern Minister

As I write this column in early November, Christmas decorations have already infiltrated many stores. “December is coming,” they say. “Better start preparing now.” And I shudder, thinking of all the people who will be hurting this month – those who don’t celebrate Christmas, those who are missing loved ones, those who have no one with whom to celebrate, those whose budgets are already strained without adding holiday expectations, those who are hungry or lonely or depressed, those with complicated family situations, those for whom the reality will never measure up to Hallmark. The list goes on and on.

December is dreaded by some and eagerly anticipated by others. For most of my life, December was my favorite month. I loved Christmas – the lights, the decorations, the presents, the concerts, watching the Nutcracker, Rudolph and Frosty, and Holiday Inn. I loved stringing cranberries and popcorn despite the inevitable bloody fingers. I loved rehearsing for Christmas concerts – all that glorious music. I loved the candlelight Christmas Eve service at my UU church and the occasional white Christmas. December was magical.

And then things got complicated. There was no longer a “home for the holidays” after my mother died. It was challenging to blend my traditions with my (late) partner’s family. In more recent years, as I’ve embraced my Jewish heritage, I’ve found myself pushing back against the ubiquitousness of Christmas, chafing at being wished a “Merry Christmas” (or even a well-meaning “Happy Holidays,” particularly if Hanukkah was long past). At the same time, I couldn’t quite embrace a “Jewish Christmas” (Chinese food and a good movie) – something in me still yearned for the Christmas of my childhood.

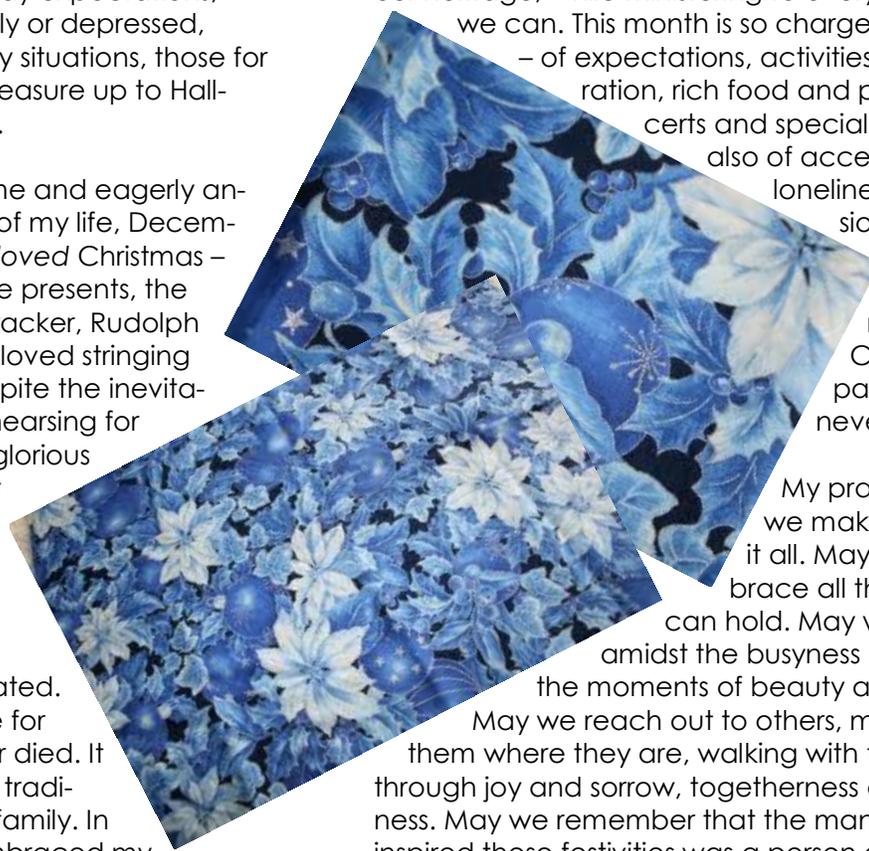
How many of us have mixed feelings about Christmas? Christmas is deep in our UU heritage¹ and yet we have become so theologically diverse that not all of us find Christmas meaningful. I know some UU-Jews who stay away from their beloved

UU congregations during the month of December – it’s just too painful to be surrounded by Christmas at church as well as everywhere else.

Meanwhile, fellow congregants eagerly await the tree-trimming, the special music, the Christmas Eve service. This is one of the great challenges that comes with theological diversity – honoring our heritage, while ministering to everyone as best we can. This month is so charged and so full – of expectations, activities and preparation, rich food and parties, concerts and special events, but also of accentuated loneliness, depression, and grief tangled up with reminders of Christmases past that can never be again.

My prayer is that we make space for it all. May we embrace all the joy we can hold. May we pause amidst the busyness to revel in the moments of beauty and magic. May we reach out to others, meeting them where they are, walking with them through joy and sorrow, togetherness and loneliness. May we remember that the man whose birth inspired these festivities was a person of peace and love, who embraced the stranger, fed the hungry, and cared especially for those most in need. May we follow his example of love for self and neighbor. May we be gentle and kind with ourselves and each other as we navigate this challenging month, each in our own way, and may we find ways to bridge the differences that divide us.

¹ In fact, 19th century Unitarians are largely responsible for today’s commodification (commercialization) of Christmas, but that’s a topic for another column!



Communicating End of Life Choices

BY First UU Care Advisory Committee

This article is written to remind all of our members and friends of the importance of communicating clearly our thoughts and wishes as they relate to end-of-life decisions. Each and every adult over the age of 18 is encouraged to give some thought to creating and documenting an Advance Health Care Directive. When our time comes, each of us wants to feel prepared for what we would like to have happen, and we want to make certain that we have clearly communicated these desires to our health care advocate(s). These important decisions that we can decide on and communicate now should not be left to chance, or for the courts to decide.

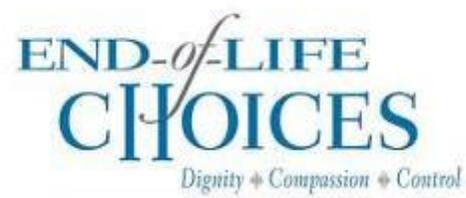
So, what can you do?

1. Don't wait. Discuss these issues with family, friends, and doctors, and complete your directive well before the need arises.

The Care Network has the Five Wishes document on the information table after services or in the church office. This can be used as a legal document. (see www.agingwithdignity.org/forms/5wishes.pdf)

2. Have those frank and honest discussions with family and/or friends to insure that your wishes are clear and will be honored. This may be a difficult and sensitive subject, but you are planning for another phase of your life.
3. Appoint a surrogate (advocate) who agrees to speak for you and act on your behalf. Explain clearly how you feel about different choices.
4. Use specific language to make clear what you want. How much treatment? When do you want treatment withdrawn?
5. Make copies of your directive and give to your surrogate, doctors, specialists, hospitals, and relatives. Make certain that your wishes are entered into your medical records (this is not automatic).
6. Fill out the confidential Personal Emergency Information & End of Life Arrangements form (green in color) provided by First Church. This completed form communicates important personal information (surrogates, relatives, final instructions) to our ministers. First Church can be a personal resource in case of emergency.

Our death is made even more difficult for family and friends when we die without clear directions. Relatives or friends are left to wonder: How much (or how heroic) health care? Were there directions for the physician? For the hospital staff? Did s/he want a memorial service? How do we best honor the deceased? Each of us can make our death easier for family and friends by planning ahead for the inevitable. Please let us know how the caring ministry team can help.



Guidelines for Conflict Resolution: Expectations

BY the Good Relations Committee

The Covenant of Good Relations for our Church affirms that we treat each other with respect, that we listen, speak, and act with integrity and compassion, and that we communicate openly with one another. Differences of opinion are part of the life of an active church, and our sense of community is enhanced when these are resolved through consensus or compromise. However, if differences or conflicts go unresolved, they can threaten the well being of our Church community. This document is intended to identify the steps that should be taken if unresolved conflicts arise.

Step 1: Talk directly with the person (member, minister, staff) with whom you have the conflict.

First, own your issue. Anonymous complaints are not acceptable.

Examine your own role in the conflict. Why is this matter important to you? Do some soul searching; try writing down what happened and why, to get it clear in your own mind.

Get a reality check from a trusted third party. Compare your perceptions. Did this person see or hear it in the same way? Based on your telling of events and your feelings, would they feel the same way?

Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk in private as soon as possible after the incident.

During the discussion, use "I" statements ("I feel" not "you did"). Actively listen to the other person; if necessary, repeat what the person just said to make sure you heard it correctly.

If a direct conversation is too difficult, consider putting your thoughts in writing, again using "I" statements. (Email is not appropriate for this sort of writing.) Be available to hear the response.

If you feel that safety is an issue, or that the conversation is too difficult to manage alone, use an appropriate third party; the Good Relations Committee has members who are available to help.

If the conflict is not with the person but with how that person is performing a job (staff, RE teacher, etc.), address your concern to the proper supervisor of that person. See the "Who to Contact" information at the end of this document.

Step 2: If the conflict remains unresolved, go to the minister or associate minister for counseling regarding the issue.

If all parties agree that the minister is neutral and appropriate, the minister or associate minister mediates.

If the minister is not appropriate, the minister will direct you to the appropriate mediation body.

Step 3: If still unresolved, take the matter to the Good Relations Committee (GRC).

The GRC will make every effort to resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of the participants. When conflicts are resolved, the parties to the conflict will sign a statement agreeing that the conflict has been resolved to their satisfaction, and the GRC will keep on confidential file a brief record of the conflicts and the persons involved. Such records will be shared only with the ministers. In the case of unresolved conflicts, the GRC will send a detailed report to the President of the Board, the ministers, and the parties involved in the conflict. These reports must be held in the strictest confidence.

The GRC is empowered to make recommendations to the parties involved in a conflict. However, the GRC is not limited to achieving compromises. If the GRC believes that a situation exists where behaviors are harmful to the Church community or not expressive of our UU principles, the Committee can recommend counseling, limits to participation in Church activities, or other behavior-changing strategies.

Step 4: If still unresolved, take the matter to the Board.

Should one or both of the parties refuse to participate in the resolution process, or if the behavior is unchanged and/or the GRC believes that the behavior is a threat to the Church community, the matter will go to the Board for consideration.

Conclusion

The Good Relations Committee trusts that most conflicts can be resolved in good faith by the efforts of individuals who live by UU principles and adhere to our Covenant of Good Relations, and that Steps 1 and 2 will be enough for most conflicts. We anticipate that Steps 3 and 4 will be necessary only when behaviors are seen as dangerous (threatening to people or property), disruptive (interfering with essential Church functions), or hostile (repeatedly aggressive or demeaning behavior towards guests or members, including unwelcome sexual advances). We further anticipate that all who participate in the process of resolving conflicts will use our UU principles to inform their own actions and treat everyone concerned with compassion and dignity. However, if there is a conflict where no resolution is possible, concern for the well being, openness, and safety of the Church community shall be given priority over the feelings or actions of any individual.

Adapted from the Rogue Valley UU Fellowship Conflict Resolution Guidelines, with permission. Their document in turn was adapted from UU Faith Works, UUA, Boston, MA

Approved by the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego Board, October, 2010. Contact the Good Relations Committee through the church office at 619-298-9978.



Interview with Mike Hctor

BY Robert McMahon

Guess who I bumped into on the patio recently - Mike Hctor and he agreed to answer some questions and send a picture. Of the picture I replied to Mike and asked, Who's the artist? I should first have read what he wrote, and I could have avoided that duh moment. What I had asked of Mike was for him to, Tell us about yourself. For you to avoid a similar duh moment like mine, read this self-portrait by Mike:



Mike Hctor

We have been here so long, our family has participated in many ways: for me, I've been on the board twice, committees including RE, helping with AYS and Coming of Age, church administrator and ministerial support committees, Midweek, long range planning, pledge drives, ushering, office volunteers, social justice projects including Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppression, leadership training, rummage sales, neighborhood potlucks, Planned Giving Committee, etc.

Even though I always felt myself to be an urban progressive, I was accidentally born in a conservative rural Catholic farm family in the middle of Washington State. Fortunately, I had some good experiences in school that motivated me to seek college and my parents supported that direction, making me the first college graduate in my family. There I discovered the Unitarian student group and fellowship --Wow, *this is a good religion!* Georganne and I met at Washington State University where I went to "get my Master's degree and a wife" [not necessarily in that order!]. We were married in the Spokane Unitarian Church in 1963. With my new MA, we traveled to Illinois, where I worked for three years at Eastern Illinois University and attended the Fellowship there. Then it was off for job-related reasons to Boulder CO, Austin TX, and finally San Diego in 1970-- joining this church in February 1971. I retired from SDSU in December 2000 after 28 years as Director of Housing and Residential Life. In all cases, we sought out the Unitarian groups and when First Church changed its name to Unitarian Universalist, we were in the fold. Our two daughters kept us involved in the church so they could make a group of friends within their philosophical boundaries -- maybe so they could explain being a UU to their school friends. It has become a very important community for all of us.

My best memories at First Church are always of the people in our community -- D4\$ events, Midweek programs and activities, taking kids to de Benneville [twice in one day because I had accidentally thrown out our daughter's retainer -- I found it in the *trash can* where I dumped it!], de Benneville for men's retreats, etc., many memorable services, and trying to keep up with Georganne in her unbelievably busy church commitments. Also, going to GA in Long Beach was very exciting -- I highly recommend GA to others at least once. Visiting a UU group in my small home town last summer.

I need to stay interactive with people in order to know who I am [part of my wellness program] -- the community at First Church is a big part of that. I also am involved in art associations based on my painting, the after retirement focus of my life, and, of course, with our family. Our three grandchildren live in San Diego which makes me a permanent resident here! I am an avid reader and voter. My philosophy has remained stable throughout my life -- I see myself as a "humane institutionalist" because of the benefits I have experienced with people in church, schools, and organizations and my experience in groups that need ongoing testing and challenges to keep focus on serving people instead of on the institution alone.

Thanks again, Robert. I enjoyed doing this.

Mike

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 Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister
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 Martha "Mar" Cárdenas, South Bay Ministry Leader
 Karen Walter, Director of Operations
 Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry
 Käthe Larick, Youth Program Coordinator
 Chris Christenson, Communications / DB / AE Coordinator
 Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator
 Kenneth F. Herman, Director of Music
 Suzette Southfox, Director of Membership and Development
 Alice King, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator
 Rev. Dr. Carolyn and Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti
 Patty Eshleman, Director, Unitarian Cooperative Preschool

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FirstWords,
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ONLINE: Important E-mail Addresses

FirstWords Submissions: nfisk1@juno.com

To be added to the E-mail List:

firstwords@firstuusandiego.org

Facilities (request for maintenance):

facilities@firstuusandiego.org

General First Church E-mail: mail@firstuusandiego.org

Scheduling of Church Property Requests:

schedule@firstuusandiego.org

Order of Service submissions: os@firstuusandiego.org

The Window submissions (Church bulletin):

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

First Church Web Sites:

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<http://www.firstuusandiego.org/uus-of-the-south-bay>

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