



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Homeless Shelter at First Church

By Nancy Fisk

Maureen McNair, Kristen Kuriga and Cynthia Burton are shelter coordinators for the Interfaith Homeless Shelter at First Church from Sunday, December 29th, 2013 to Saturday, Jan 11th, 2014. The shelter will have 12 guests, which may include families with children. This will be the 2nd year the shelter will be in operation at First Church since construction was completed on the Welcome Center. Before that, the shelter ran for many years with the support of the Douglas family.

In order to run the shelter, the leaders meet with the Interfaith Shelter Network, a group of churches that coordinates the shelter for the winter. The Network started meeting in September and runs the trainings necessary to conduct the shelter. The shelter became operational on October 7th and will run to March 23rd of next year.

Last year, over 100 volunteers from First Church helped to run the shelter. Signups to volunteer for the shelter will open Sunday, December 1 and will close on December 15th. All the dinners for the two weeks are covered; the need is for 2 overnight shelter hosts for every night the shelter is open. Every group that volunteers must have one person attend one of the two training sessions that will be offered in Hillcrest. They will view a video that goes over the rules of the shelter, and has interviews of previous homeless guests. The video has new information, so attendance is mandatory.

There are a variety of reasons that guests end up using the shelter. There was the single mother with a daughter, who works for the San Diego public library, that had difficulty making ends meet because of the cost of childcare. There are elderly guests, whose Social Security is not enough to cover housing.

The shelter guests are people who have been screened through a caseworker from Catholic charities. They must be alcohol and drug-free and either working or looking for employment. Their goal is to transition into permanent housing from the shelter. If a guest does find permanent housing while they are staying at the shelter, someone from the waiting list can enter the shelter.

The shelter is open from 6PM – 7:30 AM every day. Guests must continue to work or look for work during the day. Volunteer hosts help guests to pack lunches and make hot meals for dinner. 2 hosts stay overnight at the church during the shelter's duration. Other jobs that do not require staying at the shelter are mid-week grocery trips, laundry, and set-up and tear-down of the shelter.

The leaders hope to leave the shelter open all day on New Year's Day, since most offices are closed on that day. There will be a special sign-up for shifts on New Year's Day.

For more information on how to participate, contact Maureen McNair at maureencreates@cox.net.

Kristen Kuriga is the Social Justice Coordinator for First Church. Maureen McNair has been a member for the last 15 years at First Church and is a member of the Book Lovers affinity group. Cynthia Burton attends the South Bay campus of First Church.



Also in this issue:

- Avid's Arcana: A Unitarian New Years Custom [Pg 2](#)
- December's Sermon Messages [Pg 2](#)
- Managing the Holidays [Pg 3](#)
- Why a commercial kitchen in the Welcome Center? [Pg 4](#)
- Our Holiday Schedule [Pg 5](#)
- Fire Reconstruction [Pg 6](#)
- Winter Solstice [Pg 6](#)
- Maiden, Mother, Crone [Pg 7](#)



Arvid's Arcana

By Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

December Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30a and 11:30a
 South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30a (Intergenerational, Bi-lingual [Spanish, English])

The December **Transformational Theme** is **God**.

Sunday, December 1:

- Hillcrest Jazz Services—"The God We Don't Believe In," Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister (live). Music: Women's Chorus sings "Pat-a-Pan Salsa" with jazz ensemble.
- South Bay Service—"Kindness in the Age of Meanness," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded).

Sunday, December 8:

- Hillcrest Traditional Services—"The Mother of Us All: Celebrating The Feminine Divine," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live). Music: Chalice Choir and UUBellation Handbell Ensemble present "A Celtic Silent Night".
- South Bay Service—"The God We Don't Believe In," Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister (live).

Sunday, December 15:

- Hillcrest Music Services—Chalice Choir sings Benjamin Britten's "Ceremony of Carols."
- South Bay Service—"The Mother of Us All: Celebrating The Feminine Divine," Our Lady of Guadalupe Service, Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).

Sunday, December 22:

- Hillcrest Traditional Services—"The Weaving of Shadow and Light," Rev Kathleen Owens (live). Music: JUUL Tones sing winter solstice music.
- South Bay Service—"Rebirth of the Sun," Multi-generational Solstice Service led by Elizabeth Bukey, Intern, and Kristen Kuriga, South Bay Ministry Teams Coordinator.

Tuesday, December 24: Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, Hillcrest:

- Chalice Choir sings Venezuelan carol "Adorar al Niño", UUBellation Handbells ring "Carol of the Bells". Soprano Lynn Mendoza-Khan sings Pietro Yon's Christmas aria "Gesù Bambino". Oboist Claire Olmstead plays carols with organist Ken Herman.

Sunday, December 29:

- Hillcrest Multigenerational New Years Services—"Ring Out The False, Ring In The True," Rev Dr Arvid Straube and Elizabeth Bukey, Intern. Music: Chalice Choir sings African carol "Jabula Jesu".
- South Bay Service—"Fully Alive," Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

A Unitarian New Year's Custom

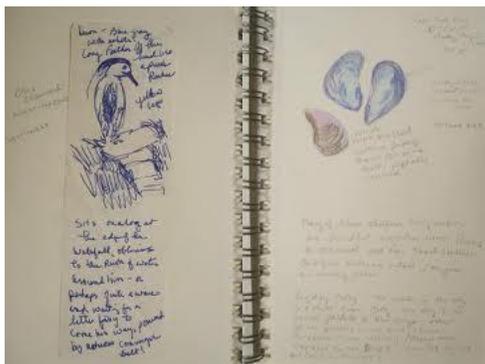
During the early part of the 19th Century, the most popular spiritual discipline among Unitarians was keeping a journal. In the journal, people reflected on their day, put down their thoughts and insights, and noted important events in their lives. Unlike what is often the case today, people didn't typically keep their journals private.

The New Year's Day custom was for family and friends to gather together to read the journals for the past year to each other. They would reflect together on how the last year had gone and then each person would tell the others what aspect of their spiritual lives they wanted to cultivate for the year to come. This wasn't in the form of a New Year's resolution as we have come to understand it. It would be, for instance, to be kinder, or less moody, or give more to charity or to attend church more often. The goal was to see, when the next New Year's Day rolled around, how the writer would have become a better person in the direction of their intention. How they would have, in the popular phrase of the day, grown in "likeness to God."

I think it is a beautiful custom. Those of you who will be attending the service for all ages on December 29, led by Intern Minister Elizabeth Bukey and myself, will have an opportunity to write down their spiritual aspiration for 2014 and, if they wish, to have it anonymously read out loud during the service. There will also be an opportunity to symbolically burn some burdensome aspect of 2013 that you would like to let go. This will be a great way to get ready for the New Year.

I wish you a wonderful Solstice, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Arvid





Managing the Holidays

By Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

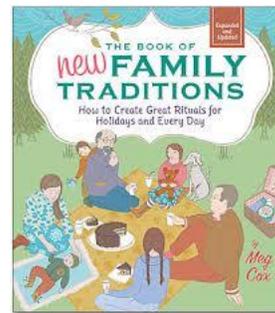
I have been looking at a number of articles and blogs about how to help our children through the holidays and I was struck by the fact that all the advice given by experts can be applied to all of us, not just our children!

Holidays bring fun, happy and exciting times, and they can also be stressful and confusing. This is true for everyone, and for some families this normal situation is intensified by losses, separations, and remarriage. Acknowledging our feelings – both positive and negative – and being realistic about our expectations can lessen the stress and help us face these days.

Make plans, but don't over schedule. Having a sense of predictability is often helpful. Allow children to help with the planning as appropriate and discuss special events and trips in advance. Surprises can be stressful even if it is a pleasant surprise. Make sure there is plenty of down time for everyone. Being overtired makes everyone cranky.

Unrealistic expectations can cause disappointment. These expectations can relate to how much fun you or your children will have at a specific event or family gathering. In an attempt to get our children to want to go to a party or gathering, it's tempting to describe it in such glowing terms that the actual event could never live up to the vision. Remember to be realistic. Such expectation may also relate to gift giving at the holidays. Disappointment at not getting some dreamed of item can cause stress. Even adults can have unrealistic expectations around gifts. Help your family have a realistic sense of what the holiday may bring, and help everyone focus on generosity and giving rather than receiving. Helping children plan gifts for others and not focus on what they will receive can help. Consider looking for a community project in which you can all participate. Giving somewhere where the need is great can be a wonderful way of putting one's own needs in perspective.

Traditions are important at this time of year. They give us an important sense of grounding. When I have asked parents what holiday traditions they remember from their childhood, it's often something very simple – a special food, a particular decoration, Christmas Eve at church, a family gathering. Sometime we create a tradition even when we do not plan it as such. Traditions can add to stress when we try too hard or make them so elaborate that it takes all our time and



energy to make them happen! If you are particularly interested in exploring family traditions I recommend [The Book of New Family Traditions](#) by Meg Cox. This book talks about all traditions, not just the Holidays.

And above all, be good to yourself and enjoy!

Blessings,

Liz Jones

Why do we have a commercial kitchen in the Welcome Center?

By Susan McLeod

Members of the First Church Kitchen Cabinet have been asked this question a number of times. The answer is actually simple. When we constructed the Welcome Center, the city codes gave us only two choices for church kitchens: One was a warming kitchen, which meant that the food must be cooked elsewhere and brought to church. The kitchen could only be equipped with appliances that are plugged in (e.g., a microwave and a coffee maker--no oven or stove).

The other choice was a commercial kitchen, where the food could be cooked on site before serving it. Your planning committee thought that the second option was the better one in terms of meeting the church's needs. Of course, a commercial kitchen comes with a lot of rules and regulations about who can do what and where, since it has to meet the health standards for restaurant kitchens.

Understandably, this has taken some getting used to. But remember the old kitchen? It was open to everyone, that's true, but because it was so open it was difficult to oversee. Food was often left in the refrigerators and cabinets and forgotten, which meant that the kitchen was also open to ants, cockroaches, and the occasional church mouse. It was not up to the sanitary standards required by the county, despite the best efforts of those who worked there.

Everyone who works there now has a food handler's card and is trained to keep the food you eat in Bard Hall safe. The First Church Kitchen Cabinet, chaired by Kath Hillery, has developed guidelines for using the new kitchen so that we are in compliance with the regulations that the law requires. If you have any questions about these guidelines, please feel free to contact Kath Hillery or Robie Evans at robie@firstuusandiego.org.

The biggest need is for preparing and serving food during Social Hour, which is after both services on Sunday. Please sign up for the kitchen training with Kath Hillery at hillery.kath@juno.com so you can help out!



Holiday Schedule

OUR HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Annual Intergenerational Holiday Tree Decorating Party and Potluck

Fri Dec 7, 6:00-8:30p.

Bard Hall, First UU Church in Hillcrest

All ages Potluck. Bring a dish. Supplies available to create ornaments for our tree. Caroling.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Worship "The Mother of Us all, Celebrating the Feminine Divine"

Sun Dec 8, 9:30 & 11:30a.

First UU Church, Hillcrest Campus and

Sun Dec 15, 9:30a.

First UU Church, South Bay Campus

Led by Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

La Posada sin Fronteras— 20th Annual Posada Without Borders

Border Field State Park, Sat Dec 14, 2-4p.

Join us for an annual Christmas Service through the Border Fence between Tijuana and San Diego.

\$5 vehicle fee. Bring proper identification and registration.

Concert, "Season of Lights"

Sat Dec 14, 7p in the Meeting House

Our Voices in Unity youth choir and the First UU

Children's Choir in seasonal music.

Service of Music:

Benjamin's Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols"

Sun Dec 15, 9:30 & 11:30a

First UU Church's Chalice Choir

First UU Church, Hillcrest Campus

South Bay Tamalada!

Sat Dec 21

Home of Angela Garcia-Sims (Coronado Cays)

This year we will be preparing 4 dozen tamales to be served at the Homeless Shelter as well as some to take home with you! We will be providing the masa—invite you to bring fillings. RSVP Angela Garcia-Sims at agarciasim@aol.com, and come celebrate with us!

17th Annual Winter Solstice Celebration

Sat Dec 21, 6:30p (arrive 6p), First Church, Hillcrest.

Celebration blends liturgical theatre, music, dance, story-telling and Pagan ritual. Donation \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and younger. Contact suzette@firstuusandiego.org or 619.398.4436.

Multigenerational Winter Solstice Worship Service "Rebirth of the Sun"

Sun Dec 22, 9:30a, First UU Church, South Bay, led by Intern Minister Elizabeth Bukey and Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice & South Bay Ministry Teams Coordinator

Winter Solstice Worship Service "The Weaving of Shadow and Light"

Sun Dec 22, 9:30 & 11:30a, First UU Church, Hillcrest.

Led by Rev. Kathleen Owens and members of the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle.

Caroling Party in the South Bay after service

Sun Dec 22, ~11a, First UU Church, South Bay.

Family Vespers & Child Dedication

Tue Dec 24, 5:30p, First UU Church, Hillcrest Campus.

A Traditional Family Christmas Eve intergenerational service filled with music and stories. Children's Christmas Story tableau and Child Dedication Ritual.

Traditional Candle Light Service of Lessons and Carols

Tue Dec 24, 8p, First UU Church, Hillcrest Campus.

Carols and Christmas readings with the Chalice Choir.

New Year's Worship Service, "Fully Alive"

Sun Dec 29, 9:30a, First UU Church, South Bay

Campus. Led by Rev. Kathleen Owens

Multigenerational New Year's Service "Ring Out the false, Ring in the True"

Sun Dec 29, First UU Church, Hillcrest Campus, led by Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube and Intern Minister Elizabeth Bukey

First UU Hosts Interfaith Homeless Shelter

Dec 29-Jan 12, 113 and Common Rooms

Contact the shelter coordinators: Maureen McNair, maureencreates@cox.net, Cynthia Burton, c.anne_burton@live.com or Kristen Kuriga, Kristen@firstuusandiego.org, 619.298.9978x216.

Or further details, check [The Window](#) weekly newsletter at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/the-window-2013-editions>.

FIRE RECONSTRUCTION

BY NANCY FISK

On July 16th, 2013 at 12:30 AM, a fire was started behind the preschool office in a storage shed. The inside of the preschool office was destroyed, while the church Common Room (Room 112) and the Religious Education (RE) office suffered from smoke damage. Currently, the police have no suspects and found no known cause for the fire.

The preschool office workers have been operating out of the church volunteer room. Chris Christenson, the Adult Education, Communications, and Database Coordinator, has been sharing an office with the intern minister, Elizabeth Bukey.

According to Robie Evans, Director of Operations, the reconstruction is almost complete. The expectation is that it will be finished by the end of November. The preschool and church would then move in concurrently by December 3rd.

New furniture has been ordered for the office, along with new cabinets, flooring and drywall for the Common room. Also a new roof was installed on the building. At the same time, a Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC) system has been installed. Air-conditioning will be available in the preschool office, the RE office and the Common kitchen and main room.

Security cameras and motion detectors will be installed around the back of the buildings. All costs were covered by insurance.

WINTER SOLSTICE

BY SUZETTE SOUTHFOX

Winter Solstice marks the longest night of the year. It is one of 8 holy days in the Pagan Wheel of the Year. This year in the Northern Hemisphere, Winter Solstice will occur on December 21 at 17:11 (or 9:11pm Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)).

Throughout history, Winter Solstice had been associated with the birth of a "Divine King". As the Sun is considered to represent the Male Divinity in many Pagan Traditions, this time is celebrated as the "return of the Sun God" where He is reborn of the Goddess.

To cope with the danger of the growing darkness, dances were devised, masks were worn, stories were told, and special foods were prepared. Shamans, crones and sages were called upon to lead the community in bringing back the light to the world.

Throughout history, cultures have recognized and celebrated this sacred and transformative time of year.



Initially produced "in the round" for three consecutive nights in Bard Hall, the Winter Solstice Celebration, now in its 17th year, has touched thousands of people and brought deep meaning to the holiday season for many Unitarian Universalists.

The Earth Centered Spirituality Circle begins working on Winter Solstice each year in June, following the Summer Solstice. This beloved worship experience takes over six months and one hundred volunteers to produce.

Tickets for the Dec. 21 celebration are a suggested donation of \$10 per person, \$5 for children 12 and younger and there is no cost for babes in arms.



**Grace Lewis-McLaren
with Anya Vail (c) 2005**

This year's Maiden, Mother and Crone in the First Church Solstice celebration will be a First Church homecoming for

the three women participating. The Maiden is Anya Vail, daughter of Mary Carter-Vail; Mary Carter-Vail is the Mother, and her mother, Grace Lewis-McLaren, is the Crone.



Mary Carter-Vail

Grace was the First Church administrative assistant from 1985-2001, when she retired to live in Maine. Her daughter



**Suzanne
Moore**

Mary moved to San Diego in 1987, and in 1989, was the co-founding mother, along with F. Suzanne Moore, of the First Church chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPs). This group later became the Earth

Centered Spirituality Circle (ECSC). Mary now works as the Director of Religious Education at the Summit UU Fellowship in Santee.

Grace and Mary came from a UU church in Maine that put on a production known as the Christmas Revels, a theatrical performance based on medieval Christmas celebrations with a Yule influence. Meanwhile a Boston group was producing a commercially popular version. They now have a copyright on the Yuletide Revels name. Several other cities pay the fee for a Boston consultant to come and instruct them on "how to" produce Yuletide Revels.

Members at First Church, thought, "why not create our own? Bring in elements of ritual, instruction, community participation, performance,

MAIDEN, MOTHER, CRONE

BY NANCY FISK

seriousness and outrageous celebration? Why not use all the local talent we could find?" Suzanne Moore and Grace worked on a mission, then a concept, then a script. They gathered an enthusiastic group to put it all together. It was successful beyond their imagination.

In the first years of the Solstice celebration, Mary and Grace sang *Stille Nacht* together, the German version of Silent Night, which was a tradition in their family. Mary has been bringing her children to the celebration since her first son was a toddler and danced to the drumming on the patio. "The holidays haven't happened if my children haven't been to Solstice," Mary says.

Anya was born and raised a Unitarian Universalist, and remembers attending many solstices as a child and as a teenager. She is glad that she is becoming a bigger part of this tradition that she has grown to love. One of her favorite parts of the celebration is the Celtic song that describes the tradition of honoring the maiden, mother and crone by feasting and drinking to them around bonfires in midwinter.

Grace on being the crone: "It's time to honor my life experience; time to trust my voice; no need for approval; just because I can doesn't mean I must; time to consider the bucket list; feel entitled to respect.

I am so thrilled to see Solstice continue at First UU. Of course it is a very special honor to serve with my granddaughter, Anya, and my daughter, Mary, as we represent the archetypes of Maiden, Mother and Crone."



Staff

Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, *Lead Minister*
 Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Associate Minister*
 Rev. Jim Grant, *Affiliate Minister*
 Elizabeth Bukey, *Intern Minister*
 Robie Evans, *Director of Operations*
 Liz Jones, *Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry*
 Käthe Larick, *Youth Program Coordinator*
 Chris Christenson, *Communications / Adult Ed. Coordinator*
 Kristen Kuriga, *Social Justice and South Bay
 Ministry Teams Coordinator*
 Suzette Southfox, *Director of Membership and Development*
 Alice King, *Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator*
 Kenneth F. Herman, *Director of Music and Organist*
 Dana Decker, *Associate Director of Music*
 Daniel Ratelle, *Adult Choir Director*
 Lynn Mendoza-Khan, *Youth and Children's Choir Director*
 Andrea Newall, *JUUL Tones Ensemble Director*
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 Jenny Epler, *Events Scheduler*
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 South Bay Campus:
<http://www.firstuusandiego.org/uus-of-the-south-bay>

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