



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## The Big Sister League

BY Betsy Stevens



The [Big Sister League](#) has had a long and honorable association with the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.

A forerunner of the present day Big Sisters Homes was Unity House Association, established in 1911 by members of the then Unitarian Church of San Diego, to provide low rent housing for young working women. This house purchased by the church members at 1790 Front Street, operated until about 1916 when financial difficulties forced its sale.

Early in 1942, Frances Wood, a member of the church and of the Women's Alliance, purchased the home and established the Big Sister League as an independent organization to assist young women needing a place to stay. She was greatly supported in this endeavor by the Women's Alliance, a forerunner of the UU Women's Federation. In the turmoil of World War II, the Big Sister League was much needed. Thousands of young women were in San Diego, either working in war plants or following their military husbands. By 1945, an estimated 1200 women had found accommodation in the home.

Over the years, there have been changes in both the location of the home and in the types of services Big Sisters have provided. The building of Interstate 5 demolished the original home, which was then relocated to the corner of Redwood Street and First Avenue, now named the Frances Wood Home. The Frances Wood Home serves women in need of transitional housing for up to 18 months, who are also required to participate in volunteer community activities, to be enrolled in adult education courses or to be seeking employment

A second residence was purchased, the Mary McAfee Home, named for a former director, and it is located on Fourth Avenue, near Thorn. This residence serves women with long term housing needs in a supervised setting. Women living here may have a history of mental illness. They receive support and encouragement to achieve their goals, and participate in community and voluntary activities. All residents must be in professional

therapy to meet their mental health needs, and are helped to move on to independent living.

The Big Sister League is a 501.3(c) organization dedicated to providing support to underserved women of San Diego. The League's mission is to assist women and girls in San Diego County by providing supervised transitional housing, volunteer mentor relationships, and support services. The League's programs are designed to encourage confidence, self-esteem, and independence. In addition to the homes the League sponsors the Big and Little Sisters Mentoring Program for girls 6 years to 17 years. Adult women commit to a schedule of meetings and activities, assisting a young girl who is seeking guidance.

Currently, the homes have space for 30 to 34 women. Many of the women suffer from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or depression. Residents may also have experienced trauma, domestic violence, homelessness, loss of children, and other complications. They are referred to Big Sisters from psychiatric hospitals, crisis homes and social service agencies throughout San Diego County

Over the years, several members of the UU Women's Federation served on the Big Sister board. Recently, our primary connection has been providing Christmas stockings for all residents, filled with things such as toiletries, scarves, socks, journals, paperback books, fruit and candy. Fryda Nicoloff has been instrumental in keeping this connection going and the current UU Women Steering Committee continues to maintain support for this needed community organization.

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## Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

Remember back to when you first discovered Unitarian Universalism. Or, if you are a birthright UU, you made the decision as a young person to remain a Unitarian Universalist. What was going on in your life? **Something big, I'll bet.** There may have been an illness, a traumatic breakup, or the loss of someone close to you. You may have realized that you wanted more from life than work, spending and distraction by entertainment. Or there was recovery from an addiction. Or you were coming out as gay, lesbian or transgendered and wanted a community that would nurture your spiritual journey while accepting you for who you are. Or maybe you were just lonely. According to one Harvard study, San Diego is the second loneliest city in America.

What was the experience of finding Unitarian Universalism like for you?

Please remember that the 20 to 40 visitors who visit our church every Sunday have similar feelings and experiences. Put yourself in their place and do what you can to make them feel welcome. Smile when someone you don't know sits next to you in worship. Introduce yourself by saying something like, "Hello, I haven't met you. I'm \_\_\_\_." And don't park in the visitors parking spots. Newcomers sometimes have a hard time finding us.

I know that what I wrote in my column this month is very similar to what I wrote last month. But it is important enough to re-emphasize. Some of our new members report that they felt welcome immediately when visiting us. Others said that no one talked to them at all the first few times they visited. Remember, one friendly gesture from you can help a visitor feel welcome enough to return and eventually make First Church their spiritual home.

## February Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

### February's Transformational Theme is Love

Sunday, February 5:

Hillcrest Services — "12 Steps To A Compassionate Life Series: Concern For Everybody," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)

South Bay Service — "Loving You," Rev Kathleen Owens (live)

Sunday, February 12:

Hillcrest Services — "Keys To Spiritual Fulfillment Series: Sex, Love and Marriage", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live) (second in this series)

South Bay Service — "12 Steps To A Compassionate Life Series: Concern For Everybody," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded)

Sunday, February 19:

Hillcrest Services — "Love in the Tangled Undergrowth of Our Lives " Rev Jim Grant (live)

South Bay Service — "Keys To Spiritual Fulfillment: Sex, Love and Marriage", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded) (second in this series)

Saturday, February 26:

Hillcrest Services — "Keys To Spiritual Fulfillment Series: Friendship", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live) (third in this series)

South Bay Service — "Love in the Tangled Undergrowth of Our Lives " Rev Jim Grant (pre-recorded)

## Family Affection and Appreciation

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

February is connected in our thoughts with Valentine's Day and Love. In our families, we show our love for each other by the ways we treat each other. We can also mark this special time of the year by special acts of appreciation and affection.

You might choose to surprise members of your family by cooking their favorite food, doing one of their chores that you know they dislike, or going out of your way to greet them and ask about their day.

One fun thing you could do as a family would be to brainstorm ways you can show this kind of love and appreciation for each other. Talk together about the things that would make each of you feel special. Then, write each person's name on a piece of paper and place it in a bowl. Each family member can draw another family member's name (you can use symbols if you have pre-readers in your family). Then, sometime during that day or week, each family member will do something special for the member whose name they have drawn. When the time you have set aside for these special acts of appreciation is over, you could discuss as a family what it felt like to do these acts of appreciation and how it felt to be the recipient. Was it fun or just a chore? Was it easy or hard to do? What might it be like if you did this all the time?

Consider making a family symbol that takes into consideration each unique individual. Sit down and talk together about the following questions: What does each person like? What skills do they have? What gifts do they bring to the family? Once you have some ideas for each member of the family, think about how you might represent that with an image or design. Remember you are showing appreciation, so make sure that each person likes the symbol that represents them. Now, figure out a way to combine these into a design. You can make your design a public statement of who you are, or you can keep it a secret that only members of your family know. If you think that your artistic skills are not quite up to creating a design, you could create a collage from magazine pictures and display it where you all can see regularly.

Remember that love is more than romance and showing love and appreciation in our families creates an environment where everyone can thrive.

*Liz Jones*



There is always,  
always, always  
something to be  
thankful for.

## A New Year's Wish

By Käthe Larick, Youth Chaplain / Youth Programs Coordinator

The holiday gifts have been exchanged, some have been returned or re-gifted and we have successfully welcomed in another new year. At this point on the calendar, resolutions are beginning to be put to the test, so rather than make new ones, I've decided to put together a New Year's wish list instead. Here are a few of the things that are on my list for 2012:

- ▶ To find a handyperson who enjoys home improvement projects to volunteer to help me get the new paint for rooms 114a and 114b.
- ▶ To find a person with a journalistic bent to help me reinstate the "Youth News" newsletters in order keep our youth and their parents up to date and better informed about the various events and activities in the youth program at 1st UU.
- ▶ To find adult sponsors for the Sr. High youth who want to attend the UUA Justice General Assembly (GA) sessions in Phoenix in June.

There they are - my three big wishes for 2012. On the whole, I'd say they look pretty realistic and attainable – unlike my wish last year for a time-turner that really works so that I actually could be in two places at one! No, these look like wishes that might just be granted by members of our beloved community. As much as I'd like to have help getting the paint for the youth rooms and start to publish the youth newsletter again, I'm especially concerned about the last wish – getting enough adult sponsors for all of our youth who want to attend our General Assembly this year.

At GA, each youth under 18 must have an adult sponsor also present at GA who is responsible for supervision and ensuring the well-being of the

youth. A youth sponsor serves as the youth's legal guardian for the duration of General Assembly. A sponsor may be a parent, relative, minister, youth advisor, religious educator, or another person trusted by the youth's full legal guardian(s). Youth are responsible for finding their own sponsors, but I'd like to help our youth and sponsors get connected. You might be wondering, "Hmm, what's involved in being an adult sponsor at GA?" A sponsor must:

- ▶ be over the age of 25
- ▶ be the sponsor of no more than 3 youth
- ▶ agree to the same Code of Ethics as the youth
- ▶ stay in the same hotel as their sponsee(s)
- ▶ check in frequently - at least twice a day - and provide support to the youth they are sponsoring
- ▶ attend Youth Caucus Orientation and required sponsor training
- ▶ be available in case of medical emergency as legal guardian
- ▶ be the first and final authority on disciplinary issues for the youth
- ▶ be supportive and encouraging of full youth participation in the greater General Assembly community

If this sounds like something you'd like to do, please call me and let's talk! Or better yet, catch me on Sunday at church – you can usually find me somewhere in the vicinity of rooms 114a and 114b. I'd be happy to give you an even more detailed explanation of sponsorship and answer any questions you might have. You could help our youth participate in a life-changing experience. Are you ready to make this wish come true?



Thursday Theology Reflections  
BY Rev Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister



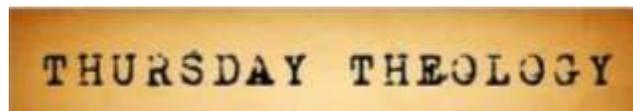
Kathleen Owens

One of the best nights of the week for me has turned out to be Thursday because of the Thursday Theology series we have offered through the Adult Religious Education program. In the fall and winter we offered a variety of classes and subjects on

Thursday nights – everything from the Hebrew Scriptures, a Deeper Look, to a class/experience of Advent ,to Owing Your Religious Past with the Rev. Jim Grant.

These classes have offered good information, deeper learning and exciting conversation as we explore the various subjects. Some of the best things Unitarian Universalists do is to study, to explore and to discuss; through these classes we practice that principle of a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. I always come away from these classes feeling my mind expanded and my spirit energized by the discussion. Classes continue into the spring with more theology on Thursday nights, including The Christian Scriptures, a Deeper Look, and The End Times – both classes with me, the Rev. Kathleen Owens. Don't miss out on this opportunity to gather with others and participate in Thursday theology

*Rev. Kathleen Owens*



### Coming Up:

#### Owning Your Religious Past w/ Rev Jim Grant

Jan 19, 26; Feb 2, 9, 16; 6:30-8:00p,  
Rm 113

#### Are We Heretics: Unitarianism and Trinitarianism?

Thu Feb 9 and 16; 6:30–8:00p,  
South Bay

Why is this difference between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism so important? This class will explore the beginnings of the doctrine of the Trinity, how it came about and why Unitarian Universalists are not considered Christians. (Repeat of the Dec Hillcrest class.)

#### The Christian Scriptures: A Deeper Look

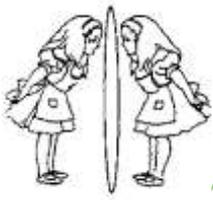
Thu Feb 23; Mar 1, and 8; 6:30-8:00p,  
Common Room (112)

Over the course of three weeks, this class will explore two or three stories/doctrines within the Christian Scriptures. We will read the story for the story's sake, learn more about the socio-political history around the story and how doctrine rose from it and then read the story again for its wisdom/spiritual teaching.

#### End Times

Thu Apr 5, 12, 19; 6:30-8:00p,  
The Common Room (112)

In this three week class we will study apocalyptic literature from both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and how this genre has captured our imagination and influences media today.



Looking Glass Theatre Presents - Creating A Fairy Tale World:  
**Sets, Lights, and Costumes for "Once Upon A Mattress"**

By Paula Johnson

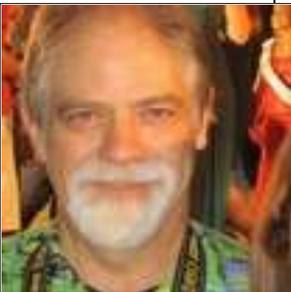
Start with a great script, stir in the director's concept, add in the particularities of the venue and 30 actors, and hand it over to three very creative people who will whip up a fairy tale world out of wood, paint, fabric and light. That's the recipe for the bright, colorful and fanciful sets, lights and costumes that Looking Glass Theatre will present in "Once Upon A Mattress" on April 13, 14, 20 and 21, 2012 at 7:30 in the Meeting House of First UU Church of San Diego. Discounted tickets will be available on the church patio beginning Sunday, March 4 or on line at [www.LookingGlassSD.org](http://www.LookingGlassSD.org).

Carolyn Watson Dubisch is the set designer for "Once Upon A Mattress." She is an artist, illustrator, author, and journalist who has been working with Looking Glass Theatre over the past two years. Carolyn helped create sets for "Seussical; and she designed the "Nunsense" set. A writer and illustrator for numerous children's books and magazines, she also writes and draws award winning web-comics.



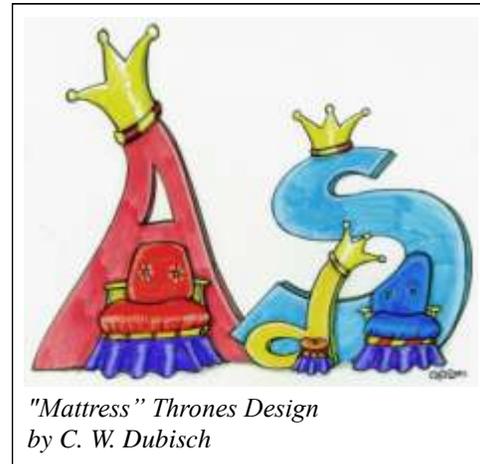
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Ray Evans is the lighting designer and technical director for "Once Upon A Mattress." Ray designed the lights and constructed the sets for "Nunsense." He worked with the Pine Hills Players in Julian and at the Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center as lighting designer, set designer and scenic carpenter.



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If you would like to work backstage with these talented people or with other creative teams, please contact Elsie Sleeter at 619.575.3191 or [elsie5@cox.net](mailto:elsie5@cox.net)



*"Mattress" Thrones Design by C. W. Dubisch*

Pam Raney, costume designer, is busy designing and building the costumes for "Once Upon a Mattress." She would like to encourage other energetic and creative theatre lovers to join her team. A First Church member since 2005, Pam has worked with LGT productions for years, constructing and designing costumes from "Oliver" to "Seussical." Pam is a physio-



cal therapist, lives in Kensington and has two sons in college.

cal therapist, lives in Kensington and has two sons in college.



*A Pam Raney Creation*

## An Interview with Christine Smith

BY Robert McMahon



Chris Smith

"My parents were from farming families in Illinois ... and mostly Methodists! We lived in rural Illinois until we moved to the Chicago suburbs in 1960. Dad was a journalist; Mom, a homemaker raising four children. As a kid, I played hopscotch, cards, jacks, board games, rode bikes and played sports. I played first chair trumpet in band and orchestra, and graduated from Lyons Township High School, LaGrange, Illinois, in 1969. My class was big - 1200 kids, including David Hasselhoff!

I continued living in the Chicago suburbs after high school, and attended community college for close to 25 years. I may have taken every class offered. I finally graduated in 1996 with a nursing degree and worked as a hospital nurse for about 10 years. In the meantime, I co-founded a commercial electrical contracting business in 1980, and ran it for 30 years until we sold it in 2010. While raising kids, I was generally the room mother, classroom helper, baseball/soccer organizer, car-pooler, etc. Now I'm retired and like to spend time hiking, biking, traveling, and working on home and garden projects. I value time with family and friends, volunteering, the arts, reading and spending time with my dog Karma.

Speaking of karma, climate change can be a good thing, especially moving from Naperville, Illinois to San Diego! Both of my sisters relocated to Southern California long ago - my visits to them (especially in winter) and my desire to be near them led me to relocate here in 2000.

As for my private life, I married young and for a very long time. I divorced only a few years ago and have two grown children, Cherie in La Mesa, and Brian in San Francisco. No grandchildren that I know of.

How did I find First Church? I followed the Priuses right to the parking lot! But I really don't remember the specifics. I was never a 'church person', and had a general disdain for organized religion. I know I attended services off and on since about 2004. I was experiencing changes and challenges on many fronts, and must have felt drawn to a place where I could nourish my spirit. I wish I could have found this church long ago.

I've been involved in the choir, lay ministry, spiritual friendship groups, helped out in the office, practical care ministry, neighborhood groups, camps and occasional classes/workshops. I especially love the D4\$ events. As for a favorite memory of First Church - Joy Gorian was (and continues to be) incredibly welcoming, and inspires me to push myself to 'pay it forward'.

I now find that Buddhist teachings seem to resonate in me more than any other. I also like the idea that just about everything I do can be part of a spiritual practice. I strive for being present, for balance, for simplicity, integrity and authenticity. Gratitude and service are also important parts of my life.

Improvements at First Church - I am glad you asked that. We could use WiFi, an Espresso Machine and a Hot Tub. I can even see myself using and enjoying all three at once."

“... a place where I could nourish my spirit...”

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*Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister*  
*Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister*  
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*Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry*  
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*Chris Christenson, Communications / DB / AE Coordinator*  
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*Kenneth F. Herman, Director of Music*  
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