



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Alex Mack in India

By Nancy Fisk

What do UU youth do after high school? If you're Alex Mack, a former youth group member at First Church, you look up alternative colleges that allow you to travel, something she has always wanted to do. She found a program at Antioch University Seattle called LeapYear. The program combines personal exploration, classes and social justice work while traveling, in the year between high school and college. Students are enrolled as full-time B.A. students at Antioch University Seattle and earn 36 quarter units of credit during the year.

In September, after a 10 day retreat, Alex traveled to India with a team of 11 students and 2 adults. They stayed in India from September to December. The team met every day to meditate, set daily intentions and participate in movement. Then they proceeded to their classwork or other activities.

At the beginning of their stay, they worked in an orphanage in New Delhi. Then they participated in a mountain retreat where they fasted and mediated. There was a week-long class on the Hindi language. Finally, the students could choose a class – stone carving, jewelry making, sitar or drumming – that was taught by someone in that particular profession. The school wants to provide a creative outlet for all their students.

After attending classes, the students traveled to the south of India, where they worked with a group called Reaching the Unreached. Reaching the Unreached (RTU) is a United Kingdom charity supporting work among orphaned children and poor villagers in a small area north-west of Madurai, in India's southernmost state of Tamil Nadu. More information can be found at <http://www.rtu.org.uk>.

Alex's group worked with a village where family units are formed by matching up foster mothers with orphans who need a home. The students built 5 cinderblock homes for the village. After this work, they hiked through the Western Ghats for a week, a very bio diverse region of India.

In addition to new experiences, the students are given introspective readings and the time to reflect and write about what they

have learned. After this semester was over, the students spent a week at the Calistoga campus of the university processing their experiences, which included writing an evaluation of their semester.

Alex found that she liked the daily routines of meditation, movement and daily intentions because it made her more focused and helped her handle the stress of not knowing what was going to happen next in her travels.

What she has learned so far from her experience is that "you don't need what we have to be happy. I kind of knew that, but now I really know that. It's about how much you appreciate what you have." The Indian people she interacted with had far fewer material things than comparable groups of Americans would have. She was also impressed at the high quality of the Indian people, especially their genuineness and groundedness.

Finally, she also took away a sense of her own okayness. "The school is designed so that everyone is on their own personal journey. The curriculum is designed to make you think about how what you are doing affects you, and the world."

On February 1st, Alex will return to the Calistoga campus and prepare for the second half of her year – a solo internship to Cuzco, Peru, where she will study Andean Folk music and volunteer at an orphanage in the area. She may also publish some poetry to commemorate her travels in India and South America.

For more information on this program, the name of the program is LeapYear and details can be found at leapnow.org.



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Arvid's Arcana—

By Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

On January 13, I delivered a message to the Hillcrest congregation entitled "Can First UU Survive The End of Church." I was very happy with the amount of excitement and discussion the message created. And, due to fortunate timing, [National Public Radio](http://www.npr.org/2013/01/17/169450811/on-religion-some-young-people-show-both-doubt-and-respect) the following week featured a series of stories on the same topic, the younger generation's disillusionment with organized religion. <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/17/169450811/on-religion-some-young-people-show-both-doubt-and-respect>

Both the sermon and the series talked about how 'church' has become a negative brand for people in their teens and twenties. Folks from that generation see organized religion as outdated, dogmatic, homophobic, biased and rigid. Still, the young adults in the PBS series spoke of their continuing interest in spirituality and spiritual questions.

In the message I spoke of how Unitarian Universalism would seem to be the very kind of spiritual community these young people are looking for. But too many of our UU congregations, (and to some degree our own congregation) have some habits that put many of these young seekers off. Many young adults are hungering for a place where they can have an honest conversation about God. They may have given up on the God of their childhood faith, but they still have questions.

In too many of our UU congregations, however, there is a strident atheism where any mention of even the word "God" is met with anger and derision. This is not very respectful of those who have spiritual wounds and tentative questions. I'm not saying that atheists and agnostics don't have a place among us. But so do theists, questioning Christians and those with just a lot of questions and no answers about the ground of our being. Can we not be a place that rejoices in these questions and the possibility of exciting learning that can result from these conversations?

Another habit that UU congregations can get into, perhaps because of lack of clarity about the mission, is that most of the program and leadership energy goes to the needs and preferences of current members, and the avoidance of incurring their displeasure. The needs of those who have not yet found Unitarian Universalism, but who need us, are barely a second thought. First Church needs to serve its mission to build community, nurture spiritual growth and act on its values to help heal the world. That is the constant and beyond that, UU congregations must be willing to listen, to innovate and to risk failure as we reach out to those who need us.

February Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

Sunday, 9:30a (Traditional) and
11:30a (Contemporary)

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

The February Transformational Theme is Prayer and Spiritual Practice

Sunday, February 3:

- Hillcrest Services—"Dealing with Difficult People," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)
- South Bay Service—"Risk Love," Emily Webb, (live) (followed by a Coffee Conversation)

Sunday, February 10:

- Hillcrest Services—"Ask and you shall...", Emily Webb, Intern (live)
- South Bay Service—"Finding Inner Peace," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live) (followed by a Coffee Conversation)

Sunday, February 17:

- Hillcrest Services—"Seeing the Sacred in All Things," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)
- South Bay Service—"Dealing with Difficult People," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded)

Sunday, February 24:

- Hillcrest Service—Journey Toward Wholeness
- South Bay Service—"Ask and you shall...", Emily Webb, Intern (live)

The Youth at First Church

By Käthe Larick, Youth Program Director

The youth at First Church are very busy people. So far this year, our youth groups have cleaned up a beach, held a fundraiser for UNICEF, en-



joyed a trip to Bates Nut Farm, had a couple of overnights, enjoyed winter camp at de Benneville Pines, cooked a meal for the Interfaith Homeless Shelter and participat-



ed in a service event for the Uptown Faith Community Service Center. They have

done all of these things in addition to keeping up with their obligations to school and their families. Our youth are

very caring, compassionate and well-rounded individuals. Many of them participate in extracurricular clubs and activities, dance, sing and perform in various dramatic productions at school and in our community. Whew – it makes me tired just thinking about it all!



To keep our youth safe and healthy, First Church is offering the senior high Our Whole Lives program (OWL). OWL is a positive, comprehensive, and age-appropriate 8-week sex education program and is based on the belief that sexuality is a lifelong process for acquiring information and

forming attitudes and values about identity and relationships, intimacy and health. OWL provides families with information and support.

The program begins with a get-acquainted pizza party and sleep-over on Friday, February 1st. The class sessions begin the next day. The program takes place on Sunday afternoons and concludes on Sunday, April 7th, with graduation day.

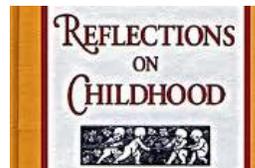
To nurture their spiritual side, many of our senior high youth will participate in the Spirituality Con at Valley UU Congregation in Chandler, Arizona the weekend of February 15th-17th.

On Saturday, February 23rd, the youth will sponsor the 10th annual whale watching trip for all interested church members and friends to enjoy.

On Sunday, February 24th, the 11:30 youth group will enjoy a visit from Jan Stankus of Storefront Shelter and San Diego Youth Services. Jan will let the group know more about the services that Storefront offers and help the youth groups develop a plan to hold a fundraiser for this wonderful organization. Look for more information in The Window as the fundraiser plan becomes a reality.



Currently, the youth are making plans to produce the annual Youth Benefit Show on Saturday, April 20th. The theme of this year's show is "Remember



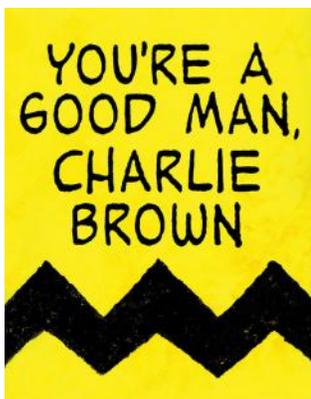
When: Reflections of Childhood." They will sing, dance and perform sketches that will invoke memories of childhood for everyone who attends. All of the proceeds from the show

will go into the youth program scholarship fund which will help send youth to district camp, Regional Assembly or General Assembly. So you can enjoy an evening of entertainment and fun while supporting our youth program. Sounds like a great investment to me!

As you can see, I wasn't exaggerating when I said that our youth are very busy people. All of this helps create whole individuals to help heal the world – and our youth are dedicated to this part of our church mission. Your support of youth program activities is much appreciated and is helping to develop the future leaders of our faith. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to support this vital part of our church community.

"You're A Good Man Charlie Brown" Auditions set for February 22, 23, & 24

By Paula Johnson



Looking Glass Theatre will hold auditions for "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown" at the First UU Church of San Diego on -

- Friday, February 22 at 6 -9 pm in the Meeting House
- Saturday, February 23 at 3-5 pm in the Meeting House
- Sunday February 24 at 1:30 to 3:30 pm in Bard Hall

Actors from age 5 to 20 somethings may audition for "YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN." Please arrive on time at the beginning of each audition period because you will be taught a song from the show and will read and sing throughout the audition period. It is not necessary to prepare a song or monologue.

The "Charlie Brown" cast ensemble includes--

- Charlie Brown—feels sorry for himself, lacks initiative, philosophical in a pessimistic way
- Lucy—overbearing, brutally honest, says what she thinks without thought to social boundaries
- Schroeder—Lucy's reluctant boyfriend, a sensitive musician
- Linus—Lucy's little brother, fanatical about his blanket
- Sally Brown—Charlie's little sister
- Snoopy—Imaginative
- Chorus of "Schultz characters" for ensemble numbers.



Mark S. Butterfuss, Director

"You're A Good Man Charlie Brown" director, Mark S. Butterfuss was raised in Long Beach, CA., and is a recent transplant to San Diego, having moved here in 2011 after spending the past three plus years in Michigan as the artistic director of Thunder Bay Theatre.

Prior to that he spent 18 years performing all over Eastern North Carolina as a producer, director, actor, and theater technician. In Wilmington, N.C. he was the producer/director of Seagull Productions a

theater company dedicated to children's theater; and he was also the technical director for the Thalian Association Children's Theater.



Performing for and teaching children/young adults has always been a passion for Mark. Someone took a chance on him as the shy little kid and helped mold him into what he is today. Mark is thrilled to be making his San Diego directing debut with Looking Glass Theatre and this production of "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown."

"YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN" is a 1967 hit musical comedy based on the characters created by cartoonist Charles M. Schulz in his comic strip Peanuts. The show centers around Charlie Brown's search for his identity and quest for happiness helped and hindered by his friends Lucy, Schroeder, Linus, his sister Sally Brown and his dog Snoopy.

In its 1999 Broadway revival, "Charlie Brown" won three Drama Desk Award Nominations including Outstanding Revival of a Musical, and most notably Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical - Kristin Chenoweth, a now famous actress of stage and screen nominated for her portrayal of Sally Brown.

Clark Gesner was an American composer, songwriter, author, and actor but is probably best known for composing "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown," a musical adaptation of the Charles M. Schulz comic strip Peanuts. Gesner's song "Happiness" from the show became a hit standard in the 1960s.

"YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN" opens Friday, May 10, continues on Saturday, May 11 and Friday May 17, and closes on Saturday May 18. All shows begin at 7:30 pm. For tickets and more information visit www.LookingGlassSD.org, email LookingglassSD@cox.net or search for us on Facebook at LookingGlass ~ San Diego.



SOLACE—VISITING DETENTION CENTERS

BY EMILY WEBB

Editor's note: SOLACE (Souls Offering Loving and Compassionate Ears) is a new San Diego interfaith project that provides volunteer visitors in order to end the isolation of people held in immigrant detention. SOLACE began visiting immigrant detainees in San Diego on September 29, 2012. The following are excerpts from a sermon of Emily's experiences with SOLACE.

...I went with a group of people to the Otay Detention center. It was my first time inside a lock-down facility. I'd never been to any kind of prison before. I was preparing to feel separated, both from the people working and the people being detained.

It was here I met Keta Gallanos. I was prepared to dislike her—at least a little bit. She was, after all, an Immigration, Customs and Enforcement (ICE) official. I'd been on the other side of a detention center, I'd been part of multiple protests and groups where we held signs that said "ICE stop breaking up families."

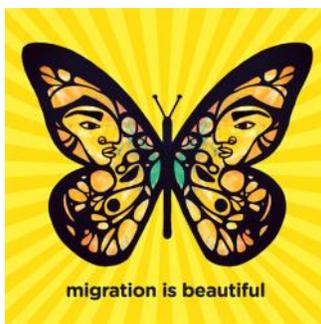
After the first few minutes on the other side of the double-gated thick barbed wire perimeter, being escorted into the building, and then through security clearance and the weapons checkpoint, Gallanos greeted us warmly, extending her hand and smiling. As we moved down the hallway, she mentioned how much she appreciated meeting with Angela, the SOLACE coordinator a few weeks ago. She said "Oh, you know, I started out teaching, but there just wasn't enough money in it!"

Slightly startled I said, oh, right. Yes. I wondered how much money ICE officials make. I wondered if she had a family to feed. I wondered how her family had come to the United States. I wondered what it would be like to be a Latina woman working in this capacity, in this field.

The officials we worked with were kind, a bit nervous, but making many efforts to be polite. Nonetheless, the tour of the detention center was gut-wrenching. One of the officials, a man who works for Corporate Corrections of America, which is a FOR-profit agency that operated the detention center in partnership with ICE, showed us the kitchen, which was filled with busy hands preparing

lunch. He told us, with a proud tone, that all of the people working had volunteered to do—that the "job program" inside the detention center had a waiting list...

...We continued the tour, and entered a large, open room where people spent many hours of the day. It had a large glass wall, with double paned glass. We could see in, and the people detained, inside could see us. We stood awkwardly facing one another, us clutching handbags and umbrellas, those behind the glass wall, in colored jumpsuits.



People are brought to the detention center because they lack paperwork, they don't have documentation of US citizenship. This, in the eyes of the state, makes them criminals—villains. Most immigrants come to this country because they are seeking a better life for themselves and their loved ones. Many of the people detained at Otay are heroes to their children, to their elderly family members, who they often support financial and emotionally for years, living, working and paying taxes in this country.

...Suffering is an aquifer on which we all draw. Often, our experience of suffering is when we might be feeling like a victim. Knowing suffering, and recognizing another suffering is also the wellspring of our compassionate action that calls us to heroic action.

We bend the arc towards justice with our witness, with our compassion, with our righteous anger, with our art, with our heart, with our ever-expanding sense of what is possible. We bend it with our words, with our prayers, with our laughter and with our tears.

For more information on SOLACE, click on this link: [New SOLACE Project Offers Visitors To Immigrants Held In Detention.](#)

Read the full text of Emily's sermon "Heroes, Victims & Villains", Nov 11 2011, South Bay, at: http://www.firstuusandiego.org/Websites/firstuusandiego/files/Content/3093931/firstwords_otay_sermon_webb.pdf

UNITARIAN COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL CELEBRATES ITS 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By NANCY FISK

Patty Eschelman, director of the Unitarian Cooperative Preschool (UCP), loves her work. She is very enthusiastic about the philosophy behind the preschool. "We honor and respect the parent's role in their child's life. They are their child's first teacher." All parents at the preschool must volunteer at the cooperative for several hours a month, as well as pay tuition.

The preschool was established by parents of First Church in 1963. It opened in the summer of 1964 with the approval of the church board. It was created by Unitarian families, but due to low enrollment from those families, the preschool has always drawn from the community for additional students. The preschool started out as a summer program, and was expanded to a week-day program after the success of its first summer. When UCP began, there were 4 or 5 other cooperative preschools in the county. Now there are only 2. The other is Sandy Hill, which is housed in buildings at the San Dieguito UU Fellowship in Solana Beach. Currently, the UCP serves 54 families and has a staff of 12.



In 1979, Patty came to the preschool as a parent. At the time, she was getting her Masters in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena. She served on the Preschool Board as secretary in 1979-80. There was a high turnover in directors in the preschool. Because of her new degree and enthusiasm, she was asked if she would consider becoming the director. In 1981, she became the director of the cooperative.

Patty also teaches in the child development department at San Diego City College. This allows her to stay updated on the latest in early childhood education. The preschool gives her a place to practice those new skills. She also has a mentoring class, where experienced teachers can learn how to mentor new teachers.

Patty feels the purpose of UCP is to teach the children to become thinkers. Children need to be coached into social and emotional skills. One example of those skills is learning to have conversations while sitting down for



meals. Another is learning to deal with conflicts. The goal here is to have the child learn to take responsibility for someone else when there is a problem, to not walk away from a conflict. "There are no time-outs. Children don't self-regulate until they are 4 or 5 years old. Then they become calmer," says Patty.



The vision statement further explains that "the curriculum at the preschool must help to create for our children a vision of a future in which each child plays an integral part as a doer, leader, and nurturer. We strive to encourage children to develop life-long, heart-felt values and to be sensitive to each other, their environment, and the world at large."

The preschool was also instrumental in mainstreaming children. They have included children with cerebral palsy, children who are legally blind or deaf, and those on the autism spectrum.

The preschool was also instrumental in mainstreaming children. They have included children with cerebral palsy, children who are legally blind or deaf, and those on the autism spectrum.

The preschool will be holding their annual dance and auction on May 18th, 2013. All parents and alumni who have attended the preschool in the last 50 years are invited to attend. The location has not been finalized. It may be in the new Welcome Center at First Church, or some other location. The focus of this particular fundraising effort is to secure the future of the UCP. To be on the email list for this event, contact Patty Eschelman at peschle-man@unitariancooperativepreschool.org.

JIM AND BETTY BOONE

By NANCY FISK



Jim and Betty Boone

Jim and Betty Boone met in Shreveport, Louisiana. Jim was raised Southern Baptist, but discovered at 14 that he didn't believe in the basic tenets of the church. He started a Unitarian fellowship when he was 17, in the basement of a synagogue.

Betty went to the Southern Methodist church, to be a part of something with her friends. She was taught that their God was one of fear, and that if you sinned, you would go to hell. You couldn't go to movies on Sunday. Her own parents were not religious. In college, she took a class on religion, where she asked a lot of questions about how science could be reconciled with the Bible. Her teacher's reply was that the Bible should be used to teach morals and religion, not science.

When Betty and Jim married after college, they tried the Congregational church, but did not like the creed. In the 1950's, Jim and Betty lived in Europe, where he was Air Force security and a Russian interpreter. When they came back from Europe, they lived in Little Rock, Arkansas, where they attended an interracial Unitarian church. After Little Rock, they lived in Fort Worth, where it was very hot. They visited friends in San Diego and decided to move here for the weather.

When Betty arrived in San Diego, she attended law school at night and was only the 2nd woman to graduate from USD law school at the time. She worked for the County Council when she was the first female lawyer to work for the organization. Jim was an engineer, working for Convair. He decided to follow his wife into law school and ended up going into general practice, taking on criminal cases, divorces, wills, probate litigations.

They came to First Church to give their children a religious home that they could agree with. Their

first Sunday at First Church was also the first Sunday the congregation was at the Front St. location. Betty thought things seemed a bit chaotic, when she showed up with her 2 young children, and was asked if she could stay with the 3 year olds, until the scheduled parent arrived.

Jim served on the Board and then as Board President for 2 terms. They came to church on Wednesday evenings, when the church held a potluck, and conducted Sunday school, in an effort to relieve the crowded conditions of the Religious Education enrollment. John Ruskin Clark would try out his sermon for the next Sunday, and take suggestions that he incorporated into the final product for the service.

Betty became the first woman President of the Board in 1973. At that time, the President was elected by the Board. Jim was co-chair with Fryda Nicoloff on the search committee that brought Tom and Carolyn Owen-Towle to First Church in 1978. Jim has written a history of First Church for the 125th anniversary of the congregation, called [Living Liberal Religion](#).

Jim is a Unitarian Universalist because he likes being a member of a community that has a social ethic at its center. He enjoys being with others who share similar views, and feel the need to act for causes in society. He believes in gun control, and equality for all. He can't believe that it is still difficult for people of color to be comfortable in this society.

What Betty appreciates about First Church, is its ability to change with the times. As she changed her perceptions of the world, the church seemed to change with her. She likes that when she met people with different thoughts, they could discuss those disagreements. She went from being a very traditional Southern woman, to a lawyer and a leader in the church. "Real things were happening, the women's movement, integration in the schools, Selma." The world opened up when they got out of the South. "I don't think I would have changed except for the church."

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ONLINE E-mail & Web Addresses

FirstWords Submissions: nfisk1@juno.com
 To be added to the E-mail List: first-words@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: oos@firstuusandiego.org
 The Window submissions (Church bulletin):
[window@firstuusandiego.org](mailto>window@firstuusandiego.org)
 Webmaster: website@firstuusandiego.org
 Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
 First Church Web Sites:
 Main Website: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org>
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FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

4190 Front Street (GPS use 298 West Arbor Drive)
 San Diego, CA 92103-2098

Phone: 619-298-9978
Fax: 619-298-9997
E-mail: mail@FirstUUSanDiego.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FirstWords,
 4190 Front Street, San Diego, CA, 92103.

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