



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Gratitude, Grief, and Goodbyes

By Sue Magidson

What a glorious ten months it has been! Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for sharing your lives with me -- your passions and struggles, your joys and concerns, your questions and convictions. Thank you for praying with me, singing with me, learning with me, teaching me, listening to me, and even arguing with me! Thank you for the great privilege of being your minister.

We've walked together through delights and challenges -- working together, playing together, sharing what's on our hearts, telling our stories. We've grown to care for each other. And now we come to the hardest part of my internship -- saying farewell.

Since congregations outlast ministers, the last task of any minister is saying a good goodbye. To make space for incoming ministers, the UU Ministers Association requires ministers (including interns) to break off all contact with congregants for a year following a leave-taking. This practice is wise, albeit wrenching. As a member of a teaching congregation, I have long hated these annual goodbyes and I know that the void they create makes space for the incoming intern. Even though you won't have an intern next year, this practice is still an important part of my learning. Think of it as a gift to my future congregations.

For me, a good goodbye includes both gratitude and forgiveness. My Jewish tradition includes an annual autumn practice of restoring right relations through apologizing and making amends. Since I'll be out of contact in September, I ask your forgiveness in advance for any ways in which I have hurt you or let you down -- phone calls or emails that slipped through the cracks, good intentions not followed through, words that missed the mark, distractedness when you needed my attention. May you know that I love you.



Many of you have asked about next steps. I preach my farewell sermon on May 29 (South Bay) and June 5 (Hillcrest). My last Sunday at Hillcrest will be June 12, after which I will reluctantly and regretfully close down my InternSue Facebook page, as well as my First UU email account.

It's so hard to step out of your lives midstream. I want to know what happens next! -- to offer congratulations or condolences, to walk with you on your journeys, to help when I can. I will miss you terribly, particularly on Sunday mornings. I have loved being your minister.

The next step in my education is a yearlong hospital chaplaincy training back in the Bay Area. I'm scheduled to see the UU credentialing body, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, in fall 2012. If all goes well, I'll be ready for ordination and the opportunities that follow.

In the words of e. e. cummings, "i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart)." May you be showered with blessings. May you know that your lives matter. May you be guided by love. I will carry you with me, always.

Also in this issue:

Ways in Which we Heal Hearts [Pg 2](#)

June Sermons [Pg 2](#)

Summer Reading for Parents [Pg 3](#)

Compassionate Life Reading Groups [Pg 4](#)

The Annual Membership Meeting [Pg 5](#)

Humanism [Pg 6](#)

An Interview with Tomas Firlé [Pg 7](#)



Ways in Which We Heal Hearts

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

First Unitarian Universalist Church has a powerful new mission statement:

Our mission is to create community, to nurture spiritual growth and to act on our values to help heal the world.

Changing our old mission statement to one that was inspiring and easy to remember was but the most important in a series of recommendations made in a report by the Growth Task Force to the Board Of Trustees at its January meeting. The Board accepted the report in full with a deadline for implementation of December 31 of this year. The report is most interesting and well worth reading. A diverse group of our most trusted leaders worked very hard on this report. Here is a link: [Growth Task Force Report](#)

The task force has found that our congregation is great at attracting visitors and new members. And yet, we are not growing. Our visitors and new members are not finding a place to land, to get involved and to make friends.

I've welcomed this report and I am taking it very seriously. There is a planning group hard at work on analyzing our programs and looking especially at which new groups need to be created to meet the deep yearnings of our members for community, spiritual growth, wholeness and acting in the work with integrity. At the worship service on June 12 Kathleen and I will present our work in a sermon entitled *Welcome To Your New Adventure: A State Of The Church Report*. I think you'll want to be there. If you can't make it, a manuscript of the sermon will be available for you to read and the video will be online. I find this so important that I'm abandoning my usual practice of speaking directly from notes and will be preaching instead from a manuscript.

We are asking our South Bay congregants to join us at Hillcrest so that we can experience this service as an entire church community. Carpooling from our Chula Vista site will be arranged.

We've changed our old mission statement and even some of our old ways of doing things. A new era is about to begin.

June Sermons

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

Summer's **Transformational Theme** is **Rest, Renewal, and Sabbath**

Sunday, June 5—Hillcrest Campus

"Hello Goodbye I Love You"

- Sue Magidson's Farwell Sermon (live)

Sunday, June 5—South Bay Campus

"Compassion: Examining Our Own World"

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

Sunday, June 12—Hillcrest Campus

"Ways in Which we Heal Hearts" and New Member Blessing

We end the church year with a powerful new mission statement and a new community building under construction. Both ministers will be preaching about the state of the church, the times we find ourselves in and the ways in which we will grow spiritually and help heal the world in the years to come. It's a new era in the history of First Church.

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube and Rev. Kathleen Owens

Annual Membership Meeting (live) at 1:15 p.m. in the Meeting House

Sunday, June 12—South Bay Campus

at Hillcrest Campus (see above)

Sunday, June 19—Hillcrest Campus

"How to Keep On"

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)

Sunday, June 19—South Bay Campus

"Finding Renewal in the Ordinary"

- Rev. Jim Grant

Sunday, June 26—Hillcrest Campus

"Universalism: It's Not for Sissies"

- Ken Herman (live)

When US Navy SEALs took out Osama Bin Laden, some Unitarian Universalists wanted to abandon the Universalist half of their identity and consign him to a fate that would have dismayed our Universalist forebears. What is it about Universalism and our First UU Principle that is difficult to live up to?

Sunday, June 26—South Bay Campus

"How to Keep On"

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (pre-recorded)



Summer Reading for Parents and Others Who Care About Children

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

We often think about Summer as a time to sit back relax and enjoy a bit of Summer reading. We also think about this time of year as a time to get out and enjoy our natural world. Luckily here in San Diego we can get out nearly year round and there are opportunities to explore and enjoy nature every day. As adults we usually have developed our own preferences for what we enjoy doing in the outdoors and what places and vistas inspire joy and awe for us. Sometimes it's hard to remember that children see the world differently and from a very different perspective. While we may enjoy wide open vistas of mountains or ocean and feel our connection to the miracle of the universe on a grand scale, children often see the world very differently. The stones and pebbles at their feet, and the worms in the puddle on the sidewalk may have far more fascination and elicit more awe than any grand vista. When with children consider lowering yourself to their eye level and seeing what they see. When they stop to explore a crack or a weed, stop and explore it with them. You may discover far more than you may have imagined.

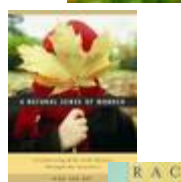
The following books may provide some insight into enjoying nature with children as well as helping you see our natural world with new eyes. These first books are specifically oriented to being outside with children:

✧ *Sharing Nature with Children: 20th Anniversary Edition, Revised and Expanded* by Joseph Cornell

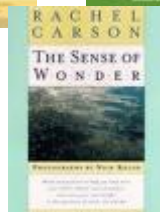


✧ *Sharing Nature with Children II* by Joseph Cornell

✧ *I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonder of Nature* by Jennifer Ward



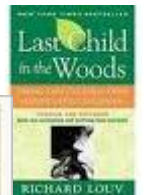
✧ *A Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting Kids with Nature Through the Seasons* by Rick Van Noy



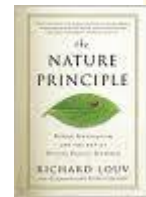
✧ *A Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson

The following two books were written by Richard Louv. Richard Louv was a columnist for the Union-Tribune and at one time was a parent here at the Unitarian Coop Preschool. He is now well known for his writings on nature and its importance in the lives of our children.

✧ *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*



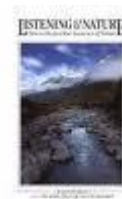
✧ *The Nature Principle*



I also recommend the following books:



✧ *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places* by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble



✧ *Listening to Nature: How to Deepen Your Awareness of Nature* by Joseph Cornell



✧ *With Beauty Before Me: An Inspirational Guide for Nature Walks* by Joseph Cornell

May Your Summer be enriched through your reading and by nature!

Liz

"Compassionate Life" Reading Groups with Arvid



Using Karen Armstrong's new book, "[Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life](#)", new reading groups at First Church will explore the meaning, cultivation, and practice of compassion in our everyday lives. Compassion is a practically acquired knowledge, practiced diligently day-by-day.

Based on the Charter for Compassion, four separate groups will meet monthly, starting in June and July, for a year, on this powerful and transformative series. Contact [Chris Christenson](#) at 619-298-9978, ext. 8014 to register at either the Hillcrest campus or in South Bay. While many of the groups are full and registration is closed, a "wait list" is being kept for new groups forming in Fall, 2011.

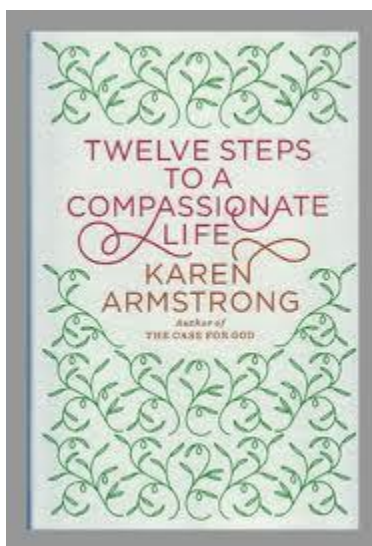
Additionally, Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube will provide a monthly sermon on each of the twelve steps. Videos of the first two are available:

- ✧ [Steps to Compassion](#), April 3
- ✧ [Examining Our Own World](#), May 29

The following was taken from the website, [Charter for Compassion](#).

Charter for Compassion:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.



It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

The Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, June 12 from 1:15 to 2:45 p.m., Meeting House

BY Everett Howe, President, Board of Trustees

All Members and Friends are invited to attend First Church's Annual Membership Meeting. Childcare for young children will be available during the meeting. The principal matters of business will be:

- ✧ The election of new members and officers of the Board of Trustees
- ✧ The election of new members of the Nominating Committee
- ✧ A presentation on the proposed church budget for the upcoming year, and on the audit report for the current year
- ✧ A vote on whether to approve the budget (2/3 supermajority needed)
- ✧ A presentation on the status of the Campus Renovation Project
- ✧ A vote on whether to adopt an amendment to the church constitution. Three years ago the congregation voted to amend the constitution so that bequests made to the church before July 2011 are directed to the Campus Renovation Fund, unless the person making the bequest specifies otherwise. The proposed amendment would extend this policy for two more years.

At its April meeting, the First Church Board of Trustees approved the presentation of the following proposed amendment to the Church Constitution at the Annual Membership Meeting on June 12, 2011:

Section 8(b) of Article IX of the Church Constitution shall be revised to read as follows:

Unrestricted Gifts or Bequests: Fifty percent (50%) of any unrestricted gift or bequest shall be transferred to the Church's Endowment Fund. Final disposition of the remaining 50% of such unrestricted gift or bequest, equal in value to or more than five percent (5%) of the current annual budgeted Church expenses and not a regular contribution to the Church, shall be approved by two-thirds (2/3) of ballots cast by Voting Members at an Annual or Special Membership Meeting. Notwithstanding Section 8(b) of this Article, all unrestricted gifts or bequests to the Church up to a limit of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) shall be allocated to the Capital Fund for the fiscal years 2008-09 through 2012-13.

The current version of this section has a \$1,500,000 limit in the final sentence, and only applies for the fiscal years 2008-09 through 2010-11. The only changes being proposed are increasing the limit to \$2,000,000 and extending the time frame through fiscal year 2012 to 2013. These changes are being proposed in order to reflect the increased cost and longer time frame of the project.



First Unitarian
Universalist Church
of San Diego

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

Humanism

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

An excerpt from an upcoming book on Unitarian Universalist philosophies

The third of the major theological movements to emerge in Unitarianism and Universalism was humanism, which inspired debate in both movements beginning in the late 19th Century. Today, when Unitarian Universalists are asked to describe their theology in various surveys, there is no one theology which represents a majority of Unitarian Universalists. The largest plurality, however, identify as humanists...

...Robert Edward Green has listed 5 assertions of religious humanism. The first is that the central concern of religion should be humanity. The second is that any concept of God has outworn its usefulness. Third is that truth will be found by a reliance on reason. Fourth is the assertion of the essential goodness of humanity. And finally, Green asserted that the primary concern of religion ought to be the conditions of humans and human society...

...At the 2000 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association Dr. William Murry presented a paper contrasting the old humanism of the first 70 years or so of the denomination's humanist history with what he called a new humanism which has been developing in the last 15 years or so....

...The old Humanism was excessively focused on the single individual. The New Humanism sees the individual as fully human only within a community. The covenanted religious community takes an essential place in the new humanism.

... The new humanism recognizes the importance of non-rational elements of human experience, such as emotions and mystical experience. Reason and empirical thinking remain central to the discovery of truth. The new humanism recognizes, however, that not all reality has a rational explanation. There is mystery.



Humanism

The old humanism was far too optimistic about human nature and human progress. The new humanism seeks to take seriously the tragic dimensions of life. Recent human history has shown that humans are capable of great evil and that great suffering has resulted from political as well as religious ideologies. Scientific knowledge and technologies have created great suffering as well as great progress. The new humanism maintains a belief in the ability of humanity to address these evils and to understand and manage our evil impulses.

... The new humanism does perceive wonder, mystery, and transcendence, but within a naturalistic rather than a super naturalistic framework. When former UUA President William Sinkford called for Unitarian Universalism to rediscover a "language of reverence" old line humanists denounced his statement, fearing an insistence on theistic language. Humanist theologian David Bumbaugh, however, argued that a language of reverence need not always be theistic. "It's a vocabulary that talks about our place in this wonderful, awesome, dangerous, beautiful world...It is a language which affirms our inescapable limits [without giving up] our inescapable responsibility."...

...Murry describes the new humanism like this: "The goals of religious humanism is fully and truly human beings, people who are free of the fictions and illusions that diminish the self, and who are free and independent in the context of a loving and caring community working together to transform the world. The religious humanist believes that human beings must rely on our own minds and hearts to achieve these goals, but that together we can make progress toward them. The new religious humanism brings together the latest contemporary understandings of what it means to be human with the best values of our liberal religious tradition to achieve that goal."



Tomas Firle and Joan Cudhea

Tomas Firle was born in Berlin in 1926. His father was an architect; his mother a concert pianist. His grandfather was Jewish. When Tomas was just 2, his parents divorced, and two years later his father married a Jewish woman. By the time Tomas was 10, he'd been declared a second class citizen under the Nazi race laws and he suffered the cruelties and trauma of being a "Mischling" (an 'other' or crossbreed). His parents had him baptized Lutheran and to further shield him, he attended a private French school. Located in Berlin, the school served mostly the children of diplomats. Tomas was safe here from the taunts and the violence directed at Jews.

Ironically, Tomas was baptized by Martin Niemoller who famously said, "In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up...Then the Jews...I didn't speak up...Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

His beloved stepmother committed suicide rather than go to an evacuation site. Later he learned the true destination was Auschwitz. Her suicide note said she had "chosen freedom". That same year, 1942, Tomas was drafted to "man" anti aircraft guns along with other 10th graders. He was just 16, but Berlin was being bombed and even "inferiors" were good enough to fight the enemies of the Third Reich. At 18, he was drafted into the army and sent to fight on the collapsing Eastern Front.

After the war, Tomas' birth mother, who emigrated to America, found him and brought him to the United States. He was 22, had little English and was in total culture-shock. He went to Los Angeles City College and learned to appreciate his new class-

An Interview with Tomas Firle

BY Robert McMahon

mates, many of whom were black or Latino. During college, Tomas worked many jobs, became a machinist and studied for his MS in Applied Physics at UCLA.

He married and had 3 daughters. In 1959, he and his family moved to San Diego where he worked for General Atomics. They bought in Del Mar, discovered Unitarianism and helped found the San Dieguito Fellowship.

After becoming unemployed in 1970, and later divorced, Tomas undertook a PhD program on Urban Planning/Human Behavior at USIU. He became an environmental analyst with the City of San Diego in 1973. He later became the head of the Port of San Diego's Environmental Management Department and served there until 1991.

Tomas has been in a committed relationship with Joan Cudhea since 1978 – he describes her as his partner, friend and lover.

Tomas says that he never felt he was a "victim" in spite of all he experienced. He honors his Jewish heritage and continues to live his religion. He says, "I must live my love, live by my principles, and learn to truly respect and accept all the 'others' in the world, specifically those who are marginalized by society such as the LGBT community, or the economically disadvantaged, and we must learn not to put down anyone."

He has a particular soft spot for "combat" veterans. "To kill someone is a terrible experience." Tomas knows this first hand, having been forced to fight for the Germans. He has lived with this memory for 67 years.

Staff

Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead Minister
 Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister
 Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister
 Sue Magidson, Intern Minister
 Robie Evans, 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 and South Bay Ministry Leader
 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

Board of Trustees

Everett Howe, President
 Marv Pulliam, Vice President
 Armin Kuhlman, Treasurer
 Susan Weaver, Immediate Past President
 Sean Bohac, Newt Ferris, Mark Helders, Katie Jaques, Mike Moreau, Susan Oliver, Julie Schauble, Andre Sullivan

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

ONLINE E-mail & Web 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)
 Webmaster: website@firstuusandiego.org
 Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
 First Church Web Sites:
 Main Website: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org>
 South Bay Campus:
<http://www.firstuusandiego.org/uus-of-the-south-bay>

Sermon audio podcasts and subscriptions, click here:
 Sermon video casts and follow up links, click on this button:



"From Here We Grow ... First Church, a Great Cause" Donate:
<http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview>



shop amazon and support First Church >>

Click on this button and First Church receives a portion of the sales. Secure and private.



FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

4190 Front Street
 San Diego, CA 92103-2098

Phone: 619-298-9978
Fax: 619-298-9997
E-mail: mail@FirstUUSanDiego.org
Unitarian Cooperative Preschool Phone: 619-295-9860