



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego



The First Church Climate Action Team, a new group dedicated to climate justice, has formed at the

Hillcrest campus. James Long, a member of the Action Team, was inspired to work for climate justice after attending Cosmos services with Keith Mesecher. James began doing research about what it means to be an ally to the earth. First, he watched a 20-part series called Journey of the Universe. Then, he realized that while First Church was great at social justice, it lacked environmental justice efforts. He spoke to the Board last year at an open mike about making climate change a priority. Through that open mike, he was approached by the ministers to begin a group, with Rev. Jennifer Channin as staff support and Larry Taylor as co-chair.

In December, the Climate Action Team showed a



video in Bard Hall on climate change. Their January meeting was with SanDiego350 (<http://sandiego350.org/>), a very active group in San Diego dedicated to climate change. The 350 in the name refers to the 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide permissible in the atmosphere. The higher the levels of carbon dioxide, the less stable the climate becomes. In September 2014, SanDiego350 sponsored a march on climate change that drew 2,000 people. The First Church Climate Action Team will be hosting SanDiego350's meetings at First Church in the future. The next meeting is on April 21st at 6:45 pm in the Common Room.

The Action Team has also invited the Sierra Club to help them do some organizational training. The team's goals are to do more education about climate change, and to work with local groups that are already working with climate change. The Action Team is currently working on developing a statement of purpose.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE

BY NANCY FISK

James wants to see First Church building community around climate change. This includes working with other groups that support this effort, such as Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) which has a website, <http://www.commit2respond.org/>, dedicated to the climate justice movement. The UUA has declared March 22rd to April 22nd Climate Justice Month. Details can be found under "News" on the Commit 2 Respond website.



Rev. Jennifer Channin will speak on climate change from the pulpit in March. The next event for the Action Team will probably be at Earth Day in Balboa Park, but they still need support for that. Their monthly meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month in Room 320 at 6:30 pm. Everyone who is interested in working towards climate change is invited.

James Long believes that if we value the earth, we should try and give back to the earth. He says, "Ecology is very spiritual. The more we can connect with the earth and all living beings on the planet, the better off we'll be."

Visit the First Church Climate Justice webpage at <http://www.firstuusanidiego.org/climate-justice>.



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## Letting Go

BY REV. KATHLEEN OWENS, LEAD MINISTER

This month's worship theme is "Letting Go" and the topic is rich for so many discussions of what's important to hold on to and what we need to let go of—for a life that is more free, joyful, life-affirming, and more. In difficult or uncertain times, letting go might be the last thing we think we need to do. If you're similar to me, sometimes when I'm feeling uncertain, I simply want to hold on more tightly and just try to hang on to get through. But there can be such freedom when we appropriately, with careful thought and right timing, choose to let go.

This month many UUs will participate in the Marching in the Arc of Justice – Re-visiting Selma conference. Jan and I will be going and I hope to let go of what I think I know about Selma and learn and listen with fresh ears and an open heart. I go with the expectation of gaining a new and deeper perspective of how slavery and Jim Crow laws continue to shape our experiences today. And I expect to learn and return with more ways to work for racial reconciliation and healing and how we might strengthen our efforts in bringing forth the Beloved Community.

Another opportunity for growth and deepening is this community's annual spiritual spring retreat held at the Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside. This year the retreat is Friday, April 10th at 5 pm. through Sunday, April 12th at 10 am. At the retreat, we'll explore the ideas of renewal, healing, and nurturing our spiritual growth through a process of letting go and experimenting with psalms/songs, poetry, and prayer. We'll engage in large group discussion, small group sharing, as well as individual time to reflect together on our shared experiences. It's my hope that participants will come away with a deeper sense of the sacred and having found a few new or renewed practices that help foster a sense of growth and deeper peace. I hope you'll join me. Please contact Chris Christenson ([chris@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:chris@firstuusandiego.org)) to register; the deadline is soon.

## March Sermon Messages

### Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30a and 11:30a (ASL Interpretation)

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

The **March Transformational Theme** is **Letting Go**

### Sunday, March 1:

Hillcrest Services—

**"Welcoming Those Who Serve,"**

Rev Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister.

South Bay Service—

**"Full Spectrum...Full Circle."**

Rev Jennifer Channin, Assistant Minister.

### Sunday, March 8:

Hillcrest Services—

"tba,"

Rev Jennifer Channin, Assistant Minister.

South Bay Service—

**"Imaging the Beloved Community,"**

Kristen Kuriga, South Bay Coordinator.

### Sunday, March 15:

Hillcrest Services—

**"Experiencing Selma,"**

Rev Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister.

South Bay Multigenerational Service—

**"Welcoming Those Who Serve,"**

Rev Jennifer Channin, Assistant Minister.

### Sunday, March 22:

Hillcrest Services—

**"On Intentions,"**

Rev Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister, and  
UU Men's Fellowship

South Bay Service—

**"Let It Go and Shake It Off,"**

Adam Dyer, Intern Minister

### Sunday, March 29:

Hillcrest Services—

**"Hold On—It's a Youth Service?"**

Rev Jennifer Channin, Assistant Minister,  
and First Church Youth Groups

South Bay Service—

**"Experiencing Selma,"**

Rev Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister.



# ON WHY CHILDREN AREN'T OUR FUTURE

BY DR. MELISSA JAMES, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Do you remember the song Whitney Houston made popular in the mid 1980s "[The Greatest Love of All](#)"? I find myself inadvertently singing the chorus in my mind often when talk of children comes up in our society. It goes:

*I believe the children are our future  
Teach them well and let them lead the way  
Show them all the beauty they possess inside  
Give them a sense of pride to make it easier  
Let the children's laughter remind us how we  
used to be*

I applaud Ms. Houston's reminder that we can find "the greatest love" inside of ourselves and that we have a responsibility to help our children find beauty and pride as they live into leadership (admittedly a very UU reading of her lyrics). She was not the first or last to sing of children being our future. Our call back to a time of innocence and wonder—this sentiment is all over our culture and media. I think this sentiment perpetuates an idea that we adults tend to cling onto, which ultimately stands in the way of us becoming a truly multigenerational community.

You see, I don't believe that children are our future and I don't want their laughter reminding me of how we used to be.

This may seem an odd thing for a Director of Children and Family Ministry to say. Don't get me wrong. I do hope and believe that the children in our midst have bright futures. I have certainly been known to revel in a good memory now and then, when one of them does something to remind me of when I was young (how many times have I recounted the story of breaking my arm after I find out the 8 year old with whom I am talking is into gymnastics?).

What I object to is the trap this story invites us into, where we don't actually see our children. In this story, children either serve as something in which we invest the hope that they will keep our church/community/country going, or they serve as a living memento.

I am not advocating for a cliché understanding which simplifies this to, "Children aren't our future; they are our present." Our children are people and they are members of our community right here, right now. When I see a child enter the Meeting House, I celebrate because a member of our community has just entered bringing all of their gifts and challenges, joys and sorrows. Like me, they are there to enter into community and ritual and it is a gift that I get to do so with them. When I sit down on the patio or in the classroom with a child, I celebrate because I have that moment to connect with a member of our community and that moment is a gift.

Just as I hope that people in my life truly see me, I seek to truly see and honor the children around me.

As we engage with March's monthly theme "Letting Go," I invite us all to seek to let go of those things that keep us from seeing one another—of all ages—fully and truly. That is how we build community. This is the gift I wish for you in this month of letting go: try it out—make an effort to fully see someone of an age or generation with which you would not usually engage and have a conversation with them.



**seek  
to truly see and honor  
the children around us**





# SELMA AND CIVIL RIGHTS

BY TONY BRUMFIELD

On February 15, 2015, the First Church service in Hillcrest was presented by Adam Dyer, Intern Minister and members of ROAR with SOUL ([Resist Oppression And Racism with a Spirit of Openness, Understanding and Love](#)). The following is the excerpt by Tony Brumfield from that service. The service will be presented again in South Bay on March 1st.

Follow these links for the service video <https://vimeo.com/120318078> and audio <http://www.firstusandiego.org/full-spectrum-full-circle>.

I was seven years old when the events in Selma took place and the Voting Rights Act was passed. I remember the images on TV but I didn't understand what was going on.

When I was older and read about Frederick Douglass and the abolitionist movement, I understood what was happening in Selma. You see Frederick Douglass warned us that power never concedes anything without a demand, that there is no progress without struggle. He said that there were people who wanted crops without plowing up the ground, who wanted rain without thunder and lightning.

The people of Selma faced their fears and proceeded with their march in spite of the

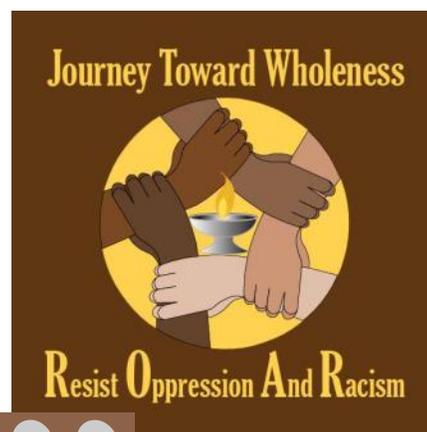
warnings they received. People were beaten and killed including Unitarian minister, James Reeb. Later that year, as a result of their brave acts, the Voting Rights Act was passed.

Recently, our own Supreme Court, struck down the very sections of the Voting Rights Act that made it so successful claiming that they were no longer necessary. Apparently they believe that racial discrimination is a thing of the past and that the war is won.

Well, the war is not won. The events in Ferguson, and New York, and here in San Diego prove the point, and I for one, will continue in this struggle. I pass the torch to a younger generation, because God knows we need their power and energy, but I will not rest. I am in this race. I cannot run the 100 yard dash like I used to but I can join the San Diego Organizing Project ([SDOP](#)) and walk the precincts with my friend Newt Ferris to get out the vote and I will continue to push up against this mountain until it moves. Those of us who have been around long enough, know that sometimes mountains move.

So at this time in history, we must not be those people who are afraid of plowing up the ground. We must not be afraid of thunder and lightning, or the roar of the ocean". Every single one of us have a role to play no matter how young or old we are. I am in this race. Are you?

“power never concedes anything without a demand, that there is no progress without struggle”





# UPTOWN COMMUNITY SERVICES WALK AND BRUNCH FOR THE HOMELESS

BY IRENE GRUMMAN

It must be Spring! It's time for the annual breakfast and walk supporting the Uptown Community Services Center. Come walk with us at 8 a.m., as families, groups or individuals, raising funds and making it plain to the public that you care for the homeless. Helping neighbors in need, UPTOWN responds to the economic injustices of our day with kindness and encouragement. We walk beside those we help, affirming the dignity and worth of every person. Breakfast is at 10 a.m. am, after the walk.

Last year, 70 people participated in the 3.5K walk from University Christian Church at 3900 Cleveland Avenue in Hillcrest, to the Uptown Community Services Center at 4101 30th and Polk Streets. They came from nine supporting congregations, a youth program, former clients, and the general community. Over 90 people enjoyed the brunch.

UPTOWN serves homeless and economically challenged San Diegans in a spirit of caring community. Open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the Center is a safe place to receive mail. Volunteers distribute groceries Tuesday and Friday at 9 a.m. Clients use computers [deleted one "space" in front of "computers."] to look for work or stay in touch with family. Vouchers reduce the cost of vital ID cards at the DMV. People access donated clothing, hygiene items, and information about resources. If you have a few hours a week or a month, consider volunteering for the Uptown Community Services Center.

Sign up sponsor forms and tickets are available at the Social Justice Ministries table Sundays, or through [www.uptownfaith.org](http://www.uptownfaith.org), 619-281-8411. Raise \$150 in donations and receive one breakfast, T-shirt and medal. Breakfast ticket donations are \$25 and sold separately. For families of three or more, the breakfast donation is \$65.

## DINING FOR DOLLAR\$ RETURNS!!

The 11th annual Dining For Dollar\$ (D4\$) returns! What's this you ask? You host an event and others bid on your event in a silent auction. Your event can be a dinner, museum tour, park party, craft workshop, an outing or tour, game night, young adult gathering, donated service, creativity workshop, poetry reading, and vacation get-away—or anything else you'd like to host.

The bidding takes place in May with events scheduled for any time from the beginning of June 2015 until the end of May 2016. Last year was a record breaker with 130 events and over \$60,000 in winning bids contributed to the church's budget – our most important fundraising activity! A number of people have enjoyed hosting their events so much, that they sign up every year to host again. D4\$ activities are a fun way to meet new people and strengthen community. Memories are made and stories are told for years to come.

This is a time to begin planning what you'd like to offer to host. You can also get together with others to co-host an event. Look for information about Dining For Dollar\$ on the patio starting in March and in upcoming issues of *The Window*.

Through March, you'll be able to submit your offers to host an event. Your event will then be printed in a colorful bidding booklet with its description and minimum bid. The silent auction will take place in Bard Hall between and after services for three consecutive Sundays.

[Click here](#) to go to the church website to get a host application and further ideas of possible events. You can also email Dorothy Pearlman [knitdap@yahoo.com](mailto:knitdap@yahoo.com) or Laurie Crehan [lcrehan@juno.com](mailto:lcrehan@juno.com).



# MEMORIAL GARDEN PROGRESS

BY JOHN HOLL

The creation of a Memorial Garden, between the west end of the Religious Education Building and the southeast corner of the Meeting House, has been a goal of First Church since the current Memorial Wall became fully subscribed. Such a garden will offer surfaces to inscribe the names of deceased church members in a manner similar to what the current Memorial Wall accomplishes and would offer a quiet, open area for contemplation, reflection, and meditation. Esthetically, the garden will fill out and complement the new patio and will offer a window out on the verdant canyon below. All of this will be done in a design that reflects the values and mission statement of First Church and this community.

The Memorial Garden committee members are Robie Evans, Andy French, Susan Riegel Harding, Lois Day, and myself. We've begun to address issues that must be faced as we proceed with plans for the Memorial Garden. These issues include:

- a. complying with requirements to complete an emergency egress from the rear of the Religious Education Building that meets American Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations,
- b. allowing sufficient offset from the crest of the canyon and its natural habitat, and
- c. the hardest one, complying with the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's regulations addressing water runoff from the Meeting House.

One of the primary objectives of this project will be to assure that there will be no more flooding of the chapel nor erosion of the canyon slopes.

Jerry Thiebolt, the co-designer and artist for the current Memorial Wall, has met with the committee to offer suggestions, ideas, and possibilities and to hear our concerns and limitations. We've charged Jerry to come back with a more definite proposal and model which can be on display for the Congregation and Church Board to review and ultimately approve or disapprove. The general look and feel of the new Memorial Wall sections will be similar to the current installation.

Since it's in a more open area, there will be spaces between the wall sections for viewing our canyon and, hopefully, provide a pleasant view for the neighbors across the canyon. The new area will be

wheelchair accessible. There will be a small seating area, but it won't be an amphitheater or a meeting space; rather, it will be a contemplation or meditation area. It's out of the main walkway area, and some elements of the new installation are intended to provide a bit of separation from the rest of the campus.

Jerry Thiebolt has recently completed the installation of a Memorial Wall at the campus for the San Dieguito Fellowship.



Initial appearance of San Dieguito Memorial Wall

While the colors of our Memorial Garden will be different, it will be somewhat similar in style to San Dieguito's installation. Concurrently, we have begun studies on the current water drainage situation. Ideally, we can connect the Memorial Garden drainage into the new drainage of the patio.

Only after we have a more definite design proposal, a more reliable technical engineering plan, and a reasonable estimate that will be in compliance with city zoning, fire approval, and ADA regulations can we address the real question the Congregation and Board want to hear—how much will it cost? Thanks to current donations, including one major donation, we have sufficient funds to start, but more money will eventually be needed to complete the project. Thanks to the hard work of Andy French, we've come up with a cost plan that is much more reasonable than what our architects had proposed when we rebuilt the Welcome Center and reconstructed the patio.

The project will take time. The committee promises to be diligent and take the time and effort necessary to do the job right and to keep the congregation apprised of the progress and the challenges. We're excited, Jerry is excited and currently engaged full time in its design, and the congregants to whom we've spoken are excited. Let's get started—keep posted to our updates!

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 Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister  
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 Dr. Melissa James, Director of Children and Family Ministry  
 Daniel Ratelle, Hillcrest Music Coordinator/Adult Choir Director  
 Lynn Mendoza-Khan, Youth and Children's Choir Director  
 Lorelei Isidro, South Bay Music Coordinator  
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<http://www.firstuusanidiego.org/uus-of-the-south-bay>

To view sermon video casts, click on these YouTube or Vimeo buttons:



Giving: <http://www.firstuusanidiego.org/giving-overview>

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