



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Beyond Categorical Thinking

By UUA Transitions Team

Think of a minister. Don't think of an elephant.

Chances are you thought of both. And distinct images perhaps came to mind. In terms of a minister, what images came to mind? Was it a person of a particular gender, race, or age?

[Beyond Categorical Thinking](#) is a highly recommended part of the search process for a Unitarian Universalist congregation. In finding the person who would be the best match for the minister, a congregation could potentially overlook or even let biases keep them from knowing that a particular person would be the best match.

Other congregations have assumed that their ideal minister looks a certain way, and often ministers who are not white or male or heterosexual or able-bodied or of a particular age or class are discounted and seen as "less than" in some ways.

Ministers in the UU faith who are people of color, bisexual, gay, lesbian, female, transgender, differently-abled, young, old, ethnically different, or of a different class—all of these credentialed ministers still face discrimination as part of the ministerial search process.

In the efforts to facilitate the best outcome for our ministerial search, the Ministerial Search Committee will host a Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop on March 23, after the second service. A trainer from the UUA will lead the Sunday service that day, and then conduct a 3-hour conversation where the congregation will have a chance to examine how it can avoid letting prejudice become a part of the search process. This is yet another way for us to put



our faith into lived experience and improve the odds that regardless of identity, we will find the minister who is the best match for First Church and will serve us well.

This opportunity allows the entire congregation fuller participation in the search process. It will allow them to explore the hopes and concerns for a new minister, learn more about the search process, and see how our own history (both personal and congregational) might interfere with the efforts in this search.

So come on March 23 after the 2nd service to participate in the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop provided by the UUA, whom First Church has asked for help in this process. Our trainer from the UUA is Danielle DiBona. Attendance is encouraged for everyone in the congregation. Snacks will be provided. If you require childcare, please notify us through our webpage: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/ministerial-search-committee> or see us at our patio table after each service on March 16th.



Rev DiBona

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Arvid's Arcana

By Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

Thoughts that have served me well:

1. Don't believe everything you think.
2. Pay attention. Subtle is significant.
3. In an unjust situation, we must speak out, without hating any person.
4. Pain times resistance equals suffering.
~ Shinzen Young
5. I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it. ~ Maya Angelou
6. The first responsibility of love is to listen.
~ Paul Tillich
7. Be the person you want others to be.
8. Do what you can. Want what you have. Be who you are. ~ Forrest Church
9. Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. ~ Plato
10. Life is a gift, not a project.



March Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

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

The March Transformational Theme is
Spiritual Maturity.

Sunday, March 2:

Hillcrest Services—**"Celebrating Carnival,"**
 Rev Kathleen Owens.

South Bay Service—**"Topsy Turvy,"** Elizabeth
 Bukey, Intern and Kristen Kuriga,
 Coordinator.

Sunday, March 9:

Hillcrest Services—**"How To Enjoy Life,"** Rev
 Dr Arvid Straube.

South Bay Service—**"Rediscovering
 Carnival,"** Rev Kathleen Owens.

Sunday, March 16:

Hillcrest Services—**"Repentance Without
 Guilt: The Art of Starting Over,"** Rev Dr
 Arvid Straube.

South Bay Service—**"How To Enjoy Life,"**
 Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded).

Sunday, March 23:

Hillcrest Services—**"Beyond Categorical
 Thinking,"**

Rev Danielle DiBona, Pulpit Guest.

South Bay Service—**"Repentance Without
 Guilt: The Art of Starting Over,"** Rev Dr
 Arvid Straube.

Sunday, March 30: Special Offering for Seminar Scholarship Fund

Hillcrest Services—**"Prayer? ... Yes, I Said
 Prayer",**

Rev Dr Arvid Straube.

South Bay Service—**"Making Space:
 Beyond Categorical Thinking",** Rev
 Kathleen Owens.



There is an App for That

By Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

Did you realize that there are Apps out there for unplugging from the Internet? When I read those Apps exist, I began to realize that maybe we've become a little too over dependent on our technology. It seems very odd that we should need technology to save us from technology. But, if those Apps exist, does that mean there is a real need?

I began looking at the literature available in magazines, in books, and yes, on-line. It's not that technology is bad; there are thousands of positive benefits of technology. It's just that technology can get in the way of other positive things. I discovered articles on the health benefits of unplugging, and benefits to interpersonal and family relationships. There is information about reconnecting to our environment and even to ourselves.

Now, there are advocates of unplugging ourselves completely, but they really are few. Most people



recommend taking breaks from our technology. Some proponents suggest that we should have specific time set aside when we turn off our phones and computers (that's what the Apps are

for!). They suggest that we use this time to be outdoors, or to really interact with people and especially our children. There are proponents of setting aside a room in your home that is technology free (no computers, TVs, phones) where any member of the family can go to rest or to actually interact with another person giving them their full attention without interruptions. There is a movement to create a weekly Technology Sabbath – a day when you go without the use of technology. There is also a retreat movement that holds device free gatherings.

These ideas are intriguing. I continue to explore the information that's out there. I've always been an advocate of giving our children our undivided attention on a regular basis – to really be with them. We cannot do it all the time, we need to work, keep the house, run errands and do chores, but we can stop and truly "BE" with them. I've



worried about all the media that we engage with as individuals and not with others. We listen to music and books through headphones, we get our news and magazines on-line. Even our smallest children get books read to them on computers. I plan on figuring out how I will incorporate some of these ideas into my life. It feels like taking unplugged time can be a spiritual discipline.

Blessings,
Liz

Suggested resources:

Web

<http://www.parenting.com/article/life-without-technology>

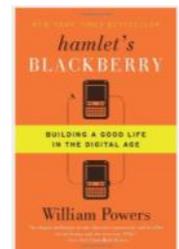
<http://myturnstone.com/blog/the-benefits-of-unplugging-and-recharging/>

Books

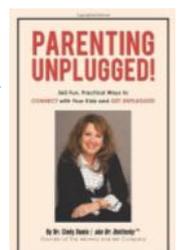
[Hamlet's Blackberry: Building a Good Life in the Digital Age](#), by William Powers, Harper Perennial, 2011



[Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other](#) by Sherry Turkle, Basic Books, 2012



[Parenting Unplugged!: 365 Fun, Practical Ways to Connect With Your Kids and Get Unplugged](#) by Cindy Bunin, iUniverse, 2012



NWEAMO performs at First Church

By Kenneth F. Herman, Director of Music and Organist



Since 2011, First Church has enjoyed a robust relationship with an exciting music festival at San Diego State University called NWEAMO, which stands for New West Electronic Art and Music Organization.

Our relationship began when [Joe Waters](#) of the SDSU music faculty invited the First Church bell choir, Las Campanas, to perform in a piece he called "Dragon." The good news is that NWEAMO is returning to First Church in the month of March. On Saturday, March 22, at 8PM, this world-class new music collective will give a full concert in the Meeting House and then return the next morning, March 23, to participate in both Sunday services.



Joe Waters

Last year, the entire NWEAMO Festival took place on the First Church Hillcrest campus, with two evenings of exciting new music that included performances by members of our own music staff, soprano Lynn Mendoza-Khan and organist Ken Herman. This year's program will feature our own Children's Choir, under Lynn's direction, performing "Falling," a work that Joe composed for them, with accompaniment of piano, harp, percussion and bass guitar. Our good friend and colleague [Karen Follingstad](#), head of the SDSU piano department and pianist for Summit UU Fellowship in East County, will be the guest pianist for "Falling."



Karen Follingstad

We will also hear the world premiere of Joe's "Things", an instrumental piece that features jazz saxophone wizard [Todd Rewoldt](#), concert pianist [Geoffrey Burleson](#), and vibraphone soloist, [Andrew Krevsa](#). Several other pieces that include Middle Eastern percussion, violin, panpipes, and melodion will charm us into the exotic but always accessible musical world of Joe Waters.

Todd Rewoldt



Geoffrey Burleson



Andrew Krevsa

Equally exciting is the participation of the NWEAMO musicians in our Sunday worship services in Hillcrest. This will mark their third visit, and we look forward to the great charge of energy and melodic invention their music making brings to Sunday worship.

This year's second NWEAMO Festival concert will be held Sunday evening, March 23, in the Heikoff Giant Dome Theatre of the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in Balboa. Each concert will start at 8:00 p.m., and the Sunday services are at the usual 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. times.





MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY OF SERVICE IN SAN DIEGO

By Nancy Fisk

January 20, 2014, marked the 6th annual MLK Interfaith Day of service in San Diego. "The MLK Day of Service is a way to transform Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and teachings into community action that helps solve social problems. On this day, Americans of every age and background celebrate Dr. King through service projects that strengthen communities, empower individuals, bridge barriers, and create solutions and move us closer to Dr. King's vision of a "[Beloved Community](#)" (the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#)). The MLK Day of Service is a part of [United We Serve](#), the President's national call to service initiative.



In San Diego, 528 volunteers of all faiths came ready to work in Balboa Park on Monday morning. After a benediction, the group split up into interfaith teams to collect trash, remove non-native plants and plant native plants at Balboa Park in the area of Morley Field and Florida Canyon. 76 members of First Church were there, according to the coordinators of the project. First Church was the third largest group of the 25 different faith communities that participated.

Some reactions from those at First Church who participated:

Nina Helms: "It was fun! I really liked when we got to dig the holes for the plants we were putting in the ground."



Nikki Helms: "I would just say that it was a good way to show my children how to be in service to their community. Martin Luther King day really shouldn't be just another day off or a good opportunity for a mattress sale."

From Ame Stanko: "We collected several bags of trash as well as an ice chest, a little cart and even a full-sized shopping cart. Very satisfying! "



Marge Wurgel: "I felt energized to be outdoors on a beautiful day, working with people of many faiths, to clean up our beautiful city! I loved working alongside other UUs, Muslims, and Christians as we cared for our shared home on Planet Earth."



Please join us on Saturday, March 29th for the [ordination of Emily Ann Hartnett Webb](#).

An ordination is the act by which a person is named and recognized by a religious body with special ministerial authority. It is a rite of passage, in which a new relationship is formed between a congregation, a religious movement, and a minister.

In other religious traditions, ordination is conferred by another religious leader. In Unitarian Universalism, only the congregation has this authority. Ordination is a theological statement of the congregation; a very special moment in the life of a congregation, and in the life of a minister. Please know you are warmly invited to

join in this ritual and celebration. Your presence matters. The ordination will be on Saturday, March 29th, at 3pm at the Hillcrest campus of First UU San Diego.

SPECIAL OFFERING FOR UU SEMINARIANS

BY EVERETT HOWE, ALICE KING, KRISTEN KURIGA, AND LAUREN WAY



Meadville Lombard
Theological School



We are having a special offering on March 30 for the long inactive scholarship fund for UU seminarians in our congregation. There are four members of our church who are now, or are soon to be, in seminary. Those people are Everett Howe, Alice King, Kristen Kuriga and Lauren Way. Here they discuss their calls:

Everett Howe: I am a humanist and atheist who wanted a community where people of many beliefs could interact with mutual respect. First Church has been a place where I have been able to try new and meaningful things: leading the Board of Trustees as board President; singing with the JUUL Tones and with the



contemporary worship band; and exploring aspects of ministry, as a worship associate and as a lay minister. I was lucky enough to join three others in Rev. Kathleen's "Seminarians To Be" program, which helped all four of us in our discernment. I am applying for low-residency part-time enrollment in the Master of Divinity program at Starr King.

Alice King: (attends Meadville Lombard Seminary) Things I have learned in seminary: Theology means so much more than the study of God; it's so much broader and deeper and sometimes very simple. Preaching is harder than I ever could have imagined. There is such a thing as "Chicago-cold" and for me it is anything 18 degrees and below. We act ourselves into new ways of thinking. UUs really are the LOVE people, mostly.



Things I knew but have been reminded of in seminary: We are co-creators with the universe. We are limited in our adventurousness by what we protect. We UUs have a rich history but if we live in the past, the future is much more difficult. A regular spiritual practice generates ideas, new ways of thinking, being and doing.

My love for First UU and my appreciation for the folks in this community have deepened through my seminary experience; every Sunday morning and each work day remind me that I am in beloved community.

Kristen Kuriga: When I came to First UU in 2009 as a staff member, my dream was to find a way to bring together my two deep and interconnected loves;



spiritual practice and social justice. In Unitarian Universalism, I have found a religious community whose theology and principles speak to my heart and support me in my own search for truth and

meaning. I am inspired by the passion, creativity, and dedication of our leaders, and of a faith tradition that calls us to not just believe in our interconnectedness, but to act on it.

With the intention of growing and deepening in my capacities as a religious leader, I am in my first semester as a Master of Divinity student at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley. I am a low-residency student, which means I have the opportunity to continue my ministry here at First UU, while I move towards ordination as a Unitarian Universalist Minister.

Lauren Way: (In her first year at Starr King) A combination of financial hiccups and a family health crisis made it clear that I would need to be a part time student this semester, which was initially very frustrating to me, but which has proven to be absolutely the best possible option...I'm learning how to be the most authentic and whole me I can be while navigating all that life throws at me. I'm learning how to face expectations and reality with integrity and honesty and



ministerial gravitas and still engaging in sustainable self-care. ... My call to be a religious leader is affirmed and reaffirmed (and questioned and challenged) constantly. This feels right and whole and important and joyful. And lonely and isolating and hard and scary. Oh, dear First UU, I am so grateful for your love and support. I wouldn't be who I am or where I am without you. Remember, you are pretty and I love you.



BEYOND DIVERSITY

BY REV. MARISOL CABALLEROS, FIRST UU CHURCH OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

These are excerpts of a sermon given on January 19, 2014 as part of the [DRUUMM](http://www.druumm.org) (Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries) conference at First Church in January. For the full video of this sermon: <http://vimeo.com/84541705>.

Dismissing the experiences of people of color within our congregations comes from a place of denial and avoidance. It isn't comfortable for anyone to talk openly about racism, but for white people (those of European descent), there is the opportunity to walk through life, walk through UU congregations, unaware of its subtleties. It's the whole "fish doesn't notice the water" thing. Racial prejudice is so pervasive within the dominant white culture, that some can easily avoid the pain that acknowledging racism brings with thinking such as, "that's just the way things are," or, "talk about a chip on your shoulder!" or, "it's just a joke! You know what I mean... Stop being so politically correct! Get a sense of humor!" ...

...I have certainly experienced my share of racism in my life, not to mention my experiences of sexism, homophobia, and whatever the "ism" is called by which people from elsewhere negatively judge Texans. Within UU congregations, I often hear comments such as, "you don't look like a Unitarian! You look like you'd be a Roman Catholic." Or, "Wow! That was powerful! And you're so articulate! Do you write your sermons yourself?!" Or, "So, what part of Mexico were you born in?" (To that one I answer, "Texas- the northern part of Mexico.") ... But, in doing this work, I have found that my stories are not unique...

...We have all born witness to various such microaggressions and, most likely, have uttered them ourselves without realizing it. Microaggressions are small acts that are done, often without thought or malicious intent, which serve to remind others that they exist outside of what is considered normal or acceptable. A boy is told, "Stop being such a girl!" A woman, "Wow, who knew you could fix a flat tire!" A plus sized woman, "You know, you have a very pretty face." A lesbian couple, "So, I guess she's more of the man, right? And you're the woman?" Or, "that's funny, I couldn't tell you were Chinese on the phone!" Or, "It's so rude when you speak in Spanish with others when I'm around."

...We would be hard-pressed to find a soul in this room that hasn't had such an experience that made them feel diminished in some way, which made them feel as if they did not matter. When someone fails to see us as an individual person of worth, it has the effect of isolating everyone involved from recognizing our inherent connectedness. Just as we all can recall feeling diminished, we all have experienced pain. We all yearn to feel loved. ..

...There are many ways to begin this crucial work of becoming an ally. By increasing our awareness of culture and difference, we become more mindful- more mindful of our "attitudes, values, and assumptions." We must explore aspects of our identities that our society deems normative and understand how that gives us an unearned advantage over others who do not fit that norm. We must then examine such cultural "norms" and begin to become curious about how they came to be. ..

...To achieve the goal of diversity begins in anti-racism/anti-oppression but it must end in working toward multiculturalism, for diversity on its own is not sustainable without multiculturalism and multiculturalism cannot be built without the foundation of anti-racism/ anti-oppression. The journey toward becoming truly welcoming to all who come in good faith, of becoming allies, is tough work, but it's soul-feeding work. These subjects are easier not to talk about. This is work that requires courage to move beyond denial, guilt, shame, and apathy. ..

... Our work begins by undoing these lessons and learning to become an ally, to be a community of allies to the historically marginalized, among us and outside of these walls. That, not trite aspirations toward empty "diversity," is a mission worthy of creating as our Unitarian Universalist legacy.

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 Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister
 Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister
 Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry
 Käthe Larick, Youth Program Coordinator
 Chris Christenson, Communications / Adult Ed. Coordinator
 Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice and South Bay
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 Suzette Southfox, Director of Membership and Development
 Alice King, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator
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