



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Guest At Your Table

BY Kathy Smith, UUSC Representative

As we move into the season of giving thanks, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee kicks off its national Guest at Your Table program. These guests represent the four focus areas: Environmental Justice, Rights in Humanitarian Crises, Civil Liberties, and Economic Justice. On November 27th there will be a table outside church where your family can receive their boxes, and an individual booklet called "Stories of Hope". Church members can pick up envelopes to make contributions, or renew membership in UUSC. (<http://www.uusc.org/guest/2011-2012/myguests>)



Environmental Justice is illustrated by the Kenyan story of Chrisantus, the teacher who guides children in 30 local schools to protect water resources there through planting trees, growing crops and raising bees. The SoilFarm Multi-Culture Group is working to save a rain forest.

The principle, Rights in Humanitarian Crises, is illustrated by Patrick, a formerly homeless youth on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Patrick used his talent of street art to survive and was noticed by our partner, Association for Promotion of Integral Family Healthcare. This group provides reproductive services, help with infectious diseases and now art therapy with Patrick as a leader, in a program serving up to 700 families.

The value of Civil Liberties is represented by Dalia, who was already a youth leader and human-rights activist in Egypt before the uprising. Her experience started when she submitted an essay to UUSC partner, Hands Across the Mideast Support Alliance (HAMSA). Discover her work with UUSC to translate a comic book about the Montgomery bus boycott into Arabic.



Our principle of Economic Justice is illustrated by Maria, who at 16 years old was a farmworker in the strawberry and lettuce fields of Salinas, California. Learn about her organizing efforts against wage theft, and journey to become a leader for poultry workers.

Learn of our mission and program at the following: <http://www.youtube.com/uusc4all>

The work of UUSC is entirely donor sponsored and is separate from the UUA.

Present to 2012: Get Involved...

1. We staff a table for our fair trade coffee, teas and chocolate goods by the Bookroom. Please consider volunteering so that we can staff our table weekly. Stop by to get more information.
2. Also, did you know that the UUSC has a College of Social Justice, with an emphasis on creating future justice leaders. Just Works trips are now part of this work., including our frequent trips for youth, and lay leaders to Haiti. Scholarship help is provided by UUSC. Next trip begins December 3rd.
3. Participate in Economic Justice activities, and watch for announcements of 2012's Economic Justice theme supporting the Human Right to Water.

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Arvid's Arcania

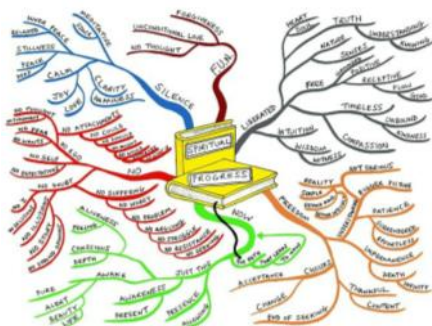
BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

5 Signs Of Spiritual Progress

Is your spiritual life progressing? Is your spiritual practice unfolding in a good way? Here are 5 signs of spiritual progress according to meditation teacher Shinzen Young, with whom I have studied for many years.

1. You have less suffering. You are less plagued by resentment, self-pity, negative judgment of self and others and envy. You are able to take the bumps and hardships of life with greater calm and equanimity.
2. You have more fulfillment. You experience gratitude for your life and the many joys and gifts that you have been given. You enjoy your loved ones, your friends, your community, your activities and your material goods. Nature nurtures you. You feel your life matters.
3. You have more insights. You see more and more the interconnections between your own existence and the world at large. You intuitively sense the right action to take more often.
4. You have more positive behaviors and fewer negative behaviors. You find yourself being kinder and more patient with other. You are less judgmental. You may find yourself having an easier time letting go of unproductive habits. You may find it is easier to take good care of yourself.
5. You have a natural tendency to act more compassionately and to serve others.

I'd say if a spiritual path does not result in these signs of progress in the long run, you may want to look closely at what path you are on.



November Sermons

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

November's **Transformational Theme** is **Faith**

Sunday, November 6—Hillcrest Campus

"Miracle Sunday"

- Rev Dr Arvid Straube and Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

Sunday, November 6—South Bay Campus

"Miracle Sunday"

- Rev. Jim Grant (live).

Sunday, November 13—Hillcrest Campus

"Living By Faith"

- Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

Sunday, November 13 —South Bay Campus

"What is a Spiritually Mature Person"

- Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).

Sunday, November 20—Hillcrest Campus

"How Little We Know"

- Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).
 - 7th in our Compassion series.
 - with "Promise of Living" Chalice Choir

Sunday, November 20—South Bay Campus

"Living By Faith"

- Rev Kathleen Owens (pre-recorded).

Sunday, November 27—Hillcrest Campus

"Unitarian Universalism Among The Poor"

- Rev Dr Arvid Straube and Pulpit Guest Nihal Attanayake, Director Of The Faith And Action Department, UU Church Of The Philippines (live).

Sunday, November 27—South Bay Campus

"How Little We Know"

- Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded).

Ways to Make the Most of the Sunday School Experience

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

Sunday morning is the heart of our church week. While not everything happens on Sunday mornings, it is the best time to see and feel what it means to belong to this beloved faith community. Coming to church together on Sundays as a family reinforces that sense of community and lets your children know that this is something of value. If, as adults, we do not make it a priority in our lives, how can we expect it to become that for our children?

There are other benefits to coming regularly as a family. When your children come regularly and join you in the Meeting House for the beginning of the worship service, they learn what it means to attend church and how to act in the worship setting. When parents complain that their children do not know how to behave in church, I have to ask, how they will learn if they are never there? We learn behavior by observing role models and being in church is the only way for them to learn.

When you come regularly your children will make friends in their classes. Who wants to be in a room with people they do not know? Coming regularly helps them make friends they will look forward to seeing again. And regular attendance helps them maintain some continuity with the material they are engaging with each week. While we work to make each lesson a whole in itself for those who we know cannot come each week, when children come regularly it helps create a context for new information and lets them feel that they are growing in understanding.

You can also help make the most of the Sunday school experience by knowing what will be taught each week. It is always announced in the weekly newsletter the Window. By letting your child know what to expect on Sunday, they can look forward to the session. Talk to your children's classroom leaders. Ask what was covered in the lesson and ask to see what the children did. Asking your children to fill you in on what they experienced can help reinforce the material. Taking the time to visit in your child's class and helping the leaders on a regular basis also lets you get to know the other children as well.

In addition to attending regularly on Sunday mornings, you can also encourage friendships and connections by attending family and community events like potlucks, family worship services, and family social justice activities. This will allow not only your children to know other children but help you to get to know the other parents in the program. Building connections with other parents who share your values is an important resource and support for you.

First Church is a multigenerational community and there are opportunities for all ages. Make a commitment to coming regularly and to attending events in addition to Sunday morning. Your whole family will benefit!



Knitting takes on a new meaning

Appeared on the [Uptown News](#) on 9/02/11

BY Dave Fidlin | SDUN Reporter

Lisa Thurn has long practiced meditation and enjoyed the generations-old pastime of knitting. But until recently, she never thought the two regular lifestyle regimens could be woven together.

"I've been a knitter most of my life; it's just been something that keeps my hands busy, and I enjoy making things for other people," said Thurn, who works in the biology department at San Diego State University. "I've also enjoyed meditation because it calms my mind."

Thurn was one of about a dozen participants in a recent class, Intentional Knitting, offered through First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego. She said she will be applying the techniques to her lifestyle.

"I used to watch TV while I knitted, but I think I'm going to stop doing that," Thurn said. "I've found that doing something as simple as counting the stitches is very calming for me. It's an opportunity to empty my mind, and that's a very freeing feeling."

Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry at First Unitarian, offered the Intentional Knitting course earlier this month. Although it was a one-time offering, Jones said the possibility is open to its return next year, likely in the summer.

"Knitting really is a perfect spiritual discipline that is ideal for meditation," Jones said. "We always think about yoga, but knitting works just as well because it quiets the mind and engages the body."

Uptown resident Bobbi Beer, 71, is not an experienced knitter, but took Jones' course because she has long studied meditation and various forms of spirituality. Beer has scoliosis, a curvature in her spine, making a traditional form of meditation challenging.

"This is very helpful to me," Beer said. "I think it would be a great benefit not just to disabled individuals, but anybody." Beer, who has a background in occupational therapy, said the art of tuning out distractions is important in her profession.



Despite scoliosis, Beer said she is committed to taking time out each day and tuning out the distractions through a method that works for her. She is currently working on a scarf.

"Since I'm new to this, I'm making mistakes," Beer said. "But you know what? Mistakes are okay because that's not really the point of this. I'm going to take a half-hour every morning and spend time meditating through knitting. If I don't do that, the cares of the day will rush in."

Regardless of the purpose, Jones said knitting through a meditative, spirit-minded lens can reap great benefits for people willing to make the practice a part of their daily lifestyle. "It's a wonderful opportunity to pray for and think about others," Jones said. "We can share love through the act of knitting."

Uptown resident Patricia Christenson has found a renewed purpose for her mission-driven hobby. In the past four years, Christenson has been knitting caps for Yayasan Bumi Sehat, a nonprofit, Indonesia-based organization aiming to meet the needs of mothers and infants in the country.

"When I'm knitting, I can sit and think about the baby who will get the chance to have the cap I'm creating," Christenson said. "I meditate and think about how I hope the baby receiving it will have a long and happy life."

"I have a very deep connection to that part of the world," Christenson said. "Knitting and meditating makes it all the more meaningful to me." Jones said, "It reminds all of us that there's a larger purpose behind what we're doing."

"SOURCES" – A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CANTATA

BY Tim McKnight and Nancy Fisk

At the 2005 Unitarian Universalist General Assembly, the Commission on Appraisal presented its report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, which challenged Unitarian Universalists to grow in their understanding of our theological identity as a religious movement. As part of Jason Shelton's process of growth, he decided to explore writing a major work using the six sources of our living tradition as inspiration.



Jason Shelton

Could these diverse theological statements be articulated poetically? Could these poetic interpretations be expressed in equally diverse musical forms? And if the answer to these questions is yes, is there an artistic statement to be made about how the six statements relate to one another, that is, in the midst of all of this diversity, what holds Unitarian Universalism together.

The result is "Sources", a 45-minute cantata in 7 movements: one for each of the six sources (described below) and a final movement tying the sources together into one final message. The work calls for SATB choir, piano, strings, and percussion. The words are by Kendyl Gibbons.

On Friday, June 8, 2012, the San Diego County Unitarian Universalist churches will present "Sources," in performance with a massed chorus that includes members from each of the participating churches plus a chamber orchestra and soloists. Rehearsals have begun and will be held monthly at various locations around the county. Individual choirs will also be practicing the piece at their regular rehearsals. Anyone who is willing to attend rehearsals and can attend the dress rehearsal and performance in June is invited to join the chorus. For more information on how to become part of this choral collaboration, contact the director Tim McKnight at tmcknight20@cox.net.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical & spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
6. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.

(From the Principles and Purposes of the UUA. Adopted as a Bylaw by the 1984, 1985 and 1995 General Assemblies.)





Sprucing up City Heights

BY Nancu Fisk

In October, the Social Justice project volunteers, coordinated by Kristen Kuriga, helped with a neighborhood clean-up event in City Heights. The event was called Facelift, sponsored by Community Housing Works (CHW), a group that has helped out in City Heights for 25 years, whose motto is "moving people and neighborhoods up in the world".

Facelift is a spruce-up-a-block-in-a-day event that is accomplished through the help of community volunteers, neighborhood associations, and local business leaders. Each year, the locally-based Facelift Committee selects a one block radius in the City Heights area to receive a makeover during a one-day event held in June and in the fall. The committee of Facelift is composed of residents of City Heights, who canvass the neighborhoods looking for clusters of owner-occupied residences, whose owners qualify for the assistance by either being low-income, senior citizens or disabled. In return for the assistance, the homeowners must volunteer several hours of their time in the community.

On Saturday, the effort concentrated on a single block of 46th Street in City Heights, in a section known as Swan Canyon. First Church helped plant flower beds, paint a house, clear brush and put down pavers to continue a sidewalk along the street. San Dieguito UU Fellowship also participated in this event.

Karen Bucey, a member of First Church and chairman of the Board for CHW, said that this particular project coordinated 500 volunteers. Over the course of 15 years, the organization has renovated 550 homes. Thirteen dumpsters were used in this cleanup. The effort is green – recycling is done where possible, with metal separated out. On occasion, the clean-up may take place over several days, especially where there is a canyon that needs cleaning up as well as the neighborhood.

The next Social Justice Project will be in December at the San Diego Food Bank. Contact Kristen Kuriga at Kristen@firstuusandiego.org or see the Window newsletter for more information.





Fryda Nicoloff

Born in Indonesia, Fryda's parents moved to Holland when she was 1 ½ years old, then to the United States when she was 3 ½. Her mother was Jewish, her father Congregationalist, although her father never attended church because he had too many ministers in the family. Her mother was the youngest in the family and very open-minded.

When Fryda first attended Sunday school, she questioned the Bible stories. She wanted to know how Jonah could be swallowed by the whale, and if Adam and Eve had two sons, how could there be any others. A music major in college, Fryda sang in the Methodist choir with her professors who were organists. She had a sorority sister who belonged to the Unitarian church where Fryda sang on occasion.

Unitarianism was always her religious preference. Her husband attended the Unitarian youth group. Fryda and her husband were married in the Unitarian church in Elgin, Ohio.

In 1952, they moved to San Diego, with their two grade school children. Peter Samson was the minister then. Her memory of him was that "he was an excellent speaker, but he didn't know how to stop."

She became a member of the Women's Alliance, which was a precursor of the UU Women's Federation. She was president of the organization at our church, and later served on the continental organization. She met women from all over the world during this time. The Women's Alliance often contributed much to the church budget, about \$5000 a year at a time when that was most of the minister's salary.

Fryda Nicoloff

BY Nancy Fisk

She attended First Church when it was on 6th street. In the late 1950's, the building the congregation was in was crumbling and the Religious Education program was so large that they bought the building next door. John Clark, the minister in 1956-1957, found the site that First church is now built on. Fryda was chairman of the Finance Committee at the time.

When the congregation decided to finance a new building, the church hired a campaign manager for the first time to raise money, to start the first pledge drive. The first campaign manager quit, saying we would never raise the money. Fryda's husband, George, was president of the Board when the church was built. One member of the Board, Alan Rosencranz, was very good at drumming up support during the building campaign. Members made pledges then that sometimes overcommitted themselves. Marston Sargent, another member helped people to lower their pledges so that they didn't have to leave the church in embarrassment.

When the new church was built there were 400 children in the Religious Education program. "They had to be put in every room that was available. The high school was in the lounge by the fireplace. There were 50 in the high school group."

For a long time, church membership "seemed to be university professors, no plumbers," to Fryda. She believes that the church represents a better cross section of people now. She hopes we continue to see people of other races and backgrounds attending our church.

As for her spirituality, Fryda grew up learning about the Old Testament, and myths and literature. She looks at the New Testament as a biography, how people at that time pictured Jesus. She feels that, "Jesus was a Jew and probably a good man." She's not an atheist but still wonders who God is. At 91, she's not going to worry about that. Heaven and hell are also things she doesn't worry about. She believes that "service is the basis of what many Unitarians are here for, to give service."

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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>
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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