



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## The Millers and UUniforms

By Nancy Fisk

Justin Miller and Jaynelle Miller are new members to First Church. Jaynelle has been here for 16 months with their children. Justin joined us when he came off deployment 8 months ago. Justin grew up wanting to be in the military. He joined the Navy right out of high school and has been in the service for the last 15 ½ years, where he has the rank of Chief. He plans to retire from the Navy in 4 ½ years. While serving, he was able to complete a Master's in Political Science and would like to teach high school government and political science as his second career. Justin and Jaynelle have three children, Jakob, Jolie and Jensen.

Justin and his family have belonged to Unitarian Universalism since 2004. They discovered Unitarian Universalism when Justin was writing a paper on Society and Religion. He was raised Jewish, while his wife was brought up Lutheran. They were married in the Lutheran church, but his wife had problems with the creed as an adult. He was raised to believe that Jesus was a great teacher but nothing more than that. They didn't go to church as a family until Justin discovered the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism and found that he agreed with them. He also read that UUs were a thinking, analytical group, always discussing about how they can be more moral and live their values, which he also agreed with.

Justin believes that his military service is not in conflict with his UU beliefs. Justin points out that "If 2% of the population in general is UU, and if the military is reflective of society, then 2% of the military will be UU."

Seeking justice holds as true for his UU beliefs as it does for his military service. He believes that "the strong should defend the weak." He also believes that war should be a last resort to resolving conflicts. When asked about the traditional belief that UUs advocate for peace, he replies that peace activists are his greatest allies. "If we go to war, I want someone to question whether that war is in alignment with our values as a country."

The Millers first joined a UU church in Yakima, Washington. After that, every time Justin was stationed in another place, they looked up the nearest UU church and attended. At the UU Church of Norfolk, Virginia, another serviceman, Lou Portella, had started a support group for UUs in the military called UUniforms.



UUniforms provides a place for military UU families to build community, to be with those supportive of their liberal values, and also provides support for those times when the military member is deployed, so that the family can have people to depend on. An example of the support needed occurred when Justin was on deployment in Afghanistan. His pregnant wife was asked to stay on bed rest for her own health and the

safety of the baby. They had a 2 year old child at the time. Justin offered to come home, but she knew that his job was crucial to the ship's mission. Through the help of neighbors and the church, she was able to make it through the pregnancy without requiring that he come home.



The Millers, with the help of last year's intern Emily Webb, began a chapter of UUniforms at First Church. The group met for a potluck last year, which was well attended. After a break of several months, UUniforms is meeting again for a potluck,

November 15, at 6PM in Bard Hall. UUniforms is open not just to active military, but to retired military, or to anyone who would like to provide that support to a military family. If you would like more information you can contact Justin on Facebook at [facebook.com/UUniforms](https://www.facebook.com/UUniforms) or at [uuniformsandiego@gmail.com](mailto:uuniformsandiego@gmail.com).

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## Arvid's Arcana

By Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

The English writer G.K. Chesterton said, "America is the only nation in the world founded on a creed," one set forth "with theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence." He called America "a nation with the soul of a church." We must admit that the ideals of the Declaration are not yet realized. But without minimizing America's wrongs, it is important to realize that very few people in human history and even most people in the world today don't enjoy the freedoms that we enjoy.

In his brilliant book, [The American Soul](#), philosopher Jacob Needleman wrote, "To be American is an idea, not an inescapable, organic given. America is a nation formed by philosophical ideas that have been thought through by human beings. It is the only nation in the world that is so constituted. America is not a tribal, ethnic or racial identity. It is a philosophical identity composed of ideas – of liberty, freedom, independent thought, independent conscience, self-reliance, hard work and justice."

"My country right or wrong." Those words were spoken in 1899 by Sen. Carl Shurtz and I agree with them. But we haven't listened to the full quote. Shurtz said, "My country right or wrong. If right, to be kept right. If wrong, to be set right."

These words are written the week after an extremist faction, in a petrified Congress, had shut down the government for two weeks and had avoided by just minutes a catastrophic default on our nation's debts that would have plunged the world into economic chaos. It is well for us to remember the creed of our who dreamed of an America that is yet to be and to stand up for that dream in this time of peril.

You may have noticed that my two messages for the month of November have been identified as part of the "Downloading Rev. Arvid Series." The times in which I will be addressing you before I leave in June will be few and precious. Therefore, I have given some thought to what are the message that are absolutely the most important I'd like to leave you with. Look for those in the coming months.

## November Sermon Messages

### Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30a and 11:30a

South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30a

(Intergenerational, Bi-lingual [Spanish, English])

The November **Transformational Theme** is **Democracy**.

### Sunday, November 3:

- Hillcrest Services—"**Power to the People**," Rev Kathleen Owens (live).  
Music: our Jazz Service offertory is Costello's *(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding* sung by Lorelei Isidro. UUBellation opens with *We Gather Together*. We close with Eddie Harris' jazz classic *Freedom Jazz Dance*.
- South Bay Service—"**How Not to Be a Zombie: Being Alive in a Deadening World**," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).

### Sunday, November 10, Veteran's Day Service:

- Hillcrest Services—"**The Beginning of Love**," Rev Jan Christian, UU Church of Ventura, w/ Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).  
Music: Chalice Choir, combined with Voices in Unity youth choir, sings Miller's *I Believe* conducted by Dan Ratelle. Voices in Unity's Dariane Wood is the mezzo soloist.
- South Bay Service—"**Remembrance**," Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister.

### Sunday, November 17:

- Hillcrest Services—"**Kindness in the Age of Meanness\***," Rev Dr Arvid Straube. (live)  
Music: our Celebration Service features Lynn Mendoza-Khan leading a small group of top-notch vocalists. The special music features music from the musicals *No Day But Today* and *21 Guns*.
- South Bay Service—"**Power to the People**," Rev Kathleen Owens with Kristen Kuriga, South Bay Ministry Team Coordinator (live).

### Sunday, November 24:

- Hillcrest Services—"**If your only prayer is 'Thank You' ...\***," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).  
Music: Vocalist Andrea Newall sings Werner's *May I Suggest*. Under Andrea's direction, the JUUL Tones also sing in these services.
- South Bay Service—"**We Give Thanks**," Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry, and Worship Associates (live).

\* Downloading Rev. Arvid Series



## Family Blessings

By Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

November brings thoughts to me of Thanksgiving, harvest, fall leaves, and gratitude. Even if we do not live in a part of the country where all these things are a reality, they are part of our culture. November also makes me think of family gatherings, and sharing meals together. Warmth, and love, and caring... As we gather in these times together with family and friends, I want to give thanks for all the blessings that I have.

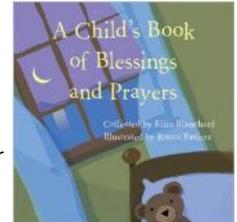
If it is not already a practice in your household, November and Thanksgiving provide an opportunity to begin a practice of offering thanks and counting our blessings. Meal times, while not the only place to do this, provide an easy space for this to begin.

Whether you want to offer a prayer of gratitude, meditate of the gifts you have received during the day, contemplate how and by whom the food arrived on your plate, or breathe deeply and look into the faces of those who share your table, stopping for a moment at the start of a meal is a perfect place to begin. You can light a chalice if you wish, hold hands, or share a reading. Even a moment's hesitation in a busy day can allow you to connect with a sense of something beyond yourself and calm your thoughts and bring a sense of peace.

If you are beginning something new with children, keep in mind their age and attention spans. Little ones need something very short and tangible. Slightly older ones will want to be able to share in the ritual, so incorporate something they can do or say. Older children might rebel at doing something new, so invite them into the planning. Have some books with sample readings appropriate to their ages and reading abilities. Or, you could collect some readings that you put on slips of paper and put in a bowl or basket. Allow family members to reach in and select the reading for the meal. Encourage family members to add readings to the collection.

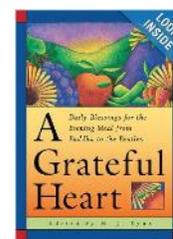
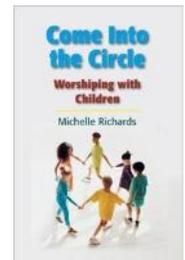
Here is a selection of books I think might be a good place to start:

[A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers](#) by Eliza Blanchard, Skinner House 2008



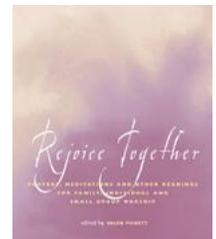
[One Earth, One Spirit: A Child's Book of Prayers from Many Faiths and Cultures](#) compiled by Tessa Strickland, Sierra Club Books for Children, 1997

[Come into the Circle: Worshiping with Children](#) by Michelle Richards, Skinner House 2008 (This book offers a large selection of readings in addition to information about creating worship.)



[A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal from Buddha to the Beatles](#), edited by M.J. Ryan, Conari, 1995

[Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations and other Readings for Family, Individual and Small Group Worship](#), edited by Helen Pickett, Skinner House, 2006



May this be a season of gratitude and love in your home –

*Liz Jones*



## What's Next for the Search Committee

By Nancy Fisk

Now that the congregation has called Kathleen as our next Lead minister, she becomes a member of the search committee, as we look for a 2nd minister. What Kathleen and our church Board have decided is that the 2nd minister will be an assistant minister with an intention to call them in two years.

Kathleen and the Search Committee will begin looking for candidates nationwide, starting in November. We will use the results from the congregational survey to broadcast to potential UUA ministers-in-search what we are looking for in a 2nd minister.

Potential candidates will be viewing a congregational record for First Church, a document that details the requirements for the next minister, and what First Church is like, both as an institution and a congregation. We begin receiving information from the candidates in the month of November, during which time the search committee begins to assess each candidate.

Kathleen and the Search Committee will first interview those candidates that we see as potential good fits for the position by phone. We will narrow that group to a select few who we will then meet and interview in person. We will make a recommendation to the church Board for the best suited candidate. The Board will then enter into a contract with the new assistant minister, with the intent to call after two years, if the person hired is a good fit for the ministerial team and for the congregation.

The next part of this search will remain highly confidential until the candidate is selected. Although many candidates may be considered, only one will be presented to the Board. Time may be required for the candidate we choose to inform their current congregation, if they have one that they are leaving.

The Search Committee will let you know, when they are able to, that a choice has been made, and at the proper time, will publish their picture and background in a First Words article. There will not be a formal candidating week, as there was with Kathleen's call, because the congregation is not being asked to take a vote at this time. Our hope is that the new minister will be able to start working for First Church as soon as August 2014 and no later than September 2014.

If you have any questions or comments for the Search Committee, there will be a table on the patio every 3rd Sunday, where you can meet with one of us to discuss this next phase of the search process. Or tell us more through our webpage at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/ministerial-search-committee>.

Ministerial Search Committee Members

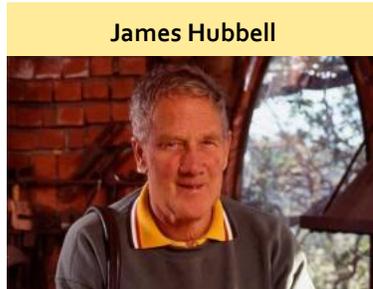




## THE HUBBELL FOUNTAIN: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

By Carolyn Sheets Owen-Towle

On September 28th, Bard Hall was the setting for the gala Ilan Lael 30th anniversary event, the organization that artist James Hubbell founded. Over the years, James Hubbell has contributed many of his architectural and art works to First Church. This was an opportunity, in that lovely setting, to celebrate his creativity. His first commission here was the memorial fountain, begun in 1967, and dedicated in January 1968. The fountain became the centerpiece of an expansive central patio, where the congregation gathers weekly, following each service.

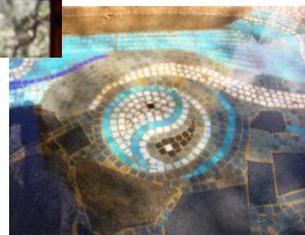


James Hubbell

Rev. John Ruskin Clark, the minister then, asked to have a symbol of the Tao placed there. Hesitant to include literal symbols, Jim made an exception and taught Dr. Clark how to lay the tiles. The minister then sat on the pool floor and created his contribution of the yin and yang symbol in the back of the fountain. You can find it if you look.



Rev John Ruskin Clark

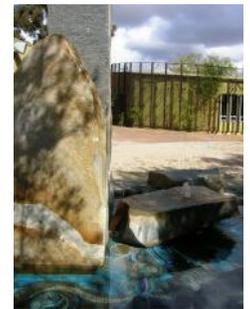


Church members involved in this wonderful project were: Kay Moore, and daughter, Kathleen; Gail and Art Durson, and daughter, Elaine; Carol and Dean Smith; Bob and Betsy Stevens; and Bob D'Hue.

The fountain was the inspiration of Gail Durson, president of the Religious Arts Guild. The money for the fountain was given by Lillian Blackman, who suggested that Jim Hubbell, a struggling young artist at the time, create the fountain. He envisioned a vertical element to enliven the expansive space. Grouped around an eight inch-deep fountain pool are six megaliths of San Diego granite, the tallest of which is 14 feet high. Jim was able to secure the massive stones from a stone company for the price of the crane that delivered them to the site and placed them.

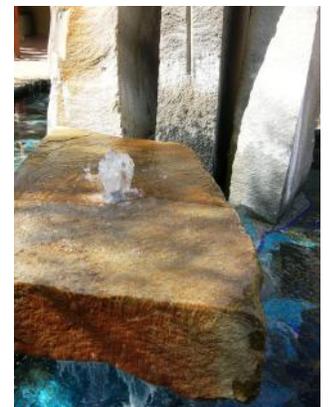


Out of this experience, Jim learned that through collaborating with others and teaching them skills, marvelous things could be achieved. The process of drawing in people who are excited to create, teaching and working with them has been an ongoing signature of Jim's work.



From [Living Liberal Religion](#) by Jim Boone: "The megaliths were cut and hauled in, and they were placed using a huge crane that was driven down the monumental steps to the lower patio. There the megaliths were lifted over the covered walkway connecting the Meeting House with Bard Hall."

First Church could not afford to complete the mosaic design that was intended for the pool floor, so Jim asked church volunteers to learn this art, following his instructions. Principally, four women came forward and soon the project was in full swing. Men shoveled the hole, while children played and the women then proceeded to work the tile tesserae into place. The total cost of the project was \$3,000.



# HUNGRY FOR JUSTICE

BY ELIZABETH BUKEY, INTERN MINISTER

I was really hungry when I woke up that morning. It had been almost 22 hours since yesterday's bowl of oatmeal, and it was hard to think about much else as I headed out the door to [Casa Latina](#). I have always had enough to eat. More than that, I've always been the kind of person who made sure to eat: when I worked as a hospital chaplain, it became a joke that I was always ducking into a corner to eat trail mix. So it was a new experience for me to choose to participate in the National Fast to say "[Not One More Deportation](#)."

**#NOT1MORE**

In some ways it was a natural step: the congregation I grew up in, [University Unitarian Church](#) (UUC) in Seattle, has supported Casa Latina and has an immigration task force. In fasting, I joined two other UUC members who have been active in immigrant rights. Personally, I have been in and around the immigrant rights movement since I worked in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Washington Office and lobbied congress for reform legislation. In seminary, I studied the U.S.-Mexico Border and traveled with other seminarians to south Texas for organizing and theological reflection. I was deeply moved by attending Justice General Assembly, in particular the vigil at Sheriff Joe Arpaio's "Tent City" jail.

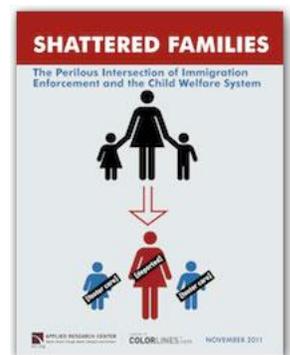
"For the fasters"



So here I was, hungry and learning a lot from this particular hunger. Living only on water for 24 hours is uncomfortable. But my experience over the last day reminded me that living in the shadow of deportation is more than uncomfortable: it can be terrifying. I spent the afternoon of my fast watching "[A Better Life](#)" with other activists. It tells the story of an undocumented man and his teenage son, and the painful search for ways to improve their lives and their strained relationship. After, as we discussed the movie, I learned that most people in the room knew someone who had been deported. Relatives and friends had been pulled over for routine traffic stops and never seen again. One person had complained about mistreatment at work: his bosses called immigration and he was deported. Children are in foster care because their [parents have been deported](#).



No one should live in this kind of fear. That's why I fasted, and that's why, after meeting people impacted by deportation, I am called to continue speaking out. As we broke our fast that morning, activists, peer organizers, and day laborers spoke about why we do this. In this room filled mostly with women, we shared that we are looking for freedom, for rights, for a better life for our families, and for those suffering in the Sonoran desert and right here in Seattle. As our t-shirts said, we are hungry for citizenship.



## Starr King GTU



Hello Beloveds! Greetings from the mythical fairyland that is Starr King School for the Ministry.

This place is everything I

hoped it might be, and nothing like I expected, comfortable and terrifying all at once.

Starr King is a member school at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), which has nine member

schools and eleven centers. I'm living in dorms at the Pacific School of Religion, so I'm surrounded by theological graduate students. We eat our meals at the dining hall, and the campus looks just like Hogwarts! (I've even heard rumors of, but I've yet to see

evidence of, a GTU Quidditch team – if you don't get these references, ask one of the youth. They'll explain it to you. And you'll get to meet an awesome youth).

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 taking two formal classes: Death, An Intellectual History, with Rev. Susan Ritchie and Writing the Rites, Liturgy in the Church Year with Rev. Michelle Favreault. I'm also engaging in a "Special Reading Course" (which is GTU talk for independent study) about ritual and prayer. I've been leading a prayer workshop for a few years, and this will allow me to more fully flesh out what I am doing.

My classes are engaging and challenging and frustrating all the time. The thing that became clear very early on, is that what I am learning here is so much bigger than what is in the classes. 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. This is all still very much a work in progress...

## The Pacific School of Religion dorm



## GREETINGS FROM STARR KING!

BY LAUREN WAY

I'm surrounded by remarkable and warm and genuine and bright and creative and lovely people. As I type, I'm sitting in the very cool coffee shop down the street, Philz, with three fellow seminarians and being distracted by conversations about unpacking white privilege, the influence of our parents' discipline processes on our development and understanding of the world, and the amazing art show we're going to in San Francisco this weekend.

Karen Hsu Patterson (l) and Lauren Way (r)



I love this place. I feel, for the first time in my life, like I am really doing what I am supposed to be doing. 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.

And I am not alone. My charge to you, my beloved congregation, is to reach out. Send Sarah Goodman (nee Angell-Isom) a letter telling her how proud you are, how much you love her, how much you affirm and support her on this journey. Drop Wendy Bartel a note letting her know that you thought of her during a particularly moving piece of music, or that you missed her smile and dancing when you were up at deBenneville, or that, as Solstice is coming around, you feel a deep connection to her, still.

Go and visit Sharon Wiley and David Miller at their congregations. They're in our very cluster! First Church is amazing and inspiring and creates remarkable and prophetic leaders in our movement. And, I would suggest, we have a responsibility to support and nurture those leaders, and let them know that we still hold and honor them.

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.

*Lauren Way is a young adult from First Church in her first year of seminary. She is available on Facebook for loving and supportive comments.*

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