



First Words

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Spoon River Anthology at First Church

By Gwen Walls

Do the dead have anything to teach the living?

Excitement is building for the new fall production at Looking Glass Theatre! Looking Glass Theatre will be celebrating the kickoff of Fall with the production of Spoon River Anthology. Spoon River Anthology is an engaging theatrical presentation of the popular collection of poems written by Edgar Lee Masters, adapted for the stage by Charles Aidman. It is a majestic collection of monologues from dearly-departed spirits of a small town as they talk about their lives, or aspects of the character's death. The show will feature songs written by Aidman, with lyrics by Naomi Caryl Hirshhorn, which are interspersed in and around these monologues.

The show is set in a cemetery, making this the perfect spooky October outing! There will be plenty of spooky surprises set throughout the theater to delight young

and old audiences, and get everyone in the spirit of the season. Looking Glass veterans Carol Angell, Roy Attridge, Les GrantSmith, Paul Hillery, and Kerry Williams will be lending their talents in roles as the spirits,

and LGT is pleased to welcome newcomers and other not-so-newcomers to our theater as part of our cast: Barbara Davenport, Allyn Charney, Hugh Burleton, Sara Ferguson, Nancy Fisk, Mita McIntyre, Noah Yatsko, Claire Chiswell, Elaine Durson, Suzan Tusson and Erich Spurgin.



Directing the play is Robie Evans, assisted by Kath Hillery. Ray Evans is doing lighting and set design. Karen Muldrew will be designing the costumes. Andrea Newall will be putting together the small folk music combo, which will delight the audience between many of these dramatic vignettes.

Spoon River Anthology opens Friday, October 5 and continues on Saturday, October 6, Friday October 12 and Saturday October 13 at 7:30 pm in the Meeting House of the First UU Church of San Diego. Join us for this thought-provoking journey into the lives of these haunting characters! Tickets can be purchased in advance at LookingGlassSD.org. They may also be purchased at the door, but this show will certainly sell out, so it is advised to buy in advance.

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Spoon River Anthology
 Adapted by Charles Aidman from the book by Edgar Lee Masters
 Music by Naomi Caryl Hirshhorn, Lyrics by Charles Aidman
 Directed by Robie Evans, Light and Set Design by Ray Evans, Costumes Design by Karen Muldrew

Friday and Saturday on
 October 5, 6, 12, 13
 at 7:30 pm

Tickets at the door or
 on-line at
www.LookingGlassSD.org

Suggested Donation
 Door \$17
 Advance \$14
 Student/Mil \$12

Parking Provided

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 Medical Center

Email us at
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Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

The transformational theme for last month was Unity. Late September was also the time of the 10 Days Of Awe, the holiest days of the Jewish year. It begins with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year and ends with Yom Kippur, the Day Of Atonement. In the days in between, observant Jews all over the world go inward and examine their hearts to see who they need to seek forgiveness, what relationships need to be reconciled and what attitudes and behaviors need to change in order to meet the new year with a pure heart. This year Rosh Hashanah coincided with the release of a film slandering Islam and arson and murder in the Muslim world in response to that film. I know that my Universalism calls me to relate to all human beings as family. As I examined my heart I found that I wanted to disown so many members of my family. From the self-examination came a prayer, which I shared with the congregation on September 23. Here it is:

Spirit of Love and peace, free me from the illusion of separateness. Help me to acknowledge my brothers and sisters without discrimination. Free me from the burden of finding enemies.

Open my eyes. The person who seeks to distract himself from his sense of insignificance and his personal pain by hating and fomenting hatred of a people of a different faith, to the point of insulting their most sacred values, to the point of making a slanderous film in order to hurt and punish others, help me to recognize that he is my brother. He is myself.

Open my eyes. The young person with no job, with no clear future or purpose, whose sense of boredom and frustration finds an outlet in fanatical religion, to the point of hatred for a people he doesn't understand, to the point of rioting and arson and murder, help me to recognize that he is my brother. He is myself.

Open my eyes. Those who feel fear and hate their new neighbors who speak another language, come from another culture, and whose skin is of a different hue; help me to recognize that they are my sisters, they are my brothers. They are myself.

Open my eyes. Those who cannot understand that a love and commitment that does not look like theirs is indeed a love and commitment just like theirs, and so seek to deny the rights of their brothers and sisters to equal protection and respect, help me to recognize that they are my brothers. They are my sisters. They are myself.

God of love, give me the courage always to speak out strongly, clearly and effectively when there is wrong, when there is injustice.

And help me, in this new year, in this season of atonement, to cleanse my heart of fear, and of any hatred, dogmatism and fanaticism. Strengthen in me the seeds of wisdom, love, compassion and understanding. Amen.

October Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

Sunday, 9:30a (Traditional) and
11:30a (Contemporary)

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

The October Transformational Theme is Vocation

Sunday, October 7:

Hillcrest Services—"You're More Enlightened Than You Think", part of our Essential Spirituality Series, Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)

South Bay Service—"UU and the Modern Family", Zach Wahls, Pulpit Guest (pre-recorded)

Sunday, October 14:

Hillcrest Services—"Right Livelihood", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)

South Bay Service—"To Know the Dark", Emily Webb, Intern (live)

Sunday, October 21:

Hillcrest Services—"Dealing with Difficult Emotions", part of our Essential Spirituality Series, Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live)

South Bay Service—"You're More Enlightened Than You Think—", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded)

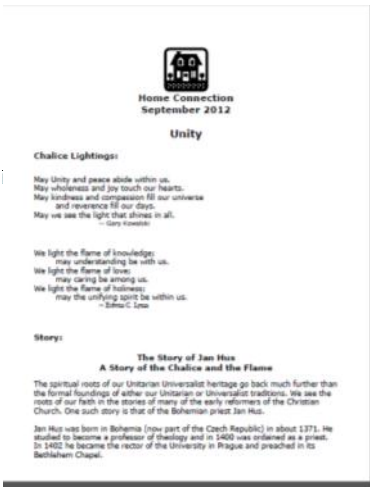
Sunday, October 28:

Hillcrest Services—"To Know the Dark", Emily Webb, Intern (live)

South Bay Service "Graying Gracefully", Rev Tom Owen-Towle (live)

Using Home Connections

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry



What do you do with the Home Connection document that is delivered to your house each month? I have a vision of the ways it can be used, and I'd love to hear how you are using it!

There are several questions following the story to spark reflection. I've tried to ask them in such a way that individuals of all ages should be able to relate to them. In addition, there are several suggested activities for each monthly theme. Activities are designed to get you out of your head and into your body. We know that, through embodied action, we learn and remember more deeply than through thought alone.

First Church has a monthly worship theme. Some of the sermons each month address the theme. Some of our religious education for all ages is connected to the theme. And, each month the Home Connection is delivered to your home specifically designed to help you and your family connect to the worship theme.

There are resources included in the Home Connection that will allow you to expand your exploration of the theme. There are suggestions of children's books, a list of readings from the back of our hymnal related to the theme, and a variety of resources for adults. There are books, some on-line resources, and an occasional movie or video.

Every document includes at least two chalice lightings. These can be used any time you light a candle or chalice in your home. Chalice lightings are a great way to begin a meal, a family meeting, or a period of personal meditation. The chalice lighting can remind us to stop and reflect for a moment.

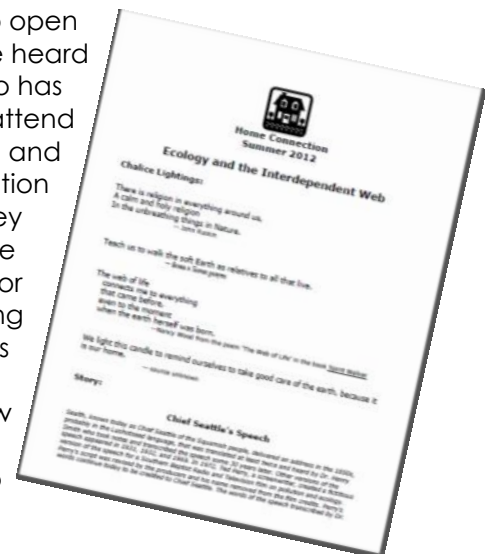
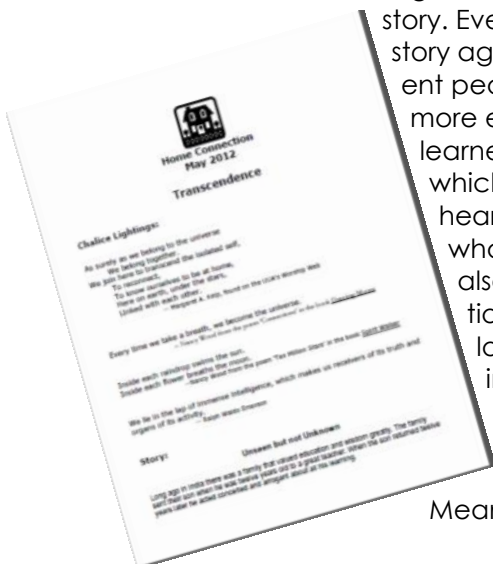
Each time we re-engage a theme, I look at the questions, suggested activities and resources in order to make changes and additions. I'd love to hear from you what other questions or activities you might suggest for one of the monthly themes. If you know of a resource that you think should be included, let me know. I might just add them the next time we engage that theme.

There is a story for all ages in each Home Connection. Stories are not just for children. As human beings we connect through story. You can read the story on your own, read it to each other, or tell it aloud. We repeat stories once every three years. Just because you've read a story once does not mean that there is nothing new to learn from that story.

I've heard from some families that they use Home Connection when they cannot get to church. Other families use the chalice lightings on a regular basis. I know one church committee that used the chalice lightings to open their meetings. I've heard from someone who has not been able to attend services for a while and the Home Connection helps them feel they are still a part of the community. If you or your family are using Home Connections on a regular basis, please let me know how you are putting it to use.

Every time we hear a story again we are different people. We've had more experiences, and learned new things which can lead us to hear or see a story in a whole new way. We also know that repetition of a story will allow us to go deeper into the meaning of a story. Take the time to read a story again.

Meanings grow!



Liz Jones

Home Connections are available from our website at [http://](http://www.firstusandiego.org/home-connection)

www.firstusandiego.org/home-connection.

Travels in Turkey

BY Rev Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister

What a gift of time this sabbatical is and again, I thank you, the Congregation for understanding the need for a sabbatical. The first few days were busy with final preparations for our three months abroad. We flew to New York and then to Istanbul on Tuesday, Sept. 4th. We arrived a day or so earlier than the tour group with which we would travel the country. We met the tour group (through Smartours) on Thursday evening and began a two-week adventure. Our tour guide was a fabulous man with extensive knowledge and stories to share. His master's degree in political science and his love of history and his country made his commentary most informative and entertaining. We traveled a little over 2,250 miles via bus as we made our way through central and western Turkey. We found the people friendly, the history very rich; and we found there are some similarities that Turkey and the United States share. The people love their land, their traditions and customs and in many ways want to be accepted by the West. Also like the United States, there are many cultures and traditions that make up the people and the country.

Time after time, in many places – whether it was visiting Istanbul and the Blue Mosque, or the Hagia Sofia, or the Holy Relics of the Prophet Mohammed in the Sultans' Palace to visiting the early Christian cave churches in the Cappadocia region, to visiting Ephesus and the House of Mary (where Jesus' mother is supposed to have lived out her final days), the power of belief, the act of believing in the legend/story/place has power and it is the act of belief that holds the power, not the site/story/legend. The people's devotion, the way they approach and come to these places, full of reverence, full of longing – is what moved me more than the place, the church, the legend. And I ponder what we Unitarian Universalists hold to so strongly – what are our actions, how we choose to spend our free time and our resources – what do they say about what we believe.

I know this isn't a new insight, but in this country, in the midst of such living history – through visits to museums, churches, and villages and interacting with local people, I was reminded again and again of this truth. I will be reflecting on this in the days to come as we continue on our way...leaving Turkey and heading toward Greece. We have identified

five different phases for our travels in the Mediterranean, 1. Turkey, 2, Greek Islands, 3, Italy – the mainland, 4, Italy – the coast and southern regions and 5, Greece, the Peloponnese and the mainland. Through it all, I'll continue to write and share some experiences and learning. Already, I have some ideas for sermons and Adult Religious Education classes forming; already I am remembering you in my thoughts and prayers and wishing you a full and rich time in San Diego.



Rev Kathleen Owens' blogs are available from our website at <http://www.firstusandiego.org/kathleens-blog>.

Rev Dr Arvid Straube's blogs are at <http://www.firstusandiego.org/ministers-blog>.



Rev. Kathleen Owens



There seems to be a growing

misconception about the idea of what makes a person strong and what makes a person weak. People in today's society can find it pretty difficult just finding a common ground between the two. If a person tries not to involve themselves in conflict, they are seen as weak or as cowardly. Many people have even come to associate being passive with being weak, as if the two go hand in hand. In reality, many people are just passive because they see conflict as just not worth it. Now personally, I think to avoid conflict in a world so full of it requires a stupendous amount of strength.

For me, it's always been quite simple. I've always believed that the person who stands up for the people they love and what they believe in could never be weak. It all comes down to how a person decides what is worth fighting for and what is just conflict for the sake of conflict. I spent the longest time trying to figure out the difference between the two. If there's anything my parents have

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

BY HALEY SWEET, FROM THE YOUTH SERVICE, MAY 27, 2012

taught me, it's that you have to learn to choose your battles wisely and that you can't let your idea of strength get so caught up in showing it.

As a child, I loved to read fairytales and reenact my latest day dreams. I would run around slaying dragons and saving my imaginary kingdom from an onslaught of trolls. I adored the stories where the brave princess ended up saving the valiant knight, because by the end of the story she had proved to the world that she was so much stronger than anyone had ever thought. I bought into the idea that to be strong you have to prove yourself; that you have to make other people think you're strong and that they have to respect you for that before you could actually be considered strong.

Strangely enough, as I grew older, I found very few dragons to slay and even worse it seemed that the name Haley Sweet doesn't really strike fear in to the hearts of your enemies. But there's the problem; a person can't be so set on waiting for others to see them as strong. Maybe that day will come, but they don't have to wait for that day to see that strength in themselves.

Fundraisers for the Kitchen and "Finishing Touches" of our new Welcome Center!

FINISHING TOUCHES

BOOGIE BALL

Saturday, October 20, 2012
7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Dance to the music of San Diego's Queen of Boogie Woogie...Sue Palmer and her Motel Swing Orchestra!

- Suggested Donation:
\$35 in advance
\$40 door
- Casual Dress
- Tickets include finger foods and non-alcoholic refreshments
- No-host beer & wine will be available
- 21 + only



OPPORTUNITY DRAWING

Tickets are a suggested donation of \$25 each.

Winners will be announced at the Boogie Ball. Winners need not be present. Prizes:

1. One Week in Cabo San Lucas in a Condo Resort plus airfare for two. Value \$4,100
2. Two nights in San Francisco at the Kimpton Prescott Boutique Hotel plus air fare for two. Value \$800
3. Two nights in San Diego at the Kimpton Solamar Boutique Hotel for two. Value \$600
4. Sunset Sail on 32' Sailboat on San Diego Bay for private party up to 5. Beverages and hors d'oeuvres included. Value \$400
5. Cohn Restaurant Dining Voucher. Value \$200
6. Brigantine Restaurant Dining Voucher. Value \$200

Tickets available on the Sunday patio in Hillcrest, the Welcome table at South Bay and the office of First UU Church, 4190 Front Street, SD, CA, 92103. Please call Suzette at 619.398.4436 for more information.

Do What It Takes!

BY CHRISTINE IMHOOF, EXCERPTS FROM A SPEECH GIVEN AT SUMMIT UU CHURCH, JULY 29, 2012

I want to tell you about my experience as a homeowner whose house is underwater. I hope it encourages others to stand up for themselves, even under the worst of circumstances.

At first, I gave \$3500 to a firm that promised me a loan modification – within days I heard that no one was getting their loans modified, and that no firm can guarantee it to you. I demanded my money back. I spoke to an attorney who told me I should declare bankruptcy. Then, I consulted with several real estate brokers about doing a short sale. They, of course, advised me I should do a short sale – they still get a commission!

At that time, I had been laid off, so I took unemployment benefits and started renting out two bedrooms in my house to foreign students. I moved my bedroom downstairs to the “family room” and set up some screens and hung a big shawl up to keep my privacy.

Then I heard about Obama's home modification program. I learned what the criteria for modification were: one was that your monthly payment could not be more than 31% of your monthly income. I learned I had a right to a copy of the deed, which showed that my mortgage had been sold to the Bank of New York. I thought I should negotiate the modification directly with them, but my mortgage service company said if I do, then I would violate their rules.

“Negotiate” is a tricky word. The mortgage servicing company, or bank, or whoever you make payments to, assigns a “negotiator” to you. That person will negotiate with the actual holder of your mortgage... You cannot negotiate the terms of the final modification agreement. Luckily, Obama's program includes the parameters the mortgage company must follow, so they HAD to work within those parameters.

They asked me to send them the last three months of bank statements, a list of monthly expenses, and a list of monthly income. I sent these and then heard nothing for two months. I started calling my assigned “negotiator” weekly. When I finally

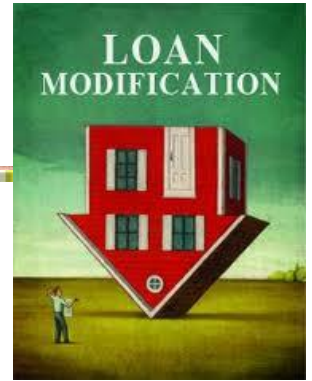
reached her, she told I did not qualify for a modification because I was receiving unemployment insurance. Because I had other income, I did not think that was true.

I learned that when told something that doesn't sound right or that you don't understand, ASK TO SPEAK TO A SUPERVISOR! I was also told that in order to qualify for a loan modification, I would have to stop making payments. That was an out-and-out lie.

To make sure I had enough income to meet the 31% of my monthly income, I advertised as a tutor. Within a month, I had two students. Then another, then two more. One of the students, a woman from Saudi Arabia, did not drive, so I offered to drive her to and from school for a fee. Now I'm driving two Saudi Arabian women to their classes – and earning some decent money!

My unemployment insurance ended after 99 weeks. By that time, I had scaled down on my budget – no cable TV, no magazine subscriptions, drought-resistant front and back yards, use coupons, drive the car only when necessary, and so on. I also have a small pension and finally qualified for social security, which gave me some breathing room, but not much. My new mantra became DO WHAT IT TAKES.

After one year and 4 months, I finally got a letter and a modification agreement, reducing my monthly payment substantially, deferring a large portion of my mortgage for 22 years, and still allowing me to pay principal and interest, and property taxes monthly, with an interest rate of 2%. ...I found out that, even if I have to declare bankruptcy, there is a way to keep my home. It's never “the end of the world!” Do what it takes!





**Everardo
Aguilar**

I never thought when the Board appointed me as this congregation's Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office ([UU-UNO](#)) Envoy that I would still be the "U.N. Guy" two decades later! I volunteered because I saw how the previous UU-UNO Envoy advocated for the goals of the United Nations (U.N.) and our Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office. I was impressed that the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was one of many non-governmental organizations (NGO) with offices at the United Nations.

I have long been an advocate for the U.N. and felt that the position of UU-UNO Envoy needed a younger voice. It seemed to me that the people most interested in the United Nations at First Church were the people who had actually witnessed World War II. The younger generation was not as educated or interested in this great organization.

I was determined to get younger people involved in the U.N. and to educate the congregation that the UUA had a presence as a religious community at the U.N. At the time, the UU-UNO was not funded by the UUA and relied entirely on memberships to stay afloat.

At the time of my appointment, I was a member of the Children's Religious Education Committee. It was decided through this connection that for United Nations Sunday, the children would sponsor the International Food Fair as a fundraiser for UNICEF. I purchased some UNICEF cookbooks from the U.N. Bookstore in Balboa Park and every year since then the children in their R.E. classes pick a country to represent, prepare a snack from that country and sell it on the patio during social hour on U.N. Sunday to raise funds for UNICEF.

Twenty Years of Being the "U.N. Guy"

BY EVERARDO AGUILAR, UU-UNO ENVOY

The Youth program helps as well by selling beverages as part of U.N. Sunday during the International Food Fair and they also donate proceeds from their annual Halloween Carnival and Haunted House to UNICEF. United Nations Sunday is the Sunday on or before October 24th which is United Nations Day. This year it is Oct 21st.

The children also participate in "Trick or Treat" for UNICEF and take their collection boxes with them for trick or treat to collect change for UNICEF. Collectively, our children and youth raises between \$700 to more than \$1,000 (I think our record was \$1,200) for UNICEF every year. Our church is the single largest contributor to UNICEF in San Diego County. I am very proud of our young people for that.

For several years, Muirlands School from La Jolla hosted the Model United Nations conference on the First Church campus. The Muirlands School program eventually became too large for our property and they had to find another facility for their program. The UU-UNO also sponsors an annual youth conference in the spring in New York City, at the United Nations Complex itself. There have been several youth selected from our congregation to participate in this conference over the years. Last year, we sent Victoria Sleetter to participate in this conference.



One of the reasons I've been the U.U.U.N.O. Envoy for as long as I have is because I firmly believe in our 6th U.U. Principle of The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; <http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/> AND I believe that achieving the goal articulated in that principle would be IMPOSSIBLE without an organization like the United Nations providing a forum for the nations of the world to meet in a neutral setting to address global issues as equals.

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