



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## General Assembly 2011 Report

BY Joan Cudhea

Eleven of our member delegates, one youth, our then incoming Church President, two ministers, and three staff attended the 2011 General Assembly of the UUA, held this past June in Charlotte, North Carolina. All the delegates prepared delightful written reports for the Denominational Relations Committee. Below is Angela Garcia-Sims' report:

"Several folks warned me about GA, about the plethora of offerings and competing attractions, about the need to pace myself. It didn't seem a big deal, since I had attended much bigger conferences. But no one warned me about the profound, gut-wrenching effect of engaging with thousands of people with similar values working together on issues emerging from my core values of social justice.

The opening session with the colorful parade of congregational flags blended spirituality, showmanship, and intellectual fireworks. Workshops on Visioning the World We Want to Live In with Linda Stout, Border Realities and Immigration Today with Enrique Morones and MALDEF (Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund) lawyer David Hinojosa, a fascinating and useful workshop on Media Skills for Changemakers; and another session on the UU funding program (in case we need significant money for a project).

Amazingly, each GA day topped the previous one. The skill building and intellectual content were enlightening and promised to be highly useful; the public witness and youth dance were fun. However, the spiritual and emotional impact of the worship sessions topped even that. The Synergy Building Worship was unlike anything I've ever experienced in worship; I left convinced that this would be the high point.

Karen Armstrong's Ware lecture was wonderful and gave life and warmth to her book on 12 Steps to a Compassionate Life. It turned out to be another bright light that led to an even greater blaze with the extraordinary Sunday worship. Kaaren Anderson and her minister husband invited us to think outside the box and play with an imaginary mega ball. The two tossed the imaginary ball back and forth to each other, to the choir and to the audience, opening us up to envision possibilities and potentialities. Then she delivered an amazing, heart-filled sermon connecting powerfully with the audi-

ence with stories of pain and love and a call to connect with others.

This had to be the peak, the greatest light, no? In tears and laughter, filled with love and hope when Karen finished her sermon, I was sure that the last plenary would be a calm, maybe even dry, affair tying up loose ends with the final report from Gini Courter, the moderator of the plenary sessions. Gini Courter gave a report to the delegates at the last plenary session that left me amazed once again. Throughout the plenary sessions, Gini had demonstrated a powerful command, leading us with a light touch, wit, and patience.

In her final report, she thanked the committee that organized the 2011 conference and pointed out that the committee members all looked alike, unlike the diversity held up as a goal by the UUA and the committee itself. She called on the organizers of the 2012 assembly to ensure that their committees reflected the diversity desired. Such remarkable honesty, courage, and love—she demonstrated a profound trust in the organizers present and future, in the assembly, and in herself. She trusted in the intelligence and good will of all to be able to understand and accept her comments without feeling hurt or reacting with hurt or anger. A brilliant, and loving performance and assembly.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the amazing 2011 General Assembly.

*For more reports, GA Report Back will be at First Church on September 18th after the second service.*



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## Welcome to this Exciting New Year

BY Rev. Kathleen Owens

Even though September is the ninth month in the year, it often feels like the start of a new year here at First Church. This year promises to be exciting and full of surprises for many reasons. The long-awaited for construction of the new building on the Hillcrest campus has begun (finally!). The first building in that space, Bard Hall, served this church well through fifty years of celebrations, memorials, meals, worship services and much more. The new hall will have more space and will be used more widely for programs that help fulfill the mission of First Church. We are envisioning a whole new way of using that precious space on Sundays to offer more to the members and friends of this community.

Another exciting addition is the expanded space at the South Bay campus. The UU presence is growing stronger in the South Bay and so are its worship and meeting needs. Recently First Church signed a three-year lease for the current space. More space was added because religious education (for both children and adults) required more room. This also means that the old religious education space can be expanded into a larger social hall space, making social time after the services even better.

Finally, First Church is also expanding its programs and small group ministry opportunities this year. Among other programs, both Arvid and I will be teaching more adult religious education classes and hosting more spiritual growth experiences throughout the coming year. And every Sunday there will be dynamic worship at both campuses.

This will be quite a year for First Church...lots of dust at both campuses to be sure, limited available space, of course and growing pains that are good signs of a vital and growing congregation. Don't miss out on all that is happening here – come and participate, grow with us and find more wholeness in your life. Welcome, welcome to an exciting and wonderful year!

## July Sermons

### Celebration Times:

#### Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

### September's Transformational Theme is Forgiveness and Reconciliation

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Sunday, September 4—Hillcrest Campus  
**"Reconciliation in the Workplace"**  
 - Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

Sunday, September 4—South Bay Campus  
**"Empathy"**  
 - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live).

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Sunday, September 11—Hillcrest Campus  
**"Healing from 9/11"**  
 - Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).

Sunday, September 11 —South Bay Campus  
**"Healing and 9/11"**  
 - Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

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Sunday, September 18—Hillcrest Campus  
**"Addiction, Grace and Recovery "**  
 - Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).  
 - September is National Recovery Month.  
 Addiction to substances and harmful behaviors is a spiritual issue that affects almost everyone.

Sunday, Sep 18—South Bay Campus  
**"Reconciliation in the Workplace"**  
 - Rev Kathleen Owens (pre-recorded).

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Sunday, September 25—Hillcrest Campus  
**"Mindfulness"**  
 - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)  
 - This is a sermon on the Fifth Step of Karen Armstrong's 12 Steps to A Compassionate Life.

Sunday, Sep 25—South Bay Campus  
**"Addiction, Grace and Recovery"**  
 - Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded).

## Behavior Guidelines

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

It's the time of year when we are busy getting ready for the beginning of the new Church School Year. There are curricula to get ready for the class leaders, leader handbooks and trainings to organize, and lots of brochures and forms to duplicate and send to our families. While I was re-reading and preparing the Classroom Behavior Guidelines that we ask all children and their parents to sign, I realized that the ideas expressed could in many ways relate to all of us. It felt a little like reading Robert Fulghum's *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

Here are the guidelines. I hope you can see that we would all do well to follow them. I've only removed the one under the safety heading that spoke of only leaving the classroom with permission and supervision.

**1. Safety is first.**

Rough play and running are not appropriate at church. Help look out after one another.

**2. We believe that each person is important.**

Speak and act with respect for classmates, teachers, and all members of the congregation.

**3. We believe that all people should be treated fairly.**

Share or pass when it's your turn. Listen and wait during other's turns.

**4. We believe that our church is a place of acceptance and growth.**

Participate with enthusiasm (or give it a try). Include everyone in activities and planning. Make an effort to come -- your teacher has

**5. We believe that each person must be free to search for understanding and for what is good and right.**

There are times to cooperate and times to work independently. Put-downs and name calling are not OK.

**6. We believe that each person should have a vote about what concerns him or her.**

Share your ideas. Disagree with people's ideas, but do not criticize the person.

**7. We believe that it is our task to help make the world a place that is peaceful, fair and free.**

Do your best to get along with others. Ask for help when you need it.

**8. We believe in caring for our environment.**

Be careful with our space, furniture and materials. Use only what you need. Help clean up.



Of course we do have an adult version of these guidelines to help guide our interactions with each other. You can see our congregations Covenant of Good Relations on the church Web Site at <http://www.firstusandiego.org/covenant-of-good-relations>. That document is our promise to each other of how we will be with each other here in the church and goes beyond the basics of behavior in our children's behavior guidelines. We ask our children to read and sign these guidelines anew each year so that we can all be reminded of these expectations. Maybe it would be good for all of us to take a minute at the start of this new church year to re-read our Covenant of Good Relations so we can begin the year reminded of our covenant with each other.

## Event Scheduling at First Church

BY Robie Evans, Director of Operations

The current Event Scheduler is Käthe Larick, who has been covering this position for the past fifteen months. Käthe is also the Youth Programs Coordinator and will continue to work this position Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. She is most happy about transitioning out of scheduling, because this means she won't be on the job seven days a week any longer. Many thanks to Käthe for filling both of these positions so admirably.

Our new Event Scheduler for the Hillcrest Campus is Jenny Epler. Starting in September, Jenny will be here at church covering this 10-hour-per-week position on Mondays and Fridays from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm in the church office behind the

reception desk. Jenny has been seen at church every Easter for the past dozen or so years as the cellist in the string quartet. She maintains a private cello studio at her home in El Cajon and has played with the San Diego Symphony, Orchestra Nova and is the past Executive Director with the San Diego Young Artists Symphony.

Jenny will be responsible for maintaining the use of the facility by affiliated organizations, ministry teams, committees, and many outside organizations. She will also work with the current part-time staff Event Coordinator, Cara Cast, who does room set-up and tear down and facilitates those events which need an on-site coordinator.



**to create community  
to nurture spiritual growth  
to act on our values  
to help heal the world**

# Urban Agriculture

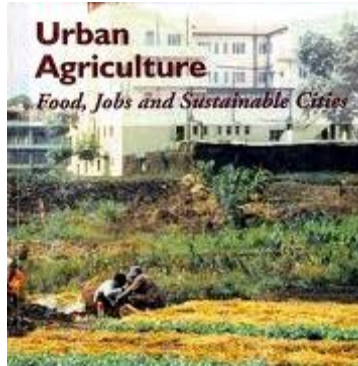
BY Laura Hershey

Currently, people in San Diego have the opportunity to grow fruit and vegetables on their own properties, or in community gardens. Beyond that, they are largely dependent on pricey farmer's markets and the 'Industrial Agricultural Complex' in order to feed themselves. All that is about to change. San Diego has received a federal grant to increase the access to locally grown, sustainable food.

<http://www.cdc.gov/CommunitiesPuttingPreventiontoWork/communities/index.htm>

The urban agriculture regulations first draft will be revealed in October at the Land Use and Housing subcommittee meeting of the San Diego City Council. Citizens of San Diego are welcome to attend and offer three minutes of input at that meeting. Here is an opportunity to act on UU values. Social justice will be enhanced, for more people will then be able to afford organic, humanely raised, high quality eggs and milk without driving a car to an expensive store.

Currently, only San Diegans with enough space to keep chickens fifty feet from every human habitation are allowed to raise chickens. That means most properties in San Diego are too small to raise chickens legally. The planner is looking at welcoming a handful of hens with zero space required from the owners' house, as long as the usual setbacks are kept from the property lines, as if you were building a shed. (You are going to have to buy or build a coop for your birds, to protect the hens from dogs and wildlife.)



Also, no goats are allowed within San Diego city limits outside of agriculturally zoned neighborhoods. The planner writing the draft of the new urban agriculture regulations is thinking to imitate the goat keeping rules in the city of Seattle, Washington. Goat owners buy a license like a dog license for their goat in Seattle. No horns allowed, and male goats must be neutered.

You can help decide the details of the new Urban Agriculture rules by participating in the October meeting of the Land Use and Housing subcommittee meeting of San Diego City Council. As soon as the location and date is announced, I will let you know if you leave your email address with me: [drhershey@cox.net](mailto:drhershey@cox.net)



At City Council Meetings, even those of us who prefer not to make a three minute speech can be counted by showing up and filling in a short form with your reason for attending. Those who wish to speak should practice their speech ahead of time. Remember to stay positive.

There will be An Adult Religious Education Class for Urban Agriculture on Tuesday, September 20th, at 6:30pm, in Room 113, at First Church

I hope that you will volunteer to speak up for healthy food that causes as little consumption of fossil fuels as possible. These new regulations go a long way in enhancing Earth stewardship.



"Nunsense" is a musical comedy with book, music, and lyrics by Dan Goggin, who originated "Nunsense" as a successful line of greeting cards. He later expanded the "Nunsense" concept into a cabaret that ran for 38 weeks, and eventually into a full-length musical. The original off-Broadway production ran for 3,672 performances and became the second-longest-running Off-Broadway show in history.

Winner of four Outer Critics Circle Awards including Best Off Broadway Musical in its original New York production, this hilarious international hit was revived in New York with a male cast "Nunsense A Men!" The premise of the show is a fund raiser put on by the Little Sisters of Hoboken to raise money to bury sisters accidentally poisoned by the convent cook, Sister Julia (Child of God).

One reason for the show's success is that it has an all-female cast and none of the players are required to be model thin or beautiful in the traditional sense. Bluntly put, this is the ultimate showcase for middle-aged broads with a good set of pipes.

From "The Flying Nun" to "Sister Act," women in habits have long been lively pop culture fodder. Another reason for the success of "Nunsense" is the ubiquity of Catholicism; but universal good reviews prove you don't have to be Catholic to enjoy "Nunsense" .

## UUs Take the Veil this October

Robie Evans, our church administrator will be making her directorial debut at First UU Church of San Diego but she is neither a "Novice nor a Postulate" when it comes to directing musical theater. Ironically, Robie's acting career began here at this church at the age of 10 with "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" playing Lucy (of course). She was Artistic Director for "Odd Couple," "Mousetrap," "Cheaper By The Dozen," and Artistic Director/ Music Director of such musicals as, "The Sound of Music," "The King and I," and "Nunsense." She has worked with the Pine Hills Players in Julian and was Artistic Director for four years at the Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center.

Carolyn Watson Dubisch will design the "Nunsense" sets. Carolyn is an artist, illustrator, author and journalist. She's been working with Looking Glass Theatre over the past year and helped create sets for the spring production of "Seussical". In her two decades as a commercial artist, she's created giant vegetables for a Washington, DC Museum, helped create two dozen tiny hot air balloons for a Vegas show and designed alien bird-men for Star Wars games. A writer and illustrator for numerous children's books and magazines including Highlights for Children and Hopscotch, she also writes and draws award winning web-comics.

Pam Rainey will coordinate costumes and Ray Evans will design the lights. He worked with the Pine Hills Players in Julian and at the Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center as Lighting Designer, Set Designer and Scenic Carpenter."

You may be "Nun the wiser\*" but we guarantee you will laugh yourself silly at the Looking Glass Theater Production of "Nunsense" opening October 7 and running Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 pm through October 15. For more information call 619-298-9978 x8003, click <http://www.lookingglasssd.org/> or search for us on Facebook. Tickets will be available on the upper patio starting mid September or online at our website.

\*Warning: "Nunsense" can be habit forming!

Since his arrival from the Eno River UU Church in Durham, North Carolina, the Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, has proven to be a warm and wonderful lead minister to First Church. He has led this congregation through some very difficult times.

For instance, in the last major capital campaign, which is usually a volunteer member effort, he chose to play a very prominent role, raising more than twice as much money as in previous capital campaigns.

Prior to that, he motivated every group in the church to participate in a strategic planning process that identified and prioritized the real needs of First Church, and planned how those needs could be met through fund raising.

He was instrumental in building a UU Fellowship in the South Bay area. First, he selected extremely capable staff, Mar Cardenas and Kristin Kuriga, to lead the South Bay effort. He followed this up by having the church's ministers bring not only the First Church Sunday services to Chula Vista but by having many other church services performed there, as well.

Not long after he arrived in San Diego, Rev. Arvid helped form a new clerical group called Faith Leaders for Peace. I'll never forget how, the day after a huge rally was held in Balboa Park against the war, Faith Leaders for Peace gathered a large group of lay people and clerics in their vestments and marched silently across the bridge into Balboa Park to rally in front of the United Nations building there. Arvid devoted a year to active leadership of this group, and also provided support services through First Church, before turning it over to his successor.

He has urged First Church congregants not only to donate occasional amounts to needy folks in the community, but to also devote every penny raised in the Sunday collection to a different group each month. This amounts to over \$72,000 this past year being given away.

In addition, he encouraged the use of Bard Hall by others in the community from the Art Guild to the

## A Tribute to a Remarkable Man

BY John Falchi

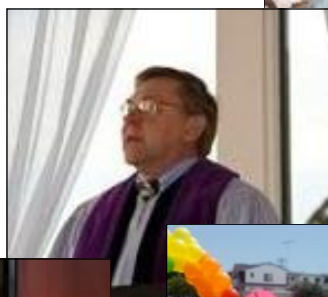
Matters of Controversy Political Series. He has been there to welcome groups to First Church, such as when eleven different religions participated in the Meeting House in a special service for peace. More recently, he did the welcome when the Pachamama Alliance held its "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing The Dream" Symposium at First Church.

Amidst all of this activity, he completed a new book on Unitarian Universalist theologies. Excerpts have appeared in this publication and are available at the First Church website. He is a thoughtful intellectual, as most of his sermons attest to.

On his return from a recent trip to the Philippines, he spoke humbly of the changes that were taking place within him because of his ventures outside of his comfort zone, specifically his travels to Mexico,

Romania, and the Philippines. He described to the congregation the tremendous advantages UUs in the United States have in transport, church buildings and full-time ministries, compared to what UUs enjoy in the Philippines. He went on to explain the common religious ground which we nevertheless share with the UUs there, in educational attainment, economic security, and some religious practices.

Furthermore, he mentioned how working with these good people while he was there had deeply affected him, internally, and he made it clear that he has returned home a changed man. From the sincere way he described what has been happening to him, I believe that First Church now has an even better and more deeply experienced person leading this church. I, for one, am most thankful for this.



**Staff**

Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead Minister  
 Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister  
 Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister  
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations  
 Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry  
 Käthe Larick, Youth Program Coordinator  
 Chris Christenson, Communications / DB / AE Coordinator  
 Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator and  
 South Bay Ministry Leader  
 Kenneth F. Herman, Director of Music  
 Suzette Southfox, Director of Membership and Development  
 Alice King, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator  
 Rev. Dr. Carolyn and Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti  
 Patty Eshleman, Director, Unitarian Cooperative Preschool

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