



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## Embracing Our Complexities, Part II

by Sue Magidson, Intern Minister

How our words return to haunt us! Less than a week after preaching on “Embracing our Complexities,” I faced an unexpected complexity of my own: how to be a Jewish-UU minister in a UU congregation that observes Yom Kippur on Yom Kippur. What’s complex about that? Here’s the back story...

My Jewish-UU family never observed the Jewish High Holy Days. I grew up knowing little about them, except that Rosh Hashanah was the Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur was a day of atonement, whatever that meant. Twelve years ago, when I wanted to learn more about these most sacred Jewish holidays, I faced a peculiar challenge: the High Holy Days are synagogue holidays, and the only time I’d been to synagogue was with my UU Sunday School class! Bravely, I began attending services, only to find myself lost, frustrated, and alienated. The services went on for hours and hours – most of the time, I had no idea what page we were on, what melody we were singing, or what any of it meant. To complicate things further, I felt as though I *should* feel at home (after all, these were “my people!”). One year, I ran away to the redwoods in frustration, determined to do the spiritual work at the core of the holiday *my way*.

And yet, I persisted. Each year, I learned a few more melodies. Each year, the rituals felt a little less alien. I learned some Hebrew, which helped immensely. I found a Jewish congregation whose English translations spoke to my heart. And little by little, I began to look forward to observing these holidays in Jewish community. I yearned for the haunting melodies we only sing once a year. I found the rituals spiritually transformative. Eventually, these holidays became so important to me that observing them became a condition of accepting the invitation to be your intern – and I *really* wanted to be your intern!

What never occurred to me was that I’d be interning at a UU congregation that observes Yom Kippur on Yom Kippur – that I’d have to choose between observing Yom Kippur in a Jewish community or leading a Yom Kippur service for my UU congregation. What to do? I love sharing Judaism with UUs; for years I’ve led UU High Holy Days-themed services – between the holidays. I’m impressed that you observe Yom Kippur on Yom Kippur; I know no other UU congregation that does so. But observing Yom Kippur with you would have meant leaving Jewish services early – before the metaphorical “Book of Life” is closed for the year. Further, I feared that I would be unable to fully immerse myself in nine hours of worship, knowing that I’d need to save some energy to lead worship.

With the encouragement of Arvid and Kathleen, I sat with two questions: “What do I need?” and “What will help me to best serve you?” After much reflection, knowing that others were available to lead your service, I chose to honor our initial agreement – to observe this most sacred day with other Jews. I believe that I will better serve you as minister for having taken this once-a-year opportunity for spiritual replenishment and deepening. With gratitude for this precious time, I hope that you too find ways to honor and embrace your complexities.



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## Preaching This Year

BY Rev. Kathleen Owens

As Arvid discussed in his September column, we are entering into the third year of our Transformational Theme-based worship. We have been following this three-year cycle of monthly topics, first developed at the UU Church in Tulsa, OK, in much the same way that other denominations follow a traditional Liturgical calendar. They have served as rich fodder for conversations. Our Spiritual Friendship groups have these themes as their discussion topics as a way to engage with it more deeply and personally. Our Home Connections also use these themes for further reflection through stories and activities for the family.

In addition to these theme-based sermons, I will also present a sermon series on The Necessity of Virtue. In June, at the UUA General Assembly, I attended a 12-hour workshop series on this topic presented by the Senior Minister from All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, the Rev. Dr. Galen Guengerich. Even as I sat listening and learning, I knew I wanted to somehow preach on these subjects and share them with this community. How do we decide what to do and how to live? How do we determine what we ought to do? This series will explore the idea that the way to happiness is through the practice of virtues that eventually lead us to "salvation not by grace or by faith, but salvation by character." Virtue strives for individual moral excellence. The virtues we will explore include Wisdom, Courage, Compassion, Justice, Temperance, Transcendence and Hope – all through the lens of our Unitarian Universalist faith. I hope you will join with me as we grow together.

## October Sermons

### Celebration Times:

#### Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

October's **Transformational Theme** is  
**Creation**

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#### October 3—Hillcrest

##### The Destruction of Creation

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)

#### October 3—South Bay

##### Joyfully Letting Down Our Walls

- Sue Magidson, Intern Minister (live)

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#### October 10—Hillcrest

##### The Eighth Deadly Sin

- Rev. William Schulz, Pulpit Guest (live)  
Former president of UUA and Amnesty International.

#### October 10—South Bay

##### The Destruction of Creation

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (pre-recorded)

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#### October 17—Hillcrest

##### And On the Seventh Day

- Sue Magidson, Intern Minister (live)

#### October 17—South Bay

##### The Eighth Deadly Sin

- Rev. William Schulz, Pulpit Guest (pre-recorded)

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#### October 24—Hillcrest

##### Wisdom

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)  
First in a series on Virtue

#### October 24—South Bay

##### And On the Seventh Day

- Sue Magidson, Intern Minister (live)

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#### October 31—Hillcrest

##### Courage

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)  
Second in a series on Virtue

#### October 31—South Bay

##### Wisdom

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (pre-recorded)



## Making Hate Mainstream

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead minister

Longtime New York Times war correspondent Chris Hedges described what he has observed about inter-ethnic conflicts that lead to war, ethnic cleansing and genocide in the book, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*. This book, despite the title, is one of the most powerful anti-war books I have ever read:

*"The ethnic conflicts and insurgencies of our time, whether between Serbs and Muslims or Hutus and Tutsis, are not religious wars. They are not clashes between cultures or civilizations, nor are they the result of ancient ethnic hatreds. They are manufactured wars, born out of the collapse of civil societies, perpetuated by fear, greed, and paranoia and they are run by gangsters, who rise up from the bottom of their own societies and terrorize all, including those they purport to protect."*

All these wars are preceded by years of "hate, propaganda and lies." I fear that there is a lot of hate propaganda in our civil and political life today as immigrants and Muslims are demonized by mainstream politicians, religious leaders, and media figures. I think the motives are mixed, but mostly base. Politicians use messages of hate to inflame and engage their voter base and call on people's fear for their votes. Religious leaders can get national attention by saying, as some have, that Islam is a religion of hate or not a true religion at all. Talk show hosts and public commentators seem to compete with each other to say more extreme and hateful things about Latinos and Muslims for a high

stakes game of ratings, book sales and influence. Lost in all of that are human beings who like the rest of us wish for peace, safety, economic security and the right to practice their faith and raise their families. Laws like that in Arizona and the deliberate distortion of facts in the 9-11 Mosque controversy are having a corrosive effect on our civil discourse. Hateful speech becomes more and more the norm and more and more acceptable. It leads to the human rights abuses we are seeing in our country today....and it could lead to much worse.

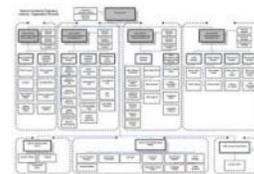


We are not immune from this hatred in San Diego. In a previous blog, I wrote about my dismay upon seeing news coverage of expensively coiffed and dressed white people at an exclusive country club calling for undocumented immigrants to be shot. In Temecula, in the name of the Prince Of Peace and under our nation's flag, people are bringing dogs to intimidate peaceful worshippers at a mosque.

As people of faith we have some things we can do. We must, kindly and forcefully, challenge stereotypes and false statements when we hear them. We can refuse to vote for any candidate who tries to leverage fear and hate. We can reach out to people in these groups to know and understand them. Under this convulsion of hatred is fear. We are called to love. And "perfect love casts out fear."

For more thoughts from Arvid, see the [Minister's Blog](http://firstuusandiego.org) at [firstuusandiego.org](http://firstuusandiego.org).

# What the Staff Does



The church office has had several shifts in staff and responsibilities. In an effort to keep members and friends of First Church informed, we present the following staff members and their responsibilities. Except where indicated, all positions are full-time.

## **Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube**, Lead Minister

- ✧ Oversees worship and operations of the church.
- ✧ Works with Worship and Program Ministry Team, Generosity Ministry Team and Denominational Affairs Ministry Team.
- ✧ Supervises the Associate Minister, the Director of Music, the South Bay Ministry Coordinator and co-supervises the Intern Minister.

## **Rev. Kathleen Owens**, Associate Minister

- ✧ Head of staff, supervises most of staff
- ✧ Works with the Social Justice, Caring, and Community Life Ministry Teams
- ✧ Collaborates with the Director of Operations for the day-to-day operations
- ✧ Also works with the Worship and Program and Generosity Ministry Teams

## **Karen Walter**, Director of Operations

- ✧ Oversees the day-to-day operations of the institution, including human resources, building maintenance, finances, parking lot and other related areas.
- ✧ Supervises support staff
- ✧ Works with many lay volunteers in various tasks
- ✧ Manages our consultants, including bookkeeping, sound, custodial and Bard Hall building project.

## **Liz Jones**, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministries

- ✧ Religious education, including children, youth and adult.
- ✧ Supervises Youth Program Coordinator, Adult RE, Children's RE leaders at our South Bay Campus, childcare workers at our Hillcrest campus

## **Ken Herman**, Director of Music and the Organist

- ✧ Supervises and works with Dan Ratelle, our part-time adult choir director
- ✧ Works with Andrea Newall, Lynn Mendoza Kahn and Roy Attridge, the mostly volunteer directors of various church choirs
- ✧ Works with Dana Decker, our Contemporary Music Director

## **Suzette Southfox**, Membership and Development Director

- ✧ Works with teams of volunteers to ensure visitors are welcomed,
- ✧ Works with members and helps with membership integration
- ✧ Works with the Generosity Ministry Team on fundraising and development

## **Alice King**, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Coordinator

- ✧ Serves our young adults, aged 18-35, on the First Church Hillcrest campus and several college campuses in the San Diego area.

## **Kathe Larick**, Youth Program Coordinator, part-time

- ✧ Part-time for junior and senior high school youth.
- ✧ 8 hrs/week as the scheduler.

## **Chris Christenson**, support staff

- ✧ ¾ time database manager and communications staff person.
- ✧ ¼ time adult religious education coordinator.

## **Abby Koch**, support staff, office and ministers' assistant.

- ✧ Edits the Window and order of service
- ✧ Prepares and runs slides for the Hillcrest Sunday worship services
- ✧ Provides support for ministers and Director of Operations
- ✧ and more tasks than can be named here

## **Kristen Kuriga** Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator, part-time

- ✧ Serves both the Hillcrest and South Bay campuses.

## **Mar Cardenas**, South Bay Ministry Team Coordinator, part-time

- ✧ Co-leads worship on Sunday mornings,
- ✧ Involved in South Bay Campus' many programs.

## **Sue Magidson**, Ministerial Intern.

- ✧ Works closely with Arvid and Kathleen, as well as other staff members as she learns and leads ministry in many areas within the church.

# Your Caring Ministry Team "Cares"

"May love be the spirit of this church and service be its prayer" is the core of the mission for the Caring Ministry Team at First Church. We continue to expand the ways in which we serve and reach out to members of our church community

The **Care Advisory Group** meets regularly with Rev. Kathleen Owens to discuss care concerns and policies. Support groups are also sponsored.

Our **ministers**, Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube and Rev. Kathleen Owens are available for pastoral counseling as well as home and hospital visits.

**Lay Ministers** are church members who have been trained in listening skills. A Lay Minister is available as a caring listener after each Sunday service as well as one-on-one listening as assigned by Rev. Kathleen Owens. The Lay Ministers meet once a month as a support group and for further training under the guidance of Rev. Owens and Marla English.

The **Practical Care Network (PCN)** provides many services for our church members:

1. We have **volunteers** who provide rides, meals, and other tasks upon request. To **request assistance, call the church office and request extension 8011**, the PCN voice mailbox, and submit your request. Joy Gorian, our "match maker", makes every effort to find a volunteer to fill a request. If possible, at least a week's notice expedites this process.

We also welcome **new volunteers**. Volunteer forms are available on the care information shelf in the church office, on the care information table on the patio on Sundays, and on the church web site.

2. Rev. Owens has established a **phone outreach** program for church members who have difficulty attending worship services and/or functions on campus yet want to be connected with the church community. If you wish to be on the list to be called or know of **someone** who you believe would benefit by being on the list, or if you wish to volunteer to be a caller, contact Peggy Holl or Kathleen Owens.

3. **Medical** equipment – walkers, shower chairs, raised toilet seats, companion wheelchairs etc. – are available for short term loan. Contact John or Peggy Holl.

4. **Care Resource Information** is available at a care **information** table on the patio on Sundays as well as on the book shelves in the church office, across from the white mailbox unit.

5. **Super Cards**, when indicated, are available for signing at a table on the patio on Sundays. Contact one of the ministers and/or Peggy Holl if you are aware of a concern or celebration that you believe would merit a super card.

6. First Church has a **Blood Bank account** under the name of UUCH. If you donate blood, consider adding it to our church account, and conversely, if you need blood, check the availability in the church account.

We are a community that cares!

## Bard Hall Goodbye Ritual

### Your Presence is Requested

Save Sunday, Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> for the Bard Hall Goodbye Ritual at 7:00 p.m. in Bard Hall. Led by the Rev. Kathleen Owens and lay leaders, this will be an interactive time of sharing memories, saying a good "goodbye" and a good "hello" to welcome the deconstruction and new construction that will be with us for a while. You don't want to miss this evening event. Child care will be available if requested by Sunday, Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>.



# Solstice Celebration on Sabbatical

BY Suzette Southfox

About 15 years ago, the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle of First UU Church produced our first Winter Solstice Celebration. The ritual was performed theatre-in-the-round style over three nights in Bard Hall. Winter Solstice is but one of eight Holy Days in the Pagan Wheel of the Year, but for many, it's the most beloved. Perhaps it's the magic of twinkle lights on a cold winter's night, or the chance to sing childhood carols with Pagan lyrics.

Over the years, thousands of people have been deeply moved by our special UU Pagan solstice worship. In 2005, this celebration moved into the Meeting House for a one-night worship experience. For many, the community gathering, magical characters, roaring bonfire, music and shared hot wassail on the patios before the ritual were just as important as the ritual itself. While many attended simply for the entertainment of the spectacle, many more considered this a sacred event.

For the organizers, producers, and kindred Spirits of the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle, Winter Solstice has always been a time of deep personal sacrifice and spiritual rebirth. This one-night ritual takes six months of planning, over 500 hours of labor and the work of least 100 volunteers. This year, we will be taking a rest and will not be producing Winter Solstice.

There are many reasons for this sabbatical. Most volunteers have worked tirelessly, without a break, for over a decade. We know it is a healthy thing to pause, rest, and renew a spiritual practice and this is the perfect year to

rest. The reality and logistics of the campus construction offer unique challenges to our regular design, and it will take a while to accommodate to the limitations that construction will present.

However, have no fear; we WILL have Winter Solstice in 2011, fence or no fence. We will also be offering tips, ideas, suggestions and simple rituals so families can keep the Solstice in a personal way, at home, in small gatherings. In the meantime, the spirituality circle will be producing our annual Samhain (pronounced Sow-in) Memorial Worship, on Saturday, October 30. This is a chance to experience one of the other eight Pagan Holy Days and see our community *offerenda* in full nighttime glory. Stop by the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle table on the Sunday patio or email [suzette@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:suzette@firstuusandiego.org) for UU Pagan Winter Solstice suggestions.

Merry Meet, Merry Part, and Merry Meet Again. Blessed Be.





**Angela:** You may know that many of us quiet folks across the country have tried to do our bit to counter the people protesting the Muslim community center.

Here in San Diego, my Unitarian Universalist ministers reached out to the Muslim community and invited them to speak at our services. The UUs of South Bay community organized a candlelight vigil at the local mosque on September 11, 2010 to show our support for them and counter the anti-American mean-spirited protesters in Manhattan.

The Imam and his congregants had decided to cancel the usual Saturday service because it fell on 9/11 and they were afraid of attacks or protesters. They decided to go ahead with their service when Mar Cárdenas, the coordinator of our UU campus, encouraged them to proceed.

They prepared delicious snacks for us and set out chairs and candles to help us with our vigil. They even invited us to join them inside for prayers. We shared an experience I never expected—the beauty and mystery of witnessing solemn praying by a very different community.

I learned how much we have in common. Our basic values are very similar, their children are as beautiful and as rambunctious as those in my family, the Koran shares elements from the Old Testament and the Torah, and their scripture includes calls for openness to the ideas of others.

It was wonderful to be able to support them in exercising their right to worship according to their religion. I felt humbled and powerful that I could exercise my right as an American to demonstrate my support for the freedom of another community to worship as their tradition decreed. It brought me closer to my religious community, my fellow Unitarian Universalists, and closer to a people I would otherwise not have had a chance to meet.

## Standing on the Side of Love with the Muslim Community

BY Angela Garcia-Simms and Mar Cardenas

**Mar:** My heart sank when I heard my Muslim friend Sarah tell everyone at our potluck that Imam Taha had decided to close the Islamic Center on 9/11 out of fear that the mosque could be targeted that day. Sarah, a Muslim Latina and the rest of the Unitarian Universalists who attended the Wednesday potluck then made the decision to be at the mosque and have a vigil to show the local Muslim community our support.

On Thursday, the plan was put on hold. The imam had received some hate-filled calls. On Friday, it was decided to go ahead with our plans. I had 24 hours to get as many UUs there as possible! I set up the event on Facebook, invited every UU in my network and sent an invitation to the UU's of South Bay listserve. In the meantime Sarah and her team got busy planning a meal for us to show their gratitude. The mosque was not closed on that day after all.

Almost 30 UUs came, most of them wearing our cheerfully yellow SSL shirts. The women wore headscarves to show the respect we felt for our new friends' faith. We were invited to partake in the evening prayer session during which Imam Taha spoke gratitude-filled words about our group. We laughed and played and sang silly chants together.

When Sarah came to our Chula Vista campus to speak last Sunday, she told us how everyone in her group was in tears after we left. Now we were ALL in tears too! For that one day we were all Muslims, we were all human beings holding each other close in times of adversity. Blessed be all our Muslim friends.



**Staff**

Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead Minister  
 Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister  
 Sue Magidson, Intern Minister  
 Martha "Mar" Cárdenas, South Bay Ministry Leader  
 Karen Walter, 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  
 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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Order of Service submissions: [os@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:os@firstuusandiego.org)

The Window submissions (Church bulletin):

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