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FirstWords

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SAYING GOODBYE

BY REV. JENNIFER CHANNIN, ASSISTANT MINISTER

The thing about writing articles for monthly newsletters is that they're written weeks before they'll be read. In this case, I'm writing my farewell letter to you, my congregation, in May, even though my last day in the office will be at the end of June. I'm not completely ready yet to say "goodbye," and I have another whole month to become ready; however, words must be written.

There are many approaches to saying "goodbye." One of the less painful—for the person leaving, at least—is to not say goodbye at all. In dating, this is called "ghosting," and at parties I've heard it referred to as a "french exit" (my apologies to the French). It has the advantage of avoiding all the emotional discomfort of tearful farewells, difficult conversations, and the awkward sensation that occurs when the person you've just said goodbye to is parked in the same direction as you and you have to walk together for several more minutes.

What I'm doing is rather the opposite of a *french exit* or *ghosting*. Since learning in early April that my ministry here will soon come to a close, I've been in a protracted state of leave-taking. And, since I can't avoid it, I'm determined to lean in to this prolonged farewell, for whatever wisdom and grace it might offer me and you. If that means the last months I spend with you are punctuated by uncomfortable emotions and awkward silences, then at least I'm am spending them in good company! I think there's a sermon to be written about leaning in to awkward silences, but it will have to wait.

Some of you have gotten to know me very well since I joined you as Assistant Minister in August, 2014, and I've gotten to know you, too. Social Justice leaders, Wisdom Circle facilitators, Membership, Young Adult, Lifespan, and Racial Justice leaders—we've worked together closely, shared joys and sorrows, experienced failures and triumphs, and collaborated on projects exciting and mundane. You've made my ministry possible, and I hope I've helped you experience First Church in a deeper and more fulfilling way. Saying goodbye to you is painful, but simple. I know what to say: I love you. I appreciate your passion and commitment to our work of shared ministry. I wish you continued success in the projects we've begun, and I trust you and know that the church is strong in your hands. You've sent me letters and emails expressing gratitude for my ministry and sadness at my

leaving, and I'll treasure these messages as affirmations of the connection and calling I've experienced here at First Church, and hope to experience elsewhere in other ministries.

Many others of you—this is, after all, a very large church—only know me through my sermons and writings, or through brief interactions on Sunday mornings. Saying goodbye to you is more complicated, and it's somewhat harder. There are many people in this congregation I was looking forward to building relationships with over time. I've known glimpses of you—your aspirations, your stories, and your contributions to music and community life. And you've given me a gift of immeasurable worth. The privilege of leading worship twice a month, of teaching classes, of leading retreats, of writing essays and articles, and knowing that there are hundreds of you who are ready to listen, read, and engage with my creative, intellectual, and spiritual offerings—this has been one of the greatest joys of my life. I never feel more "myself" than when I am sharing with others that which I value most deeply—whether it's through a sermon, song, workshop, or essay. So many of you have told me how my words impacted you, or you've engaged me with questions, or with stories of your own. I know how rare a thing it is to be able to share of one's self and be respected, heard, and appreciated. Thank you for that gift.

I'll say more words of goodbye in the coming weeks. I have many things I want to say to the staff and fellow ministers I've so loved working with, but that will happen at another time. It's been a privilege, and a joy to serve this congregation, and you'll remain forever in my heart. And, if you find yourself, after these words have been written and spoken, walking next to me as I walk towards my car, you're welcome to strike up a new conversation!

With love,
Jennifer

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JUNE AT FIRST CHURCH

BY REV. KATHLEEN OWENS, LEAD MINISTER

We tend to think of summer as a time when things slow down a bit—and, for some, it may be true. School is out for the season in some districts, folks take vacations or do different activities in the summer—camping on the weekends, staying up later, spending more time at the beach or in the park. And, while we have fewer activities (not as many religious education classes, no choirs in the services), we still have a lot happening. I hope you'll participate in what's offered. Here are some highlights:

- **The Annual Meeting is June 12th.** Board members are elected and the church's budget is presented, discussed, and voted on. Special this year; I'll share more information about the recent staff transitions, and future plans for our programs.
- **Father's Day is June 19th.** The service will be **Youth Sunday**, led by our Youth, Rev. Jennifer Channin, and Káthe Larick. It's also Jennifer's last Sunday, and we'll have a farewell social hour to thank her for her ministry at First Church.
- **General Assembly (our denomination's Annual Meeting) is in Columbus, Ohio and runs from June 22nd through the 26th.** Many members and staff will attend the workshops, business meetings, worship services, and do a service project together. This is a great time for learning together, meeting new people, and being inspired for the coming year.
- **Saturday, June 25th, at 4PM**, in the Meeting House, you can watch a livecast of the **Ware Lecture** give by Krista Tippett. The Ware Lecture is considered the keynote address of General Assembly.
- **Sunday, June 26th,** Affiliate Minister, the Rev. Jim Grant, will lead combined, both-campus, worship services (9:30 and 11:30) at our Hillcrest campus.
- **July 3rd** begins our Summer Worship and Activities schedule, which continues through Sunday, August 28th. Please see the Summer Services [article](#) on page four for more details.

Though many of our committees, programs, and events are minimal during the summer months, we continue to gather for worship, inspiration, and community building every Sunday morning. I look forward seeing you.

Faithfully,

Kathleen

June Sermon Messages

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30a and 11:30a (ASL Interpretation)

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

June's Transformational Theme is Joy

June 5, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"Acting From the Center for Change"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

"The World of Dew"

Rev. Jennifer Channin, *Assistant Minister*

June 12, 2016

Hillcrest Services—Children's RE Leader Appreciation

"God Is an Adventure"

Megan Dowdell, *Intern Minister*

South Bay Service—

"Now Let Us Sing!"

Rev. Ian W. Riddell,

Minister of Music and Worship Arts

June 19, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"The Joy of Youth"

Rev. Jennifer Channin, *Assistant Minister*

South Bay Service—

"In Honor of Men"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

June 26, 2016

Hillcrest Services—

"The Joy of Acceptance"

Rev. Jim Grant, *Affiliate Minister*

South Bay Service—

Combined service at Hillcrest campus

Note: this is the Summer issue of First Words. For the July and August Sermon Schedules, please check [The Window](#) (<http://bit.ly/1ssZtcf>), our weekly newsletter. Look for the next issue of FirstWords in early September, 2016.



FLOWERS (AND DIRT) IN THE FIELD OF FAMILY MINISTRY

BY DR. MELISSA JAMES, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about family, and multigenerational ministry in the context of our church. I look around our congregation and see flowers blooming where seeds have been sown. Relationships that span decades, music classes that bridge generations, new leaders emerging to support our growing family and multigenerational offerings. Some of these seeds have been sown in the 2 years I've been here, but many were sown long ago. I celebrate these flowers of multigenerational community, and family ministry.

As any good gardener or farmer knows, however, if you want healthy plants, it's actually the soil that is the champion. So, as we move into a summer with expanded space to build community and relationship, I invite us to think about the "why" that builds the foundation for family and multigenerational ministry at First Church. In particular, I offer four benefits of multigenerational community adapted from the work of Drs. Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross:

- **Belonging is central:**

It can be said for all of us, but particularly for children and youth, there's a deep need for them to be known, to be accepted as they are, to feel valued—in other words, to belong. One of my favorite types of moments on Sunday morning is to greet a child by name and watch their face light up because a grown-up recognizes them. This isn't a super power that I alone possess—I watch this happen all the time when grown-ups, youth, and children interact with each other.

- **Parenting is tough; multigenerational community can help:**

We could all use a little help from our friends sometimes. The parents of children and youth in our midst are no difference. They find solace in talking with others in their stage of life (such as in

our Parents' Lounge) though sometimes the support our community offers needs to come from other adults of other generations. Whether it's assuring them that they, too, will get through this phase of their child's life just as you did or finally giving them a chance to have adult conversation about something totally non-kid related, you don't need to be a child expert (or ever have had kids) to lend a hand.

- **It's good for us:**

Family and Multigenerational Ministry isn't a medicine we have to take though it's something that helps (and forms) our whole community. Some of our best teams of leaders and learning opportunities in our community, attribute their success to having multiple generations working together. The wisdom and institutional memory of one generation meets the critical and creative eye of another generation, meets the unbridled enthusiasm of another generation, and the sky's the limit.

- **Reminds us we are a community:**

Responding to the need of someone from another generation or simply another age, is a good reminder that community isn't all about "me." I find a certain blessing in needing to slow down or speed up to adapt to the needs of those around me. It reminds us that community isn't something we consume, moving to the next store the moment our needs are not the central focus, it's something we create together—a give and take.

We only gain these benefits when we intentionally form multigenerational community. This summer and fall are excellent times for us to recommit to creating community, nurturing spiritual growth, and acting on our values to help heal the world--all with a family ministry, and multigenerational lens.



SUMMER SERVICES AT FIRST CHURCH

BY REV. KATHLEEN OWENS, LEAD MINISTER, AND REV. IAN W. RIDDELL, MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP ARTS

For many folks, normal routines are set aside for summer—we take breaks from school, or go on a vacation, or attend day camps. The worship schedule will also change a bit—and it's different than last summer. Here's the information you need to engage in the various worship and activities this summer. To try and beat the heat, we'll have worship services at both our Hillcrest and South Bay campuses at 9:30 a.m. Because we know some folks just cannot attend at 9:30, there will also be a minimal service in the Chapel at Hillcrest at 11:30 a.m. Seating is limited. This smaller service is in the Chapel because it's air conditioned.

Some of you have asked about putting air conditioning in the Meeting House. Please know that Robie Evans, our Director of Operations, has been working with our maintenance professionals about this. Right now, we don't have any fixed estimates of cost but we'll keep you informed about this when we know more.

On some Sundays, there will be activities after the 9:30 service to create a deeper sense of community. Specific activities at the South Bay campus will be announced soon—watch [The Window](#) for details. The following activities will be available on the Hillcrest campus.

July 2016:

- 3rd - "Tacos in the Turnaround:" We'll have a Taco Bar in Bard Hall (for an early lunch)! For other options, for those who don't like tacos, we hope to have a food truck in the turnaround.
- 10th - Extended social hour
- 17th - Membership Mixer (along with our PRIDE service)
- 24th - Extended social hour
- 31st - Hymn Sing (location to be determined)

August 2016:

- 7th - Community game playing (along with our Bridging service)
- 14th - Pick-up choir with Ian (see announcement below)
- 21th - Pick-up choir with Ian (see announcement below)
- 28th - Membership Mixer (along with our Coming of Age service)

September 4th, we go back to our regular 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. services in the Meeting House.



**Announcing
Summer All-Ages Choir!**

Do you feel the need to sing? Have you always wanted to sing in a choir, but couldn't find the time or the inspiration? Come and join your voices together in our **Summer All-Ages Choir**. Join Rev. Ian on **August 14 and 21 from 10:40 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** (in a room to be announced). We'll enjoy making music together, and learn two songs that we'll sing as part of the Coming of Age service on Sunday, August 28th. All ages welcome—no - experience necessary—just bring your voice, and your spirit, and sing!

SCAVENGER HUNT LEADS TO NEW FUNDRAISER— OUR BED & BREAKFAST PROGRAM

BY JAN GARBOSKY

Can a scavenger hunt help the church raise money? The answer is YES!! Last fall, members of the Generosity Ministry Team (GMT) scoured the websites of the 25 largest UU congregations for fundraising ideas. Excited about all we learned, the GMT decided that establishing a Bed and Breakfast (B&B) program was one of the most promising. After researching more than 20 congregations which have (or have had) B&B programs, we were ready to give it try, and development of the First UU Church of San Diego program began.

As an ongoing fundraiser, our goal is to raise at least \$5,000 a year—part of the funds formerly raised by our Rummage Sale. (All Souls UU in Washington, DC, has raised over \$90,000 since 2008 and almost \$8,000 since January 1, 2016!) Our voluntary program allows us to meet interesting UUs from around the country, and raise additional funds for our operating budget without asking our members to open their wallets—only their homes! Currently, our rates (which include a continental breakfast) are \$75 single, \$90 double, and \$110 for a casita or suite with private entrance, with a 2-night minimum & 7-night maximum stay.

Hosts provide a private room with access to a shared or private bath, and a continental breakfast. Each host decides when, and how often, they're willing to receive guests. The Host Application allows you to list any limitation you might have about the types and numbers of guests, and the dates you're willing to host. When guest registration forms are received, the B&B Team emails or calls a host to see if the dates work. If the host says 'yes,' the team matches the guest with a host, and contact information is shared. The B&B Team will keep requests for a host's space to 2-3 times a year (unless hosts wish to open their homes more often).

A new B&B Program page will soon appear on our website. B&B guests will register and pay online

with a credit card, when they make a reservation. A host does *not* handle the money-side of the program. All proceeds will go to our operating budget in support of our mission and strategic plan programs and activities.

We'll be advertising in [UU're Home \(https://uurehome.com\)](https://uurehome.com), the Bed & Breakfast Directory for Unitarian Universalists & Other Religious Liberals) and in both the online and paper versions of the UU World magazine. Information will be distributed at General Assembly and we plan on contacting UU congregations around the country, including our San Diego Cluster UU congregations. Of course, we're also depending on word of mouth advertising, so be sure to let your family and friends who may be planning a visit, know about our program.

The B&B program doesn't operate as a commercial business requiring city permits, health inspections, and liability insurance. It's strictly a volunteer fundraising operation—like all the other UU B&B programs across the country. We offer home hospitality and, in return for that hospitality, guests make a donation to our church. (Proceeds do not count toward a host family's pledge/financial commitment.) We assume all B&B hosts carry homeowner's liability insurance to cover accidents involving their guests. As a voluntary program, all services are donations. Hosts are not being paid for offering accommodations to visitors. Therefore, it's not a business and would not, as far as we're able to discern, require any rental tax on the part of the host.

Please help us launch this exciting program by considering becoming one of our hosts, and letting family and friends who are coming to San Diego know about our program. If you have questions, you can reach our B&B Team [here \(bandbteam@firstuusandiego.org\)](mailto:bandbteam@firstuusandiego.org).



CLOSING A JOYFUL CHAPTER

BY MEGAN DOWDELL, INTERN MINISTER



Bobbi Beer (l) and
Megan Dowdell (r)

It feels like just yesterday member Bobbi Beer and I were taking this photo at our Christmas Day Potluck! But here we are: June and the final days of my internship at First UU Church of San Diego. It's time to say goodbye.

I've had a rich and beautiful year learning and serving in this community as your full-time Intern Minister. Far into the future, I'll remember, and speak joyfully of the time I've spent with you.

In August, I came as a seminary professor and doctoral student in sociology, ready to complete the internship requirement of our Unitarian Universalist fellowship process. I leave with new passion for congregational life, and new pastoral and practical skills for leading a large organization. I am particularly grateful to the pastoral and prophetic leadership of Lead Minister, Rev. Kathleen Owens, who has supported me and mentored me each step of the way as my supervisor. It's been an honor to walk with you and be permitted to care for this community through a year of many transitions.

A particular highlight has been the experience of leadership at your South Bay campus, and in a multi-campus church that seeks to be multigenerational, bilingual, and multicultural. It's been thrilling to have a small part in the creative risk-taking needed to sustain and grow a dynamic, inclusive religious community, responsive to the diverse needs of San Diego County, and aligned with the mission of the church. There's so much to learn from, and love here.

First Church has a long history as a teaching congregation, helping to prepare candidates for Unitarian Universalist ministry. It's been wonderful to work alongside Tania Márquez, your part-time intern minister at Hillcrest. An important aspect of this distinction is the internship committee, who

selected, prepared and supported me from our first correspondence in the application process until my final day in San Diego. It's been sacred work to reflect, chat, laugh, and sing with Isabella Furth, Addison Smith, Angela Garcia-Sims, Lynn Northrop, and Drew Massicot in this unique partnership. We've been joined by circles of support from former intern committee members and the members of the Board. I offer special thanks to George Klinke for his initial conversation with me about First Church that led me to apply when I'd not been considering parish internship at the time. The kindness and encouragement of each lay leader I've met has sustained me.

What's next? Most immediately, I'll enter a summer sabbatical time in order to rest, and to settle into life in Los Angeles with my partner, Stefanie. Her presence and continual support (including the occasional art project or sermon video-editing) have been so grounding throughout this experience. I know now how true it is that partners and families are the unsung heroes of ministry. In Fall, the journey continues: teaching, advising, and the clinical pastoral education program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in LA.

First Church's caring ministries have helped shape a hopeful path toward integrating my academic career with congregational ministry. I've been deeply inspired by the pastoral work in the "Coping with Chronic Conditions" support group (continuing into next year, co-facilitated by Chris Smith and Marilyn Hanson). In fall, I'll start a dissertation research project to offer similar support groups in faith communities in the Los Angeles area. Inspired by the lessons I've learned here in this internship, I hope to help the medical community better understand the particular beliefs and needs of people coping with chronic conditions in non-Biblically-based religious communities.

First UU Church has played a pivotal role in my life at this crucial stage. Your wisdom and legacy as a teaching congregation is a gift to our movement.

With all of my heart, thank you.

TEARS AT THE BORDER

BY TANIA MARQUEZ, INTERN MINISTER

A Border Patrol agent walked away from the crowd. He then removed his sunglasses and wiped his tears away. He smiled gently as he walked past me. I don't know if he recognized me as probably the only witness to that moment of vulnerability.

The Border Patrol opened the emergency door at the border with Mexico on April 30th for roughly 20 minutes. A few selected families were allowed to reunite briefly with their loved ones on the other side of the border. Three minutes each family got—three infamous minutes that probably tasted like glory to them. Three minutes to embrace their beloveds, to meet new grandchildren, to feel their aging parents close, once again.

This is the 3rd year this has happened as a way to commemorate Mexico's "Day of the Child". Separated families cannot, however, place their hopes on an annual lottery that promises them three minutes of time together. Plus, this isn't an opportunity available to everyone. The individuals on the United States side must have some form of legal status (work permit, DACA, etc.) though unable to leave the country. The Border Patrol runs a background check on these individuals and decides who gets to meet at the border. This requirement leaves out many families who can't even come near the border without risking deportation.

I had mixed feelings about the event. I was happy for the families who were given the opportunity to reunite. They were both hurting and rejoicing. Their humanity was at the center of the event. And, I was also upset precisely at the way in which their lives were placed at the center for the benefit of others; those whose pictures will be used to prove their willingness to show compassion and be humane—the politicians, the institutions, the Press.

The immigration issue is complex, with great arguments on both sides. What troubles me the most is we continue to think of it precisely in a polarized way: open borders vs closed borders, humane immigration reform vs enforced immigration laws. In the current political discourse, we're told to choose sides and we've failed to imagine alternatives to our way of being that would allow us to value people more than regulations. I believe as long as we continue to seek solutions within our current systems (the systems that have created the problem to begin with), we'll find ourselves in the same conundrum over and over again. The solution needs to come from *all* of us, from engaging in heartfelt and visionary conversations about the individual and collective changes we need to embrace, and be willing to take.

Some have labeled Border Field Park, or Friendship Park, as the saddest place in America. That day, as we witnessed families gather one by one, we could not stop the tears from flowing. The gate opened and with it a thousand collective tears were released. Inadvertently, we all paid homage to the saddest place in our country.

I must add, there was some beauty in being able to see the sky on the other side through the opened door. It evoked a vision of lands, oceans, and skies not divided by arbitrary borders. The opened door was a sign of possibility. May we move forward towards it.



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Tania Márquez, Intern Minister
Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister
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Giving: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving-overview>.

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