



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven

BY Betsy Stevens

"Cakes," sponsored by the Women's Federation, had a wonderful first run in September and October. Nearly 40 women participated in "In Ancient Times," the first volume of this 11-session course. It was held at Pat Schmidt's home in South Bay and Sheila Marsh's home near Mesa College.

The curriculum, designed Rev. Shirley Ranck, describes the origins of goddess worship in ancient Stone Age cultures. The group studied the myths, archeology and ancient writings of early Asian, African and European cultures, viewing some of these relics via the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. The text and CD covered the earliest manifestations of spiritual awareness, the goddesses of fertility, the confrontation of mortality, the relations of men and women, the development of partnership society in Crete and the gradual usurpation of power by masculine gods to the detriment of female deities.

In February and March, the second volume, "On the Threshold," will be offered. These six sessions will cover the development of Judaeo-Christian mythologies and theologies. Session titles include "The Hebrew Goddess," "Sarah the Priestess," "The Apostle Mary," "The Virgin Mary," "Witchcraft" and "Future Fantasies."

Meetings will be weekly beginning the first week in February, probably on Thursday evenings from 7 to 9 or 9:30. If enrollment warrants it, three sections will be scheduled to allow for more small group activities, which are part of the curriculum. Registration forms will be available soon and their availability announced in the Window. Questions? Contact Georganne Hctor at 619-265-7279, e-mail hctor1@cox.net.

December Sermons

Service Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

Saturday, 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, 9:30 and 11:30 a.m.

Vespers: Second Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

South Bay Campus:

Sunday, 10:00 a.m.

December's **Transformational Theme** is **Peace**.

December 5 (Saturday) & 6 (Sunday):

"Finding Peace within the Rush" - Rev. Kathleen Owens

Vespers, December 9 (Wednesday):

"Peace, At What Cost?" - Elka Cartmell Ladd

December 12 (Saturday) & 13 (South Bay only): "Hail Mary!" - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

While those of us of Mexican heritage celebrate Our Lady Of Guadalupe, this is a good time to look at how female representations of the Divine survive in Christianity.

December 13 (Hillcrest): Service of Music

December 19 (Saturday) & 20

(Sunday): "Being Peace" - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

If we are to have peace on earth, we need goodwill to all.

Christmas Eve Services: December 24

5:30 p.m. Nativity Tableau

8:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

December 26 (Saturday) & 27 (Sunday):

"Experiments in Peace" - Elka Cartmell Ladd



Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

Because of the foresight of past leaders, we are very lucky. As most of you know, the Ace Parking lot at the corner of Front and Arbor is our property. When it is not being used for church purposes, it provides a nice income for the church. In fact, more than 1/3 of our operating budget comes from the parking lot. The down side to that is that having the parking lot subsidizing our program means that member and friend giving to the church is rather low compared to other Unitarian Universalist congregations.

When the congregation voted a year ago to rebuild our beloved Bard Hall, our members and friends knew that our giving would have to increase. Our members gave generously to our Capital Campaign and voted to take a mortgage to complete the project. This means that our debt service costs will require a large portion of our parking lot income. If we are to keep our programming at their current high levels, we will need to increase our giving.

I'm proud to say that in the fiscal year that ended June 30, First Church gave away more than \$140,000. The largest portion of this is our giving to our larger Unitarian Universalist movement. But the next largest portion is the donations that you have made to our Generosity Sundays. On one Sunday per month we have given our loose offerings to other organizations and programs that are meeting human need and helping to bring about the Beloved Community we dream about. These contributions have made a big difference to the organizations that receive them.

Now, since we face a large fiscal challenge, Kathleen and I and the Generosity Ministry Team feel we will have to change that practice. Because we are fiscally challenged, *we think we need to give even more money away to causes outside the church.* Beginning in January, the Social Justice Ministry Team will continue to choose a cause of the month, but *all* contributions, every Sunday, not marked for other purposes, will be given away to that cause. Some of our most generous members have been urging us to do this for years. We are convinced that this will

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not hurt giving to the church. In fact, we believe that this practice will *increase* giving to the church. Other UU congregations who have tried this have found it to be true.

As far as giving to the church goes here is our challenge to you. We challenge you to give 5%-10% of your income *to the church.* We understand that many people cannot manage this right away. For those folks, we ask that you have a plan to reach the 5% level within the next 5 years. If enough of us do this, we will not only keep our current programs vital and growing, and be able to handle our mortgage easily. We will be able to use our parking lot income for creative programming and service to our community. Think what good almost a half million dollars could do!



Philippines Pilgrimage Trip

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry



The First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego has a partner church among the congregations belonging to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines (UUCP). Our partner church is located in Malingin on the northern end of the island of Negros. In March I will be visiting our partner church as well as other Unitarian Universalist Churches when I go on the Philippine Pilgrimage Tour sponsored by the Partner Church Council.

There are over 2,500 Unitarian Universalists worshipping in over 29 congregations in the Philippines. This special pilgrimage tour is designed to help us understand this truly Filipino manifestation of Unitarian Universalism. The tour will begin and end in Manila. We will learn the history of the UUCP, explore the country and culture, and visit many of the partner church congregations. Accommodations have been arranged in hotels for each night, but there may be the possibility for a home stay in Malingin for those who are interested.

The tour begins in Manila on March 5, 2010, and ends in Manila on March 16. The days in between allow for orientation, travel and programs as well as planned time for rest and exploration. The cost of the tour is \$1,450 (double) and includes all in-country transportation, accommodations, meals, drivers, interpreters, and any entrance fees. It does not include airfare to Manila and a few other incidental expenses. Details of the trip and expenses can be found on the Partner Church Web Site along with a detailed itinerary (<http://www.uupcc.org/trips.html>).

I plan on going in March, and I'd love to have company. Several members of the congregation went a few years ago, and they would be happy to share their experience with you. They convinced me that I really want to visit this beautiful country where these Unitarian Universalists are growing a faith movement in an environment so different from our own. If you are interested in talking about going on this trip, please let me know. I'd love to talk to you about it and would be happy to put you in touch with those who have already gone.

Blessings,

Liz



Bard Hall Construction Update

BY Kath Hillery, Chair of the Campus Project Oversight Team

On November 5, the Campus Project Oversight Team sponsored a community information meeting to present the Bard Hall replacement project to our neighbors and to members of the local planning group, the Uptown Planners. Hopefully in December this project will be presented to the Uptown Planners for their input to the Planning Commission as a part of the process of obtaining a development permit from the city of San Diego. The goal of the meeting was to allow community members and significant stakeholders in our congregation to become informed about our plans for campus renewal, including the replacement of Bard Hall, improvements to the patio and to campus infrastructure so when the project is presented to the planning group, community members will be aware of the project and will have had an opportunity to ask questions and to understand the project. While few community members attended, many church members were there and the presentation was well received.

The highlights of the topics discussed at the meeting are as follows:

Additional restroom facilities will be added on the lower floor, and a total of three additional unisex restrooms, which are transgender and family friendly, will be added to the middle and upper floors. The footprint of the kitchen will be a bit larger than the current kitchen. Our art gallery space will be expanded into the hallways on each floor in addition to the north wall of the main meeting room.

In recognition of our congregation's commitment to protecting the environment wherever possible, the following "green" features have been incorporated into our plans:

1. The building will have a durable roof that is designed to keep the building cool and last 100 years.
2. Passive ventilation and natural lighting will be introduced to the building to reduce our ongoing energy use.

3. Demolition will be done with an eye towards salvaging as much material as possible, so that suitable material will be reused on-site, and if not needed for our project, it will be recycled in the community.

The square footage of the building will be increased by more than 24% by adding a third level. This will give us two offices and three meeting rooms upstairs, two meeting rooms and a workroom on the middle floor, and three meeting spaces on the lower floor, the largest of which is similar in size to the existing Bard Hall.

A portion of the exterior finish will mirror the Memorial Wall, and the entire building will be in scale with the Meeting House.

A rain-proof cover will be provided over the Meeting House entrance and Book Room Sales area.

We received feedback on our initial submittal to the City November 5. Our professionals began working on the required changes right away. The architects have been under contract to prepare the final construction drawings and documents since early November, and it is hoped that the building permit and contract preparation can be completed so demolition can take place between March and May.



UUSC Presence, Legacy and Hope in Social Justice

I'm Kathy Smith, a member of First UU Church since 1984. I have come back in "through the back door," so to speak, because of an unexpected phone call late one night from Boston. The caller was Patricia Jones, of our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Environmental Justice Program. She asked me to consider attending this spring's "Let Justice Flow" Water and Climate Change Gathering in Walnut Creek, Ca. which was organized by our UU Legislative Ministry, with UUSC as a partner.



I have been a long-term supporter of UUSC at First Church since the days of our past co-minister Carolyn Owen Towle. when she was President of UUSC. I am inspired by so many in this social justice work. I have also admired the work of Charlie Clements, our current president, when he was a doctor in Central America and since led delegations for UUSC back to the region. Charlie recently came to Sacramento in support of the delivery of more than 2,000 signature cards from UUs across the state in support of UUSC and UULM's work on the "Human Right to Water" bill. Lisa Hartman, the church's 10-year local and regional representative for UUSC, went on one of the delegations to Guatemala. I heard her speak at a gathering in Neighborhood Church, Pasadena. These are our honored legacy people. I found that I am now

taking my turn to support our partners in California and around the globe, as we follow a partnership model that empowers local people on the ground.

Since UUSC does not receive funds from either the UUA or the federal government, we depend upon the generosity of our members and friends. (A single membership is \$40, Senior - \$20, Youth/College - \$10, Dual - \$75) It is programs such as Guest At Your Table, our Stories of Hope accompanying each box that educate our young and their families that help to bring funds to this work. This year brings four guests to our tables who all represent UUSC programs. They are the stories of the following people: Daw San from Myanmar/Burma who is trying to recover from Cyclone Nargis. Guadalupe who is suffering in Tonyville, Central Valley from a toxic level of nitrates in her ground water, Abdul Khan of Afghanistan who is a Dari speaking human rights worker giving workshops to teachers, and Jacinta, who is working to organize the informal vendors in Kenya who are still recovering from last year's election violence.

It is my hope that our church will continue to support UUSC with our generous spirit to enable partnership work to continue, a partnership that struggles under the worldwide recession, which is especially troubling for our partners in Africa. Please consider buying Holiday Cards as well, which support the work of our partners in the US and worldwide. We are offering 4 designed cards to choose from at a low price of \$10 for a 10-card set (16 in our note card collection).

This next year, it is a goal of ours to offer four scholarships to young adults to attend a Spring Break Just Journey to learn about our California water crisis and its impact on the land and our many peoples along the way. They then can bring their stories back to us and be a part of the spirit to "Let Justice Flow."

Meet Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator

BY Kristen Kuriga



My name is Kristen Kuriga and I am the new Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator at First Church. My passion for social justice began while I was at Sarah Lawrence College, where I completed my BA with a focus in social movements, labor history, and politics in 2004.

Coming from a working class family and being the first person in my family to go to college, my studies sparked in me the desire to transform the injustices that my own family experienced. After graduating, I worked as the coordinator of the New York Union Semester Program, and then moved to San Diego to be a researcher and community organizer for the Justice for Janitors campaign.

Most recently, I completed my Masters in Peace and Justice Studies at the University of San Diego, where I focused my studies on youth transforming violence in their communities through art and organizing. Around the same time that I found social justice as my vocation, I also discovered meditation, a spiritual practice that has deepened my life personally and has taught me about the importance of mindfulness and reflection in social action.

For me, social action is a spiritual practice, grounded in my belief of the interconnectedness of all beings and the need to create a world where all beings are valued. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve First Church and to have a position that fulfills my vision of bringing together social justice and spiritual practice. I look forward to supporting you and joining you on your journey.

Dr. Helen Caldicott Speaks at First Church

Mark Gabrish Conlan in *Zenger's* magazine, November 2009

ADAPTED BY John Schaibly

It's been over a quarter of a century since pediatrician Dr. Helen Caldicott emerged from her native Australia to become one of the most eloquent spokespersons against nuclear power and nuclear weapons. She said back then she was engaging in "preventive pediatrics" by warning against the potentially cataclysmic effects of nuclear energy even in its so-called "peaceful" form. Today she's past her peak as a media phenomenon – her October 23 speech at the First Unitarian-Universalist Church ... drew less than 150 people in a room that can hold over 500, and the only media covering it were Pacifica Radio, Free Speech TV and *Zenger's* – but her message was, if anything, even more fiery and emphatic than ever. She said that global warming will make it impossible for earth to sustain human life – unless we start a nuclear war and destroy ourselves that way first – and only a worldwide mobilization to develop and use only renewable energy sources can save us.

Here are some quotes:

"It fascinates me that in this society, if someone commits murder, it's a crime – but this whole country is a killing machine and the soldiers are put on pedestals."

"Except for Pacifica Radio and Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*, there are literally no U.S. media untainted by the corporations. National Public Radio takes money from the nuclear power industry"

"Nuclear power is the bastard son of the nuclear-weapons industry. A huge amount of fossil fuel is used to mine uranium ... and enrich it." (from her book *Nuclear Power is not the Answer*.)

While most of the Dr. Caldicott's message was the same as in the 70's, it was delivered with a new urgency brought on by recent global warming data.

"I believe that we are here to make the most of this life, because we don't know if there's another world beyond this one. For me, that means fighting for justice and equity for all people."

Last month I interviewed myself, and I thank the many of you for your kind compliments. I realize now, after interviewing Nancy that I'm unworthy. Consider this; I asked her about herself and what she had done at First Church – I know how hard she has worked as president and as member of the board of trustees - Nancy doesn't self promote, she's just a pillar of the church who does her job with quiet modesty - here are her words:

"I moved to San Diego in 1982, planning on getting a Master's in Social Work at San Diego State. I've been a Unitarian since I was 8 or 9, so the first thing I did when I came here from Los Angeles, was go to First Church. There was a young adult group that started up as soon as I got here. Led by two college students, it was called the Anthony Ballou group, after Susan B. Anthony and Hosea Ballou. We used to meet for discussions right after church. Then it was decided we should go to brunch first, and after awhile, we dropped the discussions and just went to brunch. Anthony Ballou eventually became Odyssey, which is where I met my husband, Tony Brumfield.

In 1985, I finally got up the nerve to join the choir. I tried it out for a semester and thought I was going to drop out, but Dan Ratelle, the choir director, called and asked when I was coming back. I've only missed one semester since then. I love singing and being part of a group that loves music.

Interview with Nancy Fisk

BY Robert McMahon

In 1990, I decided to become a high school English teacher, which is what I do now. I suggested to a member of the church that I wanted to work with the youth and I ended up being a youth advisor. I spent Sunday mornings with the youth, and went to summer and winter camps with them for about 10 years. What I love most about that time is that I now have a connection with some of the most amazing young adults, who are grateful to me for being there during their teenage years.

I believe that we are here to make the most of this life, because we don't know if there's another world beyond this one. For me, that means fighting for justice and equity for all people.

I tell people that this church is more my neighborhood than the one I live in. I have known some people here since their children were born, and those children are now in college. The connections I have here are some of the deepest and strongest friendships I've ever experienced. I'm not sure what I would have done without the church as the center of my life. I'm just grateful that it's always been here, and that I'm allowed to be part of such a supportive and caring community."



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