



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Why We Do This Work

BY Rev. Kathleen Owens

On November 19, First Church's Social Justice Ministry Team was honored at the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (ICWJ) annual benefit breakfast,



Voices for Justice. The team, under the leadership of Rev. Kathleen Owens, was recognized for over a decade of participation in ICWJ campaigns, including the Living Wage Campaign, Justice for Janitors, and the formation of Senior Activist Voices for Justice. These are Rev. Kathleen's Owens words accepting the award:

"Good morning and thank you for this award. I want to briefly name these wonderful and faithful people standing behind me and members of the team. Rev. Arvid Straube, John Stende, Jill Hansen, Sue Haskin, Jackie Statman, Mike Moreau, Penny Moreau, Jan Gallo, Kathy Radinovsky, Bonny Russell, Jan Garbosky, Joan Cudhea, Tomas Firlle, Newt Ferris, Lisa Hartman, Kathy Smith, Kristen Kuriga, Mar Cardenas, Rev. Jim Grant, Derek Staats, Dale Douglas, John Schaibly and Dorene Sulzer.

"We at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego are honored to be recognized this morning; we are honored to be with you at this breakfast and mostly to be your partner in creating justice here in San Diego.

"First Church has long been engaged in justice making to bring about the Beloved Community. We do this work because we believe and know the truth that every person has worth and dignity because they are alive on the planet - not because of who we are, what we do, or where we live but because we are. It is our first principle.

"We do this work because we know the truth spoken so eloquently by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said when one person is oppressed, we are all oppressed; when one brother or sister is denied health care, we all can be denied health care; when one person is discriminated against, we all can be discriminated against -for the truth is that we are all connected. It is our seventh principle.

"We do this work because when we listen to each other, find communion in each other's stories, look into one another's eyes, we acknowledge that we are in relationship to each other. First Church will continue this work because justice and building the Beloved Community is our saving message and we will be with you in the work for the next 100 years. Thank you."



Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

The members of our worship and program site in Chula Vista, UUs Of The South Bay, have decided on a new marketing strategy--- serving the needs of the South Bay community and thus visibly living our Unitarian Universalist values.

Worship services for UUs Of The South Bay began in early October 2008 and have continued every Sunday since at Parkview Elementary School www.uusouthbay.org. The group, which is a congregation within the larger First Unitarian Universalist Church Of San Diego, has had a religious education program for children, social activities for everyone, and opportunities for spiritual enrichment. Members of the group are also active in many activities at the Hillcrest campus. A core group of volunteers has, week after week, made those services possible. A half-time South Bay Ministry Coordinator supports the group, but the biggest challenge of the first year for UUs of the South Bay is that, due to unforeseen circumstances, four different people occupied that position.

Under the able leadership of Rev. David Miller, who served in that post in an interim capacity last spring, the group celebrated that we had planned and gathered the group (Phase 1), and then created Unitarian Universalist worship and programming in Chula Vista on a regular basis (Phase 2). And we created the vision about what UUs Of The South Bay would be for Phase 3. The outcome: the way to grow Unitarian Universalism in the South Bay is to serve that community in meaningful ways, visibly demonstrating UU values of justice-making and compassionate living. Conversations with community leaders followed, where we described Unitarian Universalism to community leaders and listened to what the needs might be in the community where we could make a difference.

In August, Mar Cardenas became the South Bay Ministry Coordinator, bringing much needed stability to the group, as well as deep commitment and high energy. Mar, a relatively new UU who is on fire for our faith, was born in Mexico and has a graduate degree in multi-cultural education. Mar is offering simultaneous translations of the sermons into Spanish when needed.

Members of the group are energetically participating in a monthly service project. The group, along with Mar and Kristen Kuriga, First Church Social Justice Ministry Coordinator, are developing a broader service project, a "vacation values school." The school systems in the South Bay are on a year-round schedule with shorter vacations more scattered throughout the year than traditional school calendars. This leaves difficult child care issues for parents in those districts, particularly those of limited means. Evangelical churches have stepped in to fill the gap with Vacation Bible Schools. UUs Of The South Bay know that many parents want an alternative to the sectarian indoctrination these programs represent. We feel that the lives of those children and their families would be enriched by a program based on the universal human values of compassion, non-violent conflict resolution, tolerance and emotional intelligence. When the program is launched, there will be ample and rich volunteer opportunities not only for the UUs Of The South Bay, but for members of all of First Church and other congregations in San Diego as well.

January Sermons

Service Times:

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

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

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

January's Transformational Theme is **Grace**.

"Transformational Grace" - Rev. Kathleen Owens

January 2 & 3—Hillcrest

January 10—South Bay

"Falling Gracefully" - Elka Cartmell Ladd

We all fall flat on our faces from time to time.

Join us for our vespers service to explore where we find grace (or grace finds us) in our mistakes and missteps.

Vespers, January 13—Hillcrest

"There Is Nothing Wrong With You!" - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

During this time of making New Years resolutions,

you might want to reflect with Rev. Arvid about the idea that... *there is nothing wrong with you!*

January 10—Hillcrest

January 17—South Bay

"A Broader Lens" - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube and

the Journey Toward Wholeness Team.

Unitarian Universalists have their own cultural norms and outlooks. What it is that makes up the "lens" of Unitarian Universalism and why would it be useful to have a broader lens?

January 17—Hillcrest

January 24—South Bay

"Original Sin or Original Blessing" - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

January 24—Hillcrest

January 31—South Bay

"Grace Across the Ages" - Elka Cartmell Ladd and Members of Young Adult and Campus Ministries of First Church

January 31—Hillcrest

February 7—South Bay

First Church

Website Updates

BY Karen Walter, Director of Operations

HAVE YOU VISITED---the First U.U. website recently? It is changing almost daily and has many new offerings. First, and very exciting, is the "Giving" tab on the front page that allows anyone to make a gift/payment/donation online with a credit card!! I understand you all have been working towards this particular goal for years. Also now residing on the front page are service times and directions. The "Events" tab now leads to a great list of upcoming functions, many of which include colorful publicity posters.

By the time you are reading this, the "Welcome" will be a live video message from Arvid and Kathleen, rather than a static printed message. Testimonials are also going to be enlarged with additional video interviews.

The Campus Renovation updates are now easily available on the home page.

Hopefully, each of you has already shopped at Café Press, <http://www.cafepress.com/FUUSD>, where you will find a wide selection of merchandise with the First U.U. logo. That link now resides on our website also. So---please check us out! First Church is quickly becoming very 21st century.

It is with sadness that the First Church Executive team has announced the discontinuation of our Saturday evening worship service.

For more information on service schedule changes, please visit our website.

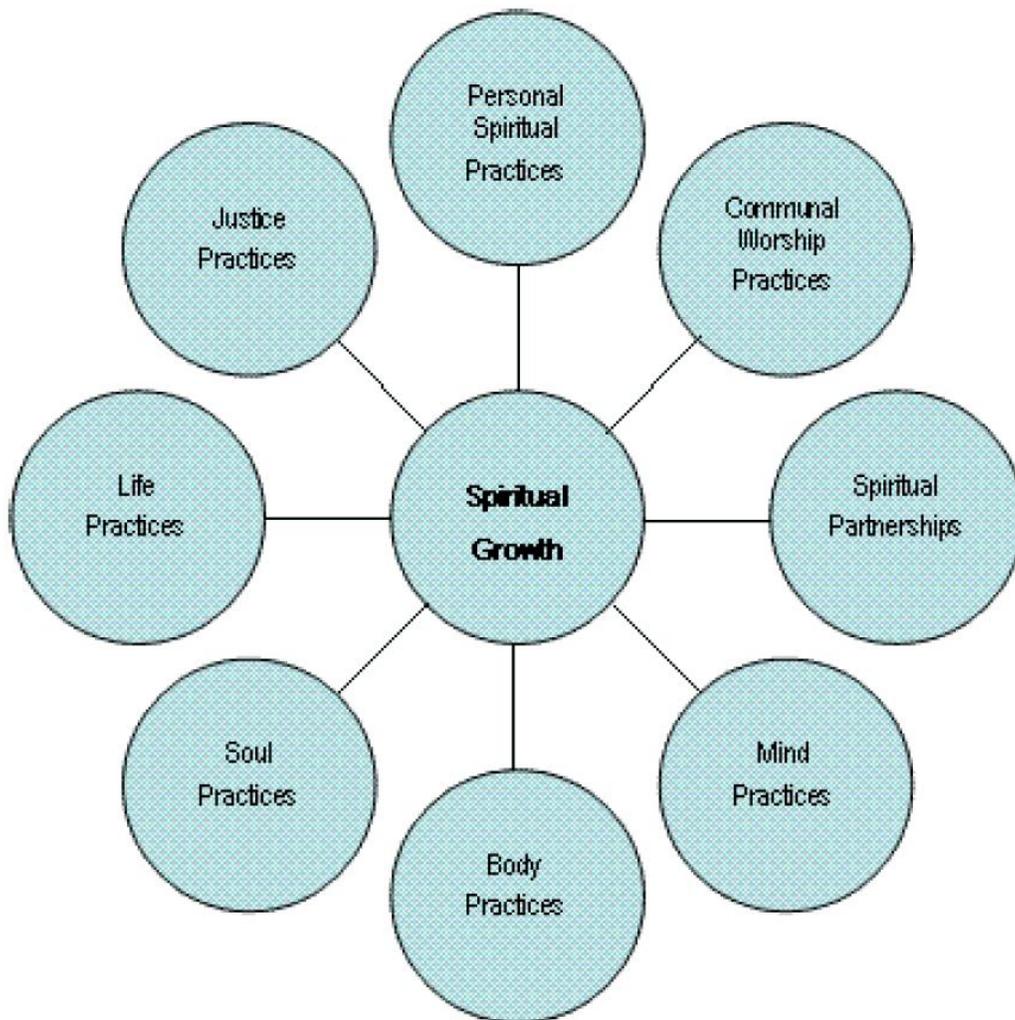
To Explore, To Deepen and To Serve

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

The core philosophy of our Adult Religious Education Program comes from the curriculum Spirit in Practice developed by Erik Wickstrom. I had the opportunity to take a workshop given by Rev. Wikstrom, in which he explained the eight spheres of spiritual development that are central to the program, and the way he sees how these spheres play a role in our spiritual development.

The eight spheres are:

- Personal Spiritual Practices: Done alone, often daily meditation, dream work, journaling, prayer
- Communal Worship Practice: Worshiping in a community setting
- Spiritual Partnerships: Small groups, or on-on-one relationships that are committed to the spiritual journey together
- Mind Practices: The intellectual component study groups, lectures, film discussions
- Body Practices: Incorporating your body into your spiritual growth running, yoga, gardening, sitting
- Soul Practices: Using our creative energies in our spiritual development art, music, poetry
- Life Practices: Bringing our spirit into our daily lives family, work, interactions with strangers
- Justice Practices: Growing our souls through working to transform the world



In his workshop, Erik discussed the idea that to fully grow our spirits each of us should explore at some point in our lives each of these spheres. Not all will be comfortable for us. Some will truly challenge us, which is not bad. We will resonate with some spheres and feel more comfortable there. Some will truly call us into a deeper engagement and further spiritual growth.

Erik explained that he feels that all times in our lives, we should be exploring some of these spheres, and deepening in others. He also says that we further develop when we are able to give back or serve in at least one of these spheres.

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So my questions to you are: Where are you exploring right now? In what areas are you deepening? And where and how are you serving?

We have organized our Adult Education Program so that each class is labeled with the sphere we feel most closely identifies it within this matrix to help you as you explore and deepen your spirit. If you are unclear on how to take that next step to serve as part of your spiritual development, our program staff is here to discuss it with you. Please call the office to set up appointments to talk to a minister; me; Suzette Southfox, our Director of Community Life; Kristen Kuriga, the Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator; Mar Cardenas, the South Bay Ministry Coordinator; Chris Christenson, the Adult Education Coordinator; Alice King, the Young Adult and Campus Ministry coordinator; and Káthe Larick, the Youth Programs Coordinator.

May you explore, deepen, and serve in this new year!

Blessings, Liz



First Church Supports Interfaith Shelter

BY Kristen Kuriga,
Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator



The week of November 8-15, 2009, volunteers from First Church supported the homeless shelter that was hosted by College Lutheran Church through the Interfaith Shelter Network. Our members and friends supported the shelter in a variety of ways, including volunteers who stayed over night, financial contributions for food, and the South Bay campus organized a potluck dinner for one night.

Newt Ferris, a member of the Social Justice Ministry Team, reflected on his service:

“When I was asked to volunteer at the Interfaith Shelter, I was initially hesitant. Despite my uncertainty, I decided to volunteer to stay overnight at the shelter on Nov. 11. The evening I was there, there were 16 men between the ages of 30 and 50 years old, and at other times there are women with their children. All of the guests at the shelter are actively seeking work or access to a training program.

The program moves amongst member churches every two weeks and volunteers bring a potluck for their dinner, a light cold breakfast and sandwich supplies. The volunteers who stay the night can have dinner with the shelter attendees if they want. The volunteer’s main duty is to assist a sponsoring church’s volunteer to ensure that the shelter attendees have a safe place to stay. It was easy to do this and helped the sponsoring church provide this service.”

If you are interested in finding out more about the Interfaith Shelter Network or would like to get involved, you can contact Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator:

Kristen@firsttusandiego.org or 619-298-9978, x8006.

Legacy to Our Spiritual Home

BY Joan Gudhea, former Chair of Planned Giving Committee

How many ways can we keep on loving this church after we die? And should we wait until we are age 50 to think on this question? Well, there are at least 10 ways to leave a legacy that will forward the work and spirit of this congregation, we hope forever. And no, don't wait until you are 50 or 60 or 70 to learn, and then maybe to implement a plan.

The simplest way is to write a will (or have an attorney write it for you) and name First UU Church as one of your beneficiaries. You can specify a dollar amount, but it makes more sense to name a percentage of your estate. You probably have no idea what your estate will be worth when you die. So specifying a dollar amount might not express the true comparative value of your total legacy. What is the relative importance to you of forwarding the future of your parents (if they are still living), your children, grandchildren, siblings as compared with the value of Yes, even one percent, or five or 10 percent to your spiritual home.



You can designate a percentage amount even if your current net worth is negative right now! You may owe more in credit card debt, student debt, and mortgage than you have in dollar value of things you own. Who knows now the value of your estate at death? No one, and it might even be unexpectedly large.

In a future article, I will be more specific. For instance: what is the difference between leaving a general (undesignated) bequest to the church and leaving a bequest designated for a specific fund, such as the General Endowment Fund or the Social Justice Endowment Fund or the Capital Fund? What is the Umbrella Giving that UUA offers, by which you can benefit any UU organization (such as Camp deBenneville Pines, UUA itself, your church, a theological school)? How can I donate assets now (and get charitable deduction now) but still get income as long as I live?

For starters, check out information online at www.uua.org/giftplanning. Or call for a sampler kit: 888-792-5885. You can also contact the current chair of Planned Giving, Susan Riegel Harding at ssrh41@cox.net or 619-281-3815

An Interview with Else Zala

BY Robert McMahon

Some of the most interesting people in the world can be found at our church, and some sing in our choir. This month's interviewee is Elsie Zala, an alto. Here are her words:

"My parents were Hungarian immigrants, and I grew up in a New York City working-poor tenement neighborhood. I sang in glee clubs all the way through public school, but I was extremely shy - hard to believe? When I attended Hunter College and University of Michigan, I was told

that I had a nice voice and if I'd learn a few chords on the guitar, I could develop my own singing style and it would help my self-confidence. I specialized in anti-war songs (this was in the '40s) and freedom songs, especially "Black Blues". Later, married with kids, I guess I was a professional folk singer, because I had gigs (for pay) on weekends

at coffee houses and parties all around L.A. On many Saturday nights, I donned my long Madras hippy dress, layers of beads, yanked out the hundreds of bobby pins that held my beehive hairdo in place, grabbed my guitar case and off I went.

"Arvid sermonized recently about following your passion(s). Listening to him made me realize I had several that I have followed, including: learning languages, studying, music, travel, writing, and teaching. In graduate schools (Columbia, Cal State LA, UCLA) I studied languages, later rehab counseling, and ultimately psychology. I retired as a part-time

professor/ psychotherapist when I was 76. I've even combined some of my passions giving training programs and presentations abroad: South Africa, the Soviet Union including Siberia, Japan, and many European countries. This past October, I gave a workshop in Edinburgh, Scotland on the joys and sorrows of aging. At 84, I should know something about that, right? In the writing department, I have produced about 40 short stories, some of which have been published in now defunct (my fault?) off-beat magazines. I've finished a novel which I hope to do something with in 2010.



"In the middle '90s, I joined the choir and have been a steady member since, except for this past year's hiatus. In the late '90s, I was co-president of the choir (I think that job has long since been downsized) and as such was a member of the music committee

and the choir-attire committee. I've given a workshop at de Benneville, have run a grief group with Larry Porter, and for quite a few years led a group for church seniors. In 1999, I spent a week in Transylvania with Sandor Mathé (minister of our partner church), who showed me the beautiful Romanian countryside and lovely Unitarian churches.

"Little known fact: When I was 10, I sang in Madison Square Garden with several thousand other glee club kids in honor of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and the president's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt. I was so nervous you'd think I was singing a solo!"

Staff

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Martha "Mar" Cárdenas, South Bay Ministry Leader
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ONLINE: Important E-mail Addresses

FirstWords Submissions: nfisk1@juno.com

To be added to the E-mail List:

firstwords@firstuusandiego.org

Facilities (request for maintenance):

facilities@firstuusandiego.org

General First Church E-mail: mail@firstuusandiego.org

Scheduling of Church Property Requests:

schedule@firstuusandiego.org

Order of Service submissions: oos@firstuusandiego.org

The Window submissions (Church bulletin):

[window@firstuusandiego.org](mailto>window@firstuusandiego.org)

First Church Web Sites:

Main Website: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org>

South Bay Campus: <http://uusouthbay.org>

Webmaster: website@firstuusandiego.org

Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FirstWords,
 4190 Front Street, San Diego, CA, 92103.



FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO

4190 Front Street
San Diego, CA 92103-2098

Phone: 619-298-9978

Fax: 619-298-9997

E-mail: mail@FirstUUSanDiego.org

Unitarian Cooperative Preschool Phone: 619-295-9860