



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## The Channing Society

BY Susan Riegel Harding

Last month, Joan Cudhea wrote an article entitled Legacy to Our Spiritual Home. She is intending to follow up with more specifics in another article, but I thought I would write about The Channing Society here at First Church as a first step in the process. Many of you may not have heard about it, much less understand how it works. Hopefully this will make it clearer for you.

There is a beautiful sculpture, Sustainers of the Flame, over the fireplace in Bard Hall with the names of people who are members of The Channing Society. These people became members by one or both of two ways: (1) donating \$1,000 or more directly to the Endowment and (2) by filling out a form stating that they have named First Church in their will or estate plan. This form is held in the office in a locked file. Membership in The Channing Society is an immediate and tangible recognition of your gift and/or your further intentions to be part of creating an enduring legacy for the future of our beloved community.

This is not a small, exclusive club of major donors. About 100 of our active members belong and 20 new members usually join each

year. An annual reception is held to honor new members. You do not need to make the gift in cash. When I joined, I didn't have that kind of extra cash at the time. However, because I believe in the idea of generosity for a community that gives me so much in the way of community and love, I filled out the form leaving a percentage of my estate to the church upon my death.



Please think about joining The Channing Society. As Joan said, you don't need to wait until you're over 50. You can do it whenever you write a will or create an estate plan. Who knows what 1 or 2 percent of your estate will be upon your death? It's only important to make the commitment. It's a wonderful feeling and you really have a different sensation of belonging!

If you have further questions, the office staff would be happy to provide you with a list of our committee members. I and they are always happy to assist in becoming a member of The Channing Society.

Susan Riegel Harding  
Chair, Planned Giving Committee

# Arvid's Arcana: Some Things I Know to be True

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube



Ask yourself often, "What is the compassionate response."

In a relationship, don't drag up the past. Don't remind your partner of his/her mistakes of the past.

What other people think of you is none of your business. Stick to your own integrity.

Get rid of anything that is not useful, beautiful or joyful.

No matter how bad or how good the present circumstance, it will change.

Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.

No matter what, take time to care of your body, your spiritual health, your core relationships, and your intellect. Write these activities in your schedule!

Breathe.

Come back to the moment.

Take in something beautiful every day.

Count your blessings.

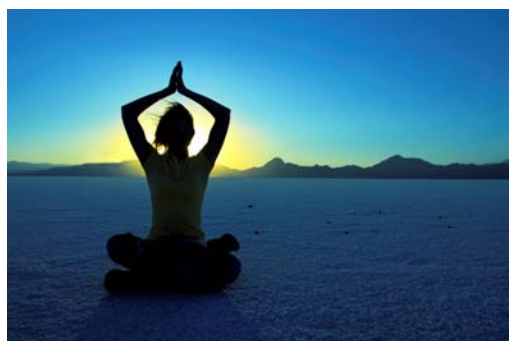
Give something to someone every day, even if just a kind word or a smile.

And in the words of my late friend, Forrest Church:

Be who you are.

Do what you can.

Want what you have.



## February 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.

February's **Transformational Theme** is **Prayer and Spiritual Practice.**

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

**February 7—South Bay**

**"Dear God...It's me, Kathleen."** - Rev. Kathleen Owens

**February 7—Hillcrest**

**February 14—South Bay**

**"Hopefully Devoted"** - Elka Cartmell Ladd  
Where does spiritual practice and social media intersect? What gifts can our web presence bring to our spiritual lives?

**Vespers, February 10—Hillcrest**

**"Standing on the Side of Love"** - Rev. Kathleen Owens

**February 14—Hillcrest**

**February 21—South Bay**

**"Approaching Prayer"** - Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

Whatever your view of prayer, other people experience it differently. Be prepared to have your understanding broadened and deepened. The music for the service will include chanted and sung prayers from several traditions.

**February 21—Hillcrest**

**February 28—South Bay**

**"Religion Beyond Belief"** - Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President

**February 28—Hillcrest**

**March 7—South Bay**

# Family Rituals and Traditions

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

Valentine's Day jumps into your mind the minute you think of February. Giving and receiving valentines is the tradition. Thinking about this tradition and about similar rituals reminded me about the wonderful resources available for creating your own traditions and rituals.

Meg Cox has written a wonderful book called The Book of New Family Traditions: How to Create Great Rituals for Holidays and Everyday. She has several ideas for Valentine's Day. There's a "What's Sweet About You

Poster." You create a poster for an individual titled *What's Sweet About* \_\_\_\_ and you glue heart shaped pieces of paper on the poster with a specific trait you love about that person. Cox also suggests creating a family Book of Love – a blank book into which family members can write loving thoughts about other member of the family. She also suggests a Red Food Night for Valentine's Day, creating a Valentine Tree, and giving Have-a-Heart awards.

Skinner House has published a book by Virginia Lang and Louise Nayer called How to Bury a Gold Fish: And Other Ceremonies and Celebrations for Everyday Life. Among lots of wonderful ideas for celebrations and traditions for traditional holidays, transitions, losses, and everyday events, these authors suggest a "Valentine's Day Without a Valentine." This is an opportunity to become a secret valentine for someone else for example those in hospitals and nursing homes. They suggest taking

"Personal and family traditions and rituals help us make meaning of our world and create lasting memories and bonds."

red carnations with notes attached and either passing them out among the patients, or giving them to staff to pass out. They also suggest Valentine's Day as a time to love yourself by giving yourself the time and freedom to do what you love.

Personal and family traditions and rituals help us make meaning of our world and create lasting memories and bonds. There are several sites on the Internet that explore such traditions and rituals. Two do so in a Unitarian Universalist context. Meg Cox wrote a wonderful article for UU World on Family Traditions that you can find at <http://www.uuworld.org/2003/04/feature2.html>. The Rev. Pill Lund has a piece on the UUA Web Site on "What does a Unitarian Universalist Home Look Like?" at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/19872.shtml>.

I encourage you to think about the ways you celebrate both the special and the everyday. Creating traditions for yourself and/or your family can give greater meaning and purpose and offer an opportunity for depth and spiritual growth. I'd love to hear about your own rituals and traditions. If you'd like to talk about creating your own rituals and traditions please call me.

Liz Jones



# Bard Hall Project Update

BY Kath Hillery, Chair of the Campus Project Oversight Team

Two different efforts are happening simultaneously as the project moves forward:

First, the church has contracted with Platt/Whitelaw Architects (PWA) to fully develop the documents needed for Swinerton Builders to establish the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) Contract. This effort involves fully detailing the plans to the level required for permits and building construction. This process is proceeding well, with the entire team (PWA, Southern Cross Property Consultants, and Swinerton) continuing to find ways to make the project more efficient and less costly while still maintaining the quality, aesthetic, and function aspects of the design.

Second, the project has been submitted to Development Services for Planning Department approvals. We have received back the initial cycle comments from this submission and Southern Cross and PWA have been working to respond to them. Several new requirements were presented, including the creation of a Biologist Report documenting the flora and fauna in and adjacent to the project (including the canyon) and any possible impacts from the project and a Historic Resources Technical Report because Bard Hall is more than 45 years old. Consultants have been retained to produce both reports,



and so far the preliminary findings are positive and should have minimal impact on the project. One of the challenges the team has been faced with is the reduction in City Staff which has impacted the process in two ways; by both slowing down the review process, but also by what appears to be an increase in the amount of comments and the requests for additional information or reports. Regardless we are pushing City staff to help move the project as rapidly as we can, and based on other projects we see moving through the City our situation is not unique.

The team continues to push to move the process along as quickly as we responsibly can. One factor working in our favor is that construction prices have been holding steady at some of the lowest levels seen in recent years. The entire team is committed to having the project through the Planning approval process and the GMP ready for congregational approval so we can move forward with the construction of the new Bard Hall as soon as possible.



# Budget Deficit at First Church

BY Everett Howe, Vice President

In December, First Church members and friends were sent a letter informing them that the church expects a large income shortfall for the fiscal year ending in June. Dealing with this shortfall will require significant cuts in church activity this spring; this includes the very real possibility of leave without pay for the staff. In this note, I will discuss the cause of the shortfall, the steps being taken to address it, and the things you can do to help.

Each year, the church takes in about \$1,400,000 and spends nearly the same amount. More than half of the income comes from pledge payments and non-pledge gifts. But our parking lot contributes nearly \$500,000 to our income — 35 percent of the budget. Our budget problem is due not to increased expenses, but rather to an unexpected drop in parking income.

Each day, about 35 fewer people are parking in the First Church lot than on the same day last year. This daily decrease translates into a yearly loss of around \$80,000. (According to Ace Parking, lots all over town are experiencing similar decreases.)



The December letter mentioned the parking income shortfall and asked members and friends to consider a year-end gift to First Church. As a result, 27 generous people do-



ated \$17,000 in one-time gifts, and 5 members increased their pledges. The church board and staff are very grateful to these members and friends for their generosity.

But even with these gifts, our budget will not be balanced without \$60,000 in cuts. In consultation with the Finance Committee, Arvid and Kathleen, our Lead and Associate Ministers, together with Karen Walter, the church Director of Operations, have searched the budget for ways to cut expenses while maintaining the church's core mission. Among other cuts, the Saturday Mosaic service has been discontinued, and Ministry Teams will be asked to essentially freeze their spending until July.

The hardest cuts to make involve the church staff. About 70 percent of our budget goes to payroll for our full- and part-time staff members. Unless the income situation improves, First Church plans to furlough its staff and close down for a week this spring; additional furloughs are possible.

How can you help? The best way would be a one-time gift or an increase in your pledge for the rest of the year. Checks are accepted at the church office, and credit card gifts can be made through the "Giving" tab on the church home page (<http://www.firstusandiego.org>).

# Elevator Speeches

BY Nancy Fisk

“What do you believe? What do you do at church? Do you pray? Why are you guys so political? Where do you get your comfort? Do you believe in God?”

adults compiled a list of questions they are often asked as Unitarian Universalists. Some of those questions included: What is Unitarian Universalism? What do you believe? What do you do at church? Do you pray? Why are you guys so political? Where do you get your comfort? Do you believe in God? Do you believe in heaven or hell?

I found the questions intriguing and remembered some of the answers I've given over the years. I don't think Unitarian-Universalists need one elevator speech; I think they need several when fielding the myriad questions that come after answering the question “What church do you go to?” with “I'm a Unitarian Universalist.”

I attended the YRUU Winter camp at the end of December. At that camp, they ran a workshop called the Elevator Speech. The past UUA president, Bill Sinkford, thought every UU should have a speech about Unitarian Universalism that could be given in the space of time provided when riding between floors in an elevator. In the workshop, youth and



This is my elevator speech, in answer to those questions: Unitarian Universalism allows people to choose the path their spirituality will take. At church, the minister gives sermons on what it means to be a good person and how to influence the world in a positive way. Unitarian Universalists support social justice causes and champion the rights of anyone who is oppressed. What gives me comfort is the idea that I belong to a community that supports people in all stages of life, from childhood to youth to adulthood, from being single, married, divorced, or widowed. At the end of life, instead of saying someone has gone to heaven, the memorial service celebrates what a person has meant to the community and how their influence will continue beyond their physical life.

There are as many answers to these questions as there are UUs to ask. What are your answers? What is your elevator speech? I hope you'll send some of your thoughts to me, and I'll include them in a First Words column.

“What gives me comfort is the idea that I belong to a community that supports people in all stages of life, from childhood to youth to adulthood, from being single, married, divorced or widowed.”



A few months back David McCain volunteered to be interviewed but was in the middle of moving, so

it took us a while to connect. David was initially rather, "to the point," and I had to prod him for more data. Imagine, a Unitarian Universalist that doesn't have lots to say about himself, so I just kept badgering him and here's what he said:

"In late 2001 I was looking for a new church home after many years as a Methodist. I had been on the First UU Campus in 1992 at a Conflict Resolution Training sponsored by the United Nations Association. I remember enjoying the feel of Bard Hall and the Patio, and knowing that First UU was relatively close to my home, I went to their website for more information. I saw that the next Sunday service by Tom Owen-Toole was titled Save the Males. I was intrigued. I attended that service on January 13, 2002 and immediately fell in love with Tom because I enjoyed his wisdom and the emotion and vulnerability he conveyed. I joined the church a few months later.

"Since then, I've been involved in numerous activities ranging from one year on the Board of Trustees to teaching (rather, playing with) 2s & 3s through the RE program. I am absolutely enamored with the intergenerational element of our institution. There are a number of people that I have been connected to as they have grown from cute children to cute teens. And there are those on the other end of the age spectrum that I have befriended and mourned, as they crossed over into mystery.

"My fondest memories at First Church have to be the All-Church Dance I attended in February 2002. I love to dance and I love people! What made it extra-special were the folks I

## An Interview with David McCain

BY Robert McMahon

danced with: an infant (Nancie Helders) and an "80something" (among many others)! I passionately desire full immersion in an intergenerational, diverse community. Another lucid memory is the most recent Variety Show. The acts were marvelous. The sense of community was enlivening. And I not only wrote and directed several skits and acts in the show, I sang an original song (Bott's Dotts, about the raised, reflective objects on California's Highways), and I danced like a wild man (this is my way) while Chris Kennedy shared her original work of Rap Music Art!

"My recent involvement with the Intern Committee has also been very rich. I more than aspire to be in partnership with all people I meet. I want to apply my skills to live that aspiration relentlessly in each and every moment. My experience with this committee has allowed me to do that. Working with the ministers and the other mem-

bers of the committee in selecting a new intern was very fulfilling. Through this work, I had the pleasure of interacting with several "bright stars" of the "UUuniverse" including our current intern, Elka.

"I endeavor, first, to be present to what's happening in me (my feelings and needs) with compassion and, second, to focus my attention on what's happening in those around me. My intention is to dance with these presences in ways that support the creation of heaven on earth in each moment. I live this philosophy by helping people and organizations of all types and flavors develop their capacity to create the world of their dreams."

"My intention is to dance with these presences in ways that support the creation of heaven on earth in each moment."

**Staff**

*Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube, Lead Minister*  
*Rev. Kathleen Owens, Associate Minister*  
*Elka Cartmell Ladd, 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, RE Assistant/ Adult Education Coordinator*  
*Kenneth F. Herman, Director of Music*  
*Suzette Southfox, Director of Community Life*  
*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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