



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Peace Resource Center—May's Generosity Offering Recipient

by John Schaibly

Each month our Generosity Offerings go to local charities whose values are congruent with UU values. May's offering will go to the San Diego Peace Resource Center (PRC) (<http://www.prcsd.org>).

Now in its 30th year, the center continues to provide a consistent presence in the San Diego community, speaking out against violence in all of its forms and providing a voice for peaceful, nonviolent ways to solve interpersonal, community and global problems. First UU Church was one of six local founding organizations and continues to be an organizational partner.

The mission of the Peace Resource Center is:

- ✧ **Educating** the public on peace and social justice issues
- ✧ **Facilitating** communication and networking among peace-related groups
- ✧ **Functioning** as a central clearinghouse for information about community, national and international peace and social justice efforts and activities
- ✧ **Consulting** on peace education, program planning and nonviolent conflict resolution
- ✧ **Publishing an up-to-date Peace Calendar** on the web at www.prcsd.org/webcalendar
- ✧ **Providing** speakers, trainers and workshops on a variety of peace-related topics, including nonviolent methods

- ✧ **Promoting** dialogue and understanding of the causes of violence and militarism and promoting ideas for constructive nonviolent actions and solutions
- ✧ **Mobilizing** members for action.

Specific projects in 2009 included:

- ✧ Teaching Peace, Conflict Resolution and Nonviolence,
- ✧ Children and Nonviolence Program
- ✧ High School Peace Writing Contest
- ✧ Creating a Culture of Peace workshops
- ✧ Creating Peace and Social Justice
- ✧ Participation in annual community events
- ✧ Coordination of special programs
- ✧ Providing speakers for events
- ✧ Conducting media interviews

The Peace Resource Center is also completing a new straw-bale environmentally green building to house their staff and staffs from our collaborative partners, the First Church of the Brethren, the San Diego Friends Meeting and the American Friends Service Committee (San Diego Area).

During the month of May, your tax-deductible offering will support this worthy organization and its work to bring peace to our community and the world.



The Peace Resource Center of San Diego

Working for Peace, Social Justice, and the Environment Since 1980



Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

Before I ever entered the ministry, I imagined that being a minister meant sitting in a comfortable study, reading and thinking profound thoughts. Then I would summarize those thoughts in a sermon to be presented each Sunday to a grateful and mesmerized congregation. From time to time I would welcome others into my study for the purpose of offering sage advice. Hah!

The reality, I soon found out, is the overwhelming amount of time ministers spend doing their jobs has to do with organizational matters--meetings, preparing for meetings, planning, interacting with staff and lay leaders. I do take a whole day on each week that I am preaching for sermon preparation. And I get to teach, which I enjoy. But there is not that much time for reading and study, really. And the profound thoughts, such as they are, come on the fly, or in my daily spiritual practice. Most of the reading and study that does get done happens during my study leave in the summer when most of the sermons for the coming church year are planned.

Recognizing the need for time away from the press of ordinary ministry obligations to think, and to experience life at a different pace and from other perspectives, almost all minister's Letters of Agreement include provisions for a Sabbatical Leave from time to time. This congregation is very familiar with this practice since my predecessors, Revs. Tom and Carolyn Owen-Towle, took several sabbaticals during their 24 years of service. The Board has approved a Sabbatical Leave for me for the 2010-2011 Church year. Since Tom and Carolyn were married, they both left on sabbatical at the same time. But in our present situation, Rev. Kathleen Owens will be maintaining continuity of ministry during the weeks that I am gone, aided by the capable Sue Magidson, who will be our intern minister next year.

I plan to take this leave in two separate installments, since I don't want to be out of touch with all of you for months at a time. The first half will be from September 15-November 30. I plan to spend that time in Mexico. First, I will be living with a Mexican family and learning Spanish. For the rest of the time Sonya will join me as we travel in Mexico. This is recognition that because San Diego, the site of my ministry, is a border city, this immersion in the language and culture of Mexico will enrich my ministry. First Church's brand new web site will make it possible for me to send blogs, letting me keep you up to date on what I'm doing and learning.

I will take the remainder of this sabbatical from January 15-March 31. This will be writing and study time. I've been asked by many of you to make available in manuscript form two sermon series: UU Spiritualities and Gandhi's Seven Social Sins. This will take some work since I preach from notes and not a manuscript. I'll put those sermon series together in book form and make them widely available, perhaps self publishing them or publishing them online.

May 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.

May's **Transformational Theme** is **Truth**

May 2—Hillcrest

Dragged Kicking And Screaming Into Heaven

- Pulpit Guest: Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed

May 2—South Bay

Saved for What? From What?

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

May 9—Hillcrest

Truth: To Tell or Not to Tell

- Rev. Kathleen Owens

May 9—South Bay

Dragged Kicking And Screaming Into Heaven

- Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed

May 12—Vespers, Hillcrest

Two Truths and a Lie

- Elka Cartmell Ladd, Intern Minister

May 16—Hillcrest

Music Celebration Sunday

Every spring all of our music ensembles join together to celebrate our faith through music. All four choirs will join in Jim Papoulis' contemporary anthem "Can You Hear?" and the Chalice Choir will sing Brent Pierce's "Hosanna." Each of our handbell choirs will ring, including **Roy Attridge's arrangement of Mascagni's "Intermezzo Sinfonico"** and the lively postlude "Ragtime." Our vibrant Youth Choir will contribute "Listen to the Sound of My Voice." The JUUL Tones will sing "Heleluyan" (arr. Jerry Ulrich) and "Love Learns by Laughing" (arr. Thomas Morley). Come to listen and be refreshed with great music. – Ken Herman Music Director

May 16—South Bay

Considering Prayer

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

May 23, 9:30 am—Hillcrest

Lies and Lying

- Presented by the youth program.

May 23, 11:30 am—Hillcrest

Bridging Service—Circles, Cycles, and Rites

May 23—South Bay

Truth: To Tell or Not to Tell

- Rev. Kathleen Owens, Live

May 30—Hillcrest

Right View

This is the first in an occasional series of sermons inspired by the Buddhist path to spiritual liberation, The Noble 8 Fold Path.

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

May 30—South Bay

- Rev. Kathleen Owens, Live

Maglipay Universalist

BY Liz Jones, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry

“Maglipay Universalist” “Be Joyful Universalist” is the English translation of the title of the hymn written by Toribio Quimada, the founder of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines. It keeps coming back to my mind as so appropriate in expressing the impressions of my visit to many of our partner congregations in the Philippines. Everywhere we went I came away with such a sense of joy. These are people and congregations with almost nothing in terms of material possessions who at the same time have a great joy in their faith. I was humbled to think of how much we have in material possessions, and how seldom I see or feel the kind of joy in my life or in our congregation. This is what I bring back with me - a need to figure out the meaning of this observation for me and my work here.

I led two religious education workshops while on Negros. Preparing was a learning experience in itself. Trying to figure out what I would present made me realize how culturally embedded our religious education is. I finally realized that I needed to focus them on teaching through story (parable). As an example, I chose to use the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, believing it was universal enough that it was a safe choice. I was surprised when I asked where in their life experience they had seen examples of people passing by a hurt or dying person and not getting involved and they had no such experiences - they lived in such close knit communities that the idea of walking past someone in that condition was not conceivable to them. I feel like I am just beginning to grasp the cultural differences. I learned that Reli-

gious Education for all ages is very important to them. They need some basic training in good teaching techniques and some lesson plan outlines that they can adapt for their own use.

I feel full to overflowing with other pieces of information, images, ideas, and concerns. I am sure that I could not have absorbed any more information in this visit. The land is beautiful; the people we met were joyful and gracious. On the Island of Negros, pride in keeping everything clean and beautiful was clearly evident. Song and dance filled every one of our congregational visits. I keep seeing the faces of all the children who were at moment shy and at others joyfully sharing their talents and homes with us. I also learned more of the history and the structure of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines. We share so much and in some ways we are so different.

The five of us who went on this trip are planning to make a report. Please take the time to come and learn about ways that we can move forward in our partnership with Malingin.



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What's UP with our First Church Endowments

BY Joan Cudhea

The Market Value, that is what is up! That is good news because we receive quarterly distributions as a constant percent (5%) of the market value, averaged over the last 13 quarters. And when the market meltdown happened, that meant our income from the endowment was also down. Now we can look forward to slowly increasing income.

President Susan Weaver and I joined a quarterly conference call held in February about our endowment investment, and heard words like "spectacular" and "out of the ball park" and "top 8% of endowments in our size range."

There is good news, too, about the International Equity portion of the total portfolio, and its new bent toward Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) justice.

First, some background. In the January 2010 *First Words*, I wrote "Legacy to Our Spiritual Home" in which I suggested specifying a percentage gift legacy in your will or trust for the future benefit of our church home. I wrote that I would be more specific in a future article. I want you to be proud of how your bequest will be invested.

The church actually has three endowment funds: the General Endowment, the Social Justice Endowment, and the Helen Meyers Endowment. This article will focus solely on the General Endowment. This is the one that generates perpetual income for our operations.

The General Endowment is invested, in a very sophisticated manner, in a pool of investments called the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF). Broad policy is established by the UUA Board of Trustees and implemented by the Board-appointed Investment Committee and Treasurer. They engage an Investment Consultant and 15 investment managers with specialties in different asset classes.

You can find many details at www.uua.org/leaders/finance/endowment/index.shtml.

The value of our General Endowment at the end of 2009 was \$534,959, an increase (\$96,270) of 22 percent above the market value at the end of 2008. We also received \$28,618 in distributions in the 2009 calendar year.

The UUCEF 2009 annualized return after expenses was 27.1 percent. The three-year annualized return was 1.3 percent, and the five-year annualized return was 3.0%.

The UUA has engaged in extensive ESG activity this year, by filing 12 shareholder resolutions, and as the lead filer on 11 of these. Two resolutions were filed on climate change (one withdrawn because the company will address the issue, and even said it is necessary to "succeed in a de-carbonized world"). Four corporations are challenged on executive compensation, and five corporations have been asked to add gender identity and expression to their already existing policies for non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Home Depot has already agreed to do this, so this resolution has been withdrawn! Verizon is "trying every trick in the book" to keep this resolution off the proxy ballot. Stay tuned!





The Importance of Congregational Singing

BY Dana Decker

Well it's been about a year and a half since I was hired as the Contemporary Worship Associate at First Unitarian Universalist San Diego. It has been a great experience so far and it's been wonderful to meet so many great folks at both the Hillcrest and South Bay campuses.

I wanted to talk a little about something that I've been thinking about quite a bit since I started working at First U.U. and that is the importance of congregational singing. At my last job at Sepulveda U.U. Society in North Hills, CA I was the music director for the Soulful Sunday services. The Soulful Sunday services were bi-monthly and were high energy services with a lot of upbeat music, congregational participation, drama, and dancing.

Though there was congregational singing it was a lot different in nature than the singing we do each week in South Bay or once a month (with the band) in Hillcrest. These services were more performance oriented, almost like a concert, and though successful, did not have that special component that comes from a congregation, spiritually engaged, through song.

I've found that when singing with the same group of people week in and week out something very special happens as we all start to learn a body of music together. There are the obvious things that occur: we sing with more conviction, we sing in tune and with stronger rhythm, we find new and important meaning

in the lyrics. But there are also subtle, maybe less obvious, and I would argue, more important things taking place as well.

When a congregation really sings together there is something that happens that is more than the technical elements of correct pitch, rhythm, or lyrics. When a congregation lets themselves feel and experience the music on that other level it becomes something larger than just making music: it becomes an act of worship. The congregational singing then becomes an integral part of the worship service which takes the service to a place it wouldn't have gone without the music.

As a music director there is nothing more rewarding than when all of the musical concerns fall away and you become lost in the spiritual experience of making music. And when you can do that with the congregation, it becomes something even more special. It doesn't happen every week or on every song but I've felt it becoming a more and more common experience the longer I sing with you. As we sing together as a group, and join our voices in song, we create something larger than ourselves. Our singing enhances our spiritual experience while enriching the worship experience for those around us. The most beautiful part is that it can only happen when we come together each week in these sacred spaces we've created in Hillcrest and South Bay.

Singing with the congregation is one of the most wonderful parts of my job and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to worship with all of you each week. I look forward to many more opportunities to worship with you in song.



Facebook with Awareness

BY Elka Cartmell Ladd, Intern Minister

What makes prayer different than talking to yourself? What makes walking a labyrinth different than wandering around in circles? What makes meditation different than just sitting around, staring off into space? What makes posting or responding to a Facebook status more than just a purely social activity?

I aspire to bring my whole self, as a spiritual being, to each moment. Being human and not enlightened, I do not always succeed, but there is something to be treasured in my trying. With all of the rabbit holes one can get caught in within the vastness of cyberspace, it is that much harder sometimes, but then that much more rewarding when I am able to transcend the ordinary to connect with something greater than myself.



A little knowledge about the features of Facebook can go a long way in helping keep me on track. I have organized my friends into categories based on how I know them or what level of personal closeness we have. This allows me to essentially turn off all of the rest of the noise of Facebook for a minute and hone in on whoever I feel compelled to connect with.

Making categories also allows me to set my privacy settings, so that those people who went to seminary with me have access to a different level of information on my page than those I went to high school with, for example. This allows me to offer something of myself in the Facebook world only to those who I choose. When I am in need of support, or celebrating a success or joy, it is

heartwarming to send it to my friends and hear their responses. I feel seen and heard. It is uplifting to me as well, when I am able to respond to the posts of others when they reflect on something truly important in their lives.

People share deep parts of themselves on Facebook, so I want to show them the respect and honor that they deserve. One of the perceived dangers of the rise of email and now social media is that the distance created by the computer screen will lead people to be less human and caring with one another. We do not have to look someone directly in the face, so we are not as gentle with our comments as we might otherwise be. In bringing spiritual awareness to this space, I remind myself of the real person that I care about sitting at their computer. I see God in each moment of true connection and it is truly something special when Facebook connections can feel like a mystical experience.

Just as with other, more widely recognized, spiritual practices, much of the spiritual gratification is delayed. Our awareness of each other on Facebook helps us to be able to go that much deeper when we are able to see each other. We are already up to date on each other's small-talk lives. We can cut right to what is really happening within our hearts and minds and spirits. And those kinds of conversations are deeply spiritual experiences, indeed.





Sharon Wylie

Sharon was an active member of the Earth Centered Spirituality Group at First Church. This is an update on her journey to becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister.

Where do you live?

My partner, Peter, and I live in Berkeley. I am in my second year at Starr King School for the Ministry, pursuing a Master of Divinity degree, one of the many requirements of becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister. Peter works for the City of Berkeley, so we are in the fortunate and enjoyable situation of being able to walk to work, school, restaurants, post office... almost everywhere we need to go. A Trader Joe's is supposed to be opening in May about four blocks from where we live, and then we'll really never need our cars!

Where are you on your path to ministry?

I had an interview with the Western Regional Subcommittee on Candidacy (WRSCC) in October, and they approved my becoming a "candidate," which basically means I've moved from "step 1" to "step 2." And in November, the First Church Board of Trustees voted to sponsor me, which—according to the UUA—"indicates confidence in the person's potential and suitability for UU ministry.... congregational sponsorship [is regarded] as evidence that the person seeking fellowship is actively committed to Unitarian Universalism and the institutions which uphold our faith tradition."

The Care and Feeding of Seminararians

An Interview with Sharon Wylie

So...yay! I'm so grateful to First Church for agreeing to sponsor me. First Church remains my spiritual home, and the more I study and learn about ministry and congregational life, the prouder I am to come from such a healthy and dynamic congregation.

What comes next?

Next year I will be the intern minister at the Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church in Hayward, CA. The internship counts as my third year of school (I get course credit), so I hope to graduate in May 2011. Then I'm scheduled to interview with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee ("step 3") in September 2011. The next steps in this process won't be clear until I've had that interview, but it still feels good to know what I'm doing for the next year and a half. There's a lot of uncertainty on this journey, and I've grown fond of saying I have hopes, not plans.

First Church continues to have congregants called to ministry. Any advice for them?

My advice is for the entire First Church community, not just future seminararians. It is hard to move away from one's spiritual community and continue to feel connected. Every time I have come home to First Church to visit, I have felt welcomed AND I have felt awkward. There are new faces, new classes, new programs. The community continues to grow and change, and I have grown and changed too. It can feel challenging to stay connected.

All the ways that First Church is able to reach out have helped me: through the super card I received when I first left, the Facebook friends I am in touch with, the emailed announcements, the weekly Window, the monthly First Words. My advice to the First Church community is to never stop reaching out, and my advice to seminararians is to know that change (and even awkwardness) is part of this path we're on.

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