



FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Day of Action In Arizona

by Julie Schauble



When I first heard that a delegation from San Diego was going to march in Phoenix for immigration reform on the last weekend in May – and that Unitarian Universalists would be among them – I found myself being pulled to go. The

task was a little scary: marching five miles in 90-some degree weather. I am overweight, approaching middle age, and have very fair skin. I was also concerned when the members of the May 1st Coalition – one of our partner organizations in the march – talked about people being pepper-sprayed during previous marches. But I also read the stirring call from Phoenix UU minister Susan Frederick-Gray for UUs around the country to come and support them in this action. So, in spite of my nervousness, I committed to going.

I drove there with Mar Cardenas, from the South Bay campus. I had fun getting to know some fellow UUs better as well as practicing my Spanish with a new friend. The march itself was exciting – physically exhausting but emotionally energizing. I was overwhelmed by the sea of people that stretched as far as you could see forward and backward, and all the way across the street. All was peaceful, well-organized and optimistic. Unlike some previous immigration actions, the participants were of every age and ethnicity. It was impossible to keep a group of marchers together but whenever we fell behind or pushed ahead, we would encounter another group of UUs in “Standing on the Side of Love” T-shirts.

The last mile or so of the walk, when Mar and I had lost the rest of the group, we were getting weary. But every now and then, somebody on

the sidewalk would cheer for us or say “Oh, Unitarians – you guys are everywhere!” -- and that would reinvigorate us.



Why did I feel compelled to take action on immigration reform? I think our current laws offend my values in so many ways. The values I was raised with as to believe that Americans hold – that all people have an “inalienable right to ... life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and our national mythology as a country built by immigrants are offended by our denying people pursuing the same freedom and opportunity as my ancestors the chance to be part of the American dream. The Christian values I was raised with -- “love your neighbor as yourself” and “whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me” -- are offended by policies that hurt the most vulnerable among us and tear apart families. And I don't see how I, as a UU, could say that I “affirm and promote ... justice, equity, and compassion” if I accept that the freedom and opportunity I hold dear are denied to people based on the circumstances of their birth.

I feel like I'm fighting for the soul of my country, and I hope you will join me in the struggle.

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Arvid's Arcana

BY Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

An Anthology Of Doubt

As I grow older, doing theology for me becomes less a matter of collecting beliefs and more a matter of really examining and questioning beliefs I have long held and subjecting them to the question: Is this really true? How do I know? As a result, my ambition is to know less and less. Here are some quotes that are meaningful to me from some of the questioning philosophers of human history.

Nobody surely doubts, however, that he lives and remembers and understands and wills and thinks and knows and judges. At least, even if he doubts, he lives, if he doubts, he remembers why he's doubting; if he doubts, he has a will to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows he does not know; if he doubts, he judges he ought not to give a hasty ascent. You may have your doubts about anything else, but you should have no doubts about these; if they were not certain, you would not be able to doubt anything.—*St. Augustine*

Several years have now elapsed since I first became aware that I had accepted, even from my youth, many false opinions for true, and that consequently what I afterward based on such principles was highly doubtful; and from that time I was convinced of the necessity of undertaking once in my life to rid myself of all the opinions I had adopted, and of commencing anew the work of building from the foundation, if I desired to establish a firm and abiding superstructure in the sciences. But as this enterprise appeared to me to be one of great magnitude, I waited until I had attained an age so mature as to leave me no hope that at any stage of life more advanced I should be better able to execute my design. On this account, I have delayed so long that I should henceforth consider I was doing wrong were I still to consume in deliberation any of the time that now remains for action. To-day, then, since I have opportunely freed my mind from all cares [and am happily disturbed by no passions], and since I am in the secure possession of leisure in a peaceable retirement, I will at length apply myself earnestly and freely to the general overthrow of all my former opinions.—*Descartes*

The great doubters and believers have been preoccupied with another great schism: the one between what human beings are and what we wish we were, what we do and what we understand. That we love, and that love, among other possibilities, brings forth life, is very strange. We cannot say it is inexplicable, and yet, when it happens (either true love, or conception, or both) we stand amazed. Love can drastically alter a rational person's world.

The birth of a child can bring extraordinarily religious feelings because it is such a good thing, but also because it makes no real sense. Where did this miniature human being come from? Technically, we made it out of nine month's worth of French toast, salad and lamb chops. Technically, our bodies hold tiny little instructions for how to build human eyes, a language center in a human brain, and a human spirit—fussy, joyful, or otherwise. But how strange that such a thing as fussy exists and is created thusly.—*Jennifer Michael Hecht, Doubt: A History*

July Sermons

Celebration Times:

Hillcrest Campus:

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

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

The summer's **Transformational Theme** is
Joy and Ecstasy

July 4—Hillcrest

You're Wrong! (More Often Than You Think.) So Am I.

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

This is the second in the series of sermons on the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Thought. The Noble Eight Fold Path is the Buddha's program for spiritual liberation.

July 4—South Bay

The Road to Social Justice: A Personal Journey

- Kristen Kuriga, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator (live)

July 11—Hillcrest

Goddess Past and Present

- Women's Federation (live)

July 11—South Bay

You're Wrong! (More Often Than You Think.) So Am I.

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

July 18—Hillcrest

Right Speech

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube (live)

The third in the series of sermons on the Noble Eightfold Path.

July 18—South Bay

Goddess Past and Present

- Women's Federation (pre-recorded)

July 25—Hillcrest

What If ... In 4-D?

- Rev. Kathleen Owens (live)

Our annual sci-fi sermon in honor of Comic-Con.

July 25—South Bay

Right Speech

- Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

President's Comments

BY Everett Howe, President, Board of Trustees

“Members and friends of First Church,

I would like to thank Susan for all of her work — for piloting us through the difficulties that arose this past year, and for helping to create the successes that we have celebrated here.

A few days ago, Susan and I participated in a tradition that has developed at First Church over the years: The outgoing board president takes her successor aside and says “One day, perhaps even while you are president, construction on Bard Hall will begin.” It looks like I will not continue this tradition with Marv, and that is good news.

Two and a half years ago the members of First Church voted to begin raising money to finance the rebuilding of Bard Hall and the reconstruction of our church campus. Since then, many people have worked very hard to realize our dream of an improved campus, but for those of us not directly involved with the project, the results of this work have not been tangible. The Campus Project Oversight Team, the Loan Committee, the church staff — they and others have been arranging for financing, working with our architects on building design, convincing the city's Historical Review Board that the current Bard Hall is not a modernist masterpiece — it's been a long, hard, road. But as we've traveled down this road we have not yet seen any bulldozers, and psychologically that's been difficult. That is why the milestone we are approaching — the demolition of the current Bard Hall, and the start of its reconstruction — is so important. It will make visible all of the work that we have done over the past few years.

There will be more work to do this year and in the future, not just for our building project but for our wider mission — work-

ing for justice in the world, encouraging the growth of our South Bay campus, providing for the spiritual needs of ourselves and our children — and I am confident that seeing our construction project commence will inspire and strengthen us in this work.

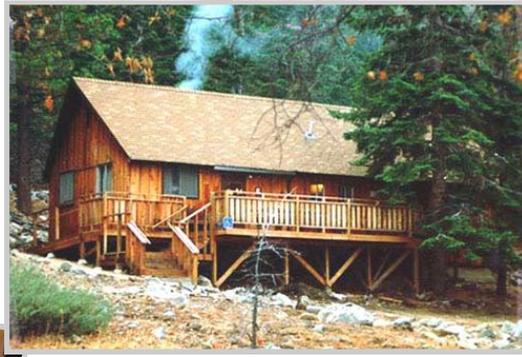
I am deeply honored to be board president for the coming year. As some of you know, I was raised completely unchurched, and the morals and philosophy of life that I developed grew from a number of sources. My parents, of course, were a primary source, but as for written words, the ones that spoke to me in an almost religious way as I grew up were the founding documents of our country: hopeful, eloquent, radical expressions of deeply-felt beliefs about what the world should be like and what action people should take to make it that way.

Those documents speak to our political life, and not so much to our daily moral lives. But here, in this congregation, I have found an equally hopeful, eloquent, radical expression of deeply-felt beliefs: “May love be the spirit of this church, may the quest for truth be its sacrament, and service be its prayer.”

I am grateful to all of you for the opportunity to serve.



Everett Howe



All-Church Camp 2010

camp de'benneville pines



Praying With Our Feet Report on the March For California Future

BY Jill Hansen, Social Justice Ministry Team (representing UUs at ICWJ)

On Wednesday, April 21st, I was proud to be part of the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (ICWJ) delegation that went to Sacramento to support the March for California's Future. We joined thousands of workers, college students, teachers, school nurses, and people in wheelchairs -- all facing cuts in pay, loans, or health benefits -- in completing the last few miles of a 365-mile march from Bakersfield to Sacramento that ended with a rally on the Capitol steps. "Wake up and smell the coffee!" was one of the rally's cries directed at Governor Schwarzenegger and California's legislators.

Our group of sixteen included two rabbis, an imam, a nun, a retired Roman Catholic priest, the Dean of St. Paul's Episcopal cathedral, and several other ministers from different denominations (UU Reverend Kathleen Green among them). "I still maintain that it was the most religiously diverse group of clergy and people of faith that have ever graced the Capital," said Rabbi Laurie Coskey, Executive Director of ICWJ. We also -- all sixteen of us -- had the opportunity to "grace" the offices of five Assembly members who we lobbied to stand up for low-wage workers and teachers by supporting a moral budget.

As Rabbi Ben Kamin eloquently described the event in *Examiner.com*, "The pain and anguish of so many little people, from sanitation workers to bus drivers, from nurses to middle school teachers, compelled all of us to walk, sing, and pray together with both outrage and dignity."

If you would like to get involved with ICWJ events to support low-wage workers, teachers, and immigrants, please contact Jill Hansen at jillhan329@gmail.com.

Netiquette and Our Covenant of Good Relations

BY Susan McLeod, Chair, Good Relations Committee

E-mail has made communication easier in many ways. Recently I connected with someone I hadn't heard from in years, thanks to the wonders of electronic exchange. It makes committee work easier (agendas arrive promptly, members can communicate in virtual as well as real time) and it helps facilitate work on cooperative projects.

But e-mail is not an appropriate venue for conflict resolution; rather than facilitating communication, it can encourage misunderstanding, especially if sent in anger. And unlike a verbal exchange, it leaves a record that can be forwarded in ways the original sender might not intend. (A friend of mine, after a contentious budget meeting of Department Chairs, went back to her office and fired off an angry e-mail to several colleagues about the president's incompetence. She was horrified to find her entire e-mail on the front page of our small college town newspaper the next day with the headline "Department Chair Calls for Vote of No Confidence in President.")

Conflict in a large and diverse group such as our church is inevitable, but it can be addressed in helpful ways if we keep in mind some ground rules: If there is disagreement, the issue should be addressed in a face-to-face conversation if at all possible, or by telephone, to facilitate real conversation. If such a conversation does not resolve the issue, the Good Relations Committee stands ready to help.

All e-mail should follow the basic rules of netiquette: be courteous (avoid inflammatory language, do not type in all caps--the equivalent of shouting online), remember that e-mail is not private, and cc only those who actually need to know the information. Unless it is necessary to share information, an e-mail message should not be forwarded without the consent of the sender. All these guidelines are in line with our Covenant of Good Relations.



Nathan and Caroline Clark

I was born and grew up in Milford, Connecticut. After high school I attended Brown University in Providence, RI where I got my bachelor's degree in 1962. From there I went to MIT in Cambridge, Mass., and even-

tually earned my Ph. D. in 1967. My majors were Oceanography and Meteorology and I got a job with Scripps Institute in La Jolla looking into the early effects of climate change.

In 1982 I switched careers and went to work for non-profit organizations. My first job in that field was with the original San Diego AIDS Project, where I stayed into the mid-1980's. I then got into social action fund development, including grants and special events. Since retiring in 2002, I've been mostly volunteering for various church groups like the Spirit Level Foundation, which has given nearly \$2 million for building UU congregations.

I was raised as a Methodist and then attended Quaker meetings in both New England and in La Jolla. It was there that I learned about First UU Church and was immediately impressed by the music and quality of the sermons. Although I began attending First Church in 1976, I didn't join until 1979, and that's when I met Caroline. The following year we were married, and I helped raise her two teenagers, Janet and Mark Helder. Not an easy job, but what did I know!?

I have volunteered on many church committees: Finance, Intern, Building, etc., and served as president of the board in the early 1980's. A body surfing accident in 1968 left me seriously disabled and has resulted in four back and neck operations over the past ten years. The past couple of years I've had difficulty attending church. (Because of Caroline's church women's groups and their emotional and physical support, she has been able to stay active. They were also there to help her in her struggle with colon cancer in the mid 80's.)

I'm most proud of the fact that I made a good decision to change careers. For me, social service

An Interview with Nathan Clark

BY Robert McMahon

was much more rewarding than research science. My most fulfilling job was the four years I spent with Lutheran Social Services in directing a volunteer program that built wheelchair ramps, organized home painting, repaired plumbing, did gardening projects, and various other services for the frail elderly in San Diego. It gave me great satisfaction to help them remain in their own homes and not have to live in a nursing home facility.

In the end, however, I'm finding that family is most important of all. I have no biological children but have been fortunate to be part of Caroline's family and watch Mark's and Lesleigh's (Helders) daughters grow. I am also fortunate to have them live nearby - when we visit, the girls come to help me out of the car, set up my walker, and then escort me into their house. I've watched Nancie's and Hana's development since their births, and I really enjoy being involved in their lives. One of my main goals in life now is to see them grow up and go out into the world on their own.

First Church makes Internet News in San Diego and San Francisco By John Schaibly, Co-chair Peace and Democracy

I knew our Peace and Democracy "Matters of Controversy" programs were newsworthy, but I was still surprised to be surfing the web and finding a review of our May 6th program "Innocents Abroad: Trek from San Diego to Gaza" reported in two blogs on the web.

Mark Gabrish Conlan is a regular attendee of Matters of Controversy and records many of our sessions. He then reviews the presentations in *Zenger's Newsmagazine* published in Hillcrest. I found out recently that he also publishes some of these comprehensive reviews in a San Diego news blog, (<http://zengersmag.blogspot.com> May 8 post).

This was then picked up by the San Francisco blog <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2010/05/08/18647435.php>.

What a joy to see my church's social justice program making news in the wider community.

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