



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

February 2021; Vol 15 No. 2

Take the Next Step to Spiritual Wholeness: Register for the Beloved Conversations Virtual “Within” Spring 2021 Session

By Jan Garbosky



Next to the pandemic, there’s no more pressing issue in our nation than addressing systemic racism in its many forms.

Beloved Conversations—the signature offering of The Fahs

Collaborative at Meadville Lombard Theological School—is a program for Unitarian Universalists seeking to embody racial justice as a spiritual practice. *Beloved Conversations* is designed to heal the impact of racism on our lives, in order to get free together.

Pre-pandemic, 80 folks participated in the in-person version. In Fall 2020, 53 from First UU participated in an entirely new *Beloved Conversations Virtual (BCV) “Within.”* In a safe and supportive spiritual community, Within focuses on the individual, personal work each of us needs to do as we engage in racial justice—as preparation for working for institutional change in our congregation and the community beyond. **This program is for you, no matter how much or how little you know about systemic racism.**

You’re invited to register for the Spring 2021 term—including those who participated in the Fall term. The coursework for all participants includes:

- 6 online Lessons (released every two weeks) with a wealth of resources to read, listen to, or view;
- 6 Learning Pod (small group) Gatherings every two weeks, and
- 4 large group Meaning Making Sessions (worship and small group discussion).

The courses, gatherings, and materials are different for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and white

(non-BIPOC) folks. All Lessons, Learning Pods, and Meaning Making Sessions are done in race-based caucuses.

“Gathering Ourselves” is the curriculum for BIPOC folks. Those continuing on from Fall 2020 will have new materials. New participants will begin with the curriculum from Fall 2020. The two groups will be together for Meaning Making Sessions.

Non-BIPOC folks will all participate in “Un/Learning for Liberation.” Everyone will be together for Meaning Making Sessions and combined into Learning Pods that mix both newer folks and folks who’ve completed the Fall 2020 term.

To learn more, view the five short (4-9 minute each) videos about the program at <https://www.meadville.edu/fahs-collaborative/fahs-curriculum-catalogue/beloved-conversations/> (One is accessed at the top of the page and four others at the bottom of the page.)

Spring 2021 Term Dates:

- Registration: February 1 – 26, 2021: Registration & payment
- Spring Term Begins: March 16, 2021 (First lesson available)
- Spring Term Ends: End of May/very beginning of June 2021

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Love is a Verb

by Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*



Love is a Verb. This isn't just a pithy sentence; it's our theme for this month. It's another way to wonder, to think about, and to experience Love. It can be a guidepost on our path to a deeper and more Beloved Community. Most of all, Love is a Verb means love is action.

In this month that sees us celebrating Black history month, and understanding that Black history is America's history; in this month that has us acknowledging and celebrating the Lunar New Year, I hope Love is a Verb also invites us to wonder how we can honor this new beginning in 2021. This theme is a call to courage because it can be a struggle to follow love, to do what love asks of us.

I think love can often ask us to move beyond our routine to experience a bigger life. That can be hard right now, as the pandemic continues and devastates lives and families. In this reality, what action is love asking you to take? Is there something you can offer to someone who's suffering illness or loss? What comfort can you give to another in need?

In our discernment about the 8th Principle, how can love help each of us to embody the journey toward spiritual wholeness as we, by our actions, accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions? How can love show up as we do this? What might love look like, sound like, and feel like in the dismantling of racism in ourselves and in our congregation?

Reflecting on Love is a Verb I'm drawn back to the basics. To love and be loved, to experience, grow, and cultivate love is necessary to life. In the first seven Principles, love isn't named; it's only in the 8th, in the description of community, that love is named. In this new year, I invite you to join me in getting back to the basics, getting back to love, as a verb. Let's find out where love will take us—for a more abundant, bold, joyful life.

Faithfully,

Rev. Kathleen

February Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Live Streamed Worship:

Sunday, 9:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/>

**February's
Transformational Theme is:
"Love is a Verb"**

February 7, 2021

"Lovin' Ain't (Always) Easy"

Matthew Waterman, *Intern Minister*

February 14, 2021

"Strength to Love, Part 1"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

February 21, 2021

"The Longest Journey"

"El viaje más largo"

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

February 28, 2021

"Strength to Love, Part 2"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

Take the Next Step to Spiritual Wholeness

Continued

No one will be turned away. Full and partial scholarships are available—with no questions asked—for those who cannot afford the \$250 program cost. A number of our Fall 2020 participants received scholarships.

More information will be shared as soon as it becomes available. Jan Garbosky will be coordinating our First UU participation. Contact her as soon as possible at jgarbosky@cox.net with questions and/or to indicate you intend to participate. Beginning February 14, she'll assist with the official program registration.

Your participation helps First UU become more inclusive—building community, nurturing our spiritual growth, and gaining the skills, knowledge, and understanding to act on our values to help heal the world.

Love in a Time of COVID

by Tony Bianca, *Program Coordinator*



It goes without saying that our Family Ministry Program has changed quite a lot this year. When we went virtual (can you believe it's been almost one full year!), the Family Ministry Staff Team decided that two main

principles would guide the programming created for this new, online way of being together:

- Rather than try to translate our existing programs exactly, we'd center the needs of our children/families and aim to create spaces where we could hold and support each other in meeting those needs as best we could.
- We'd work to center our families—especially our families of color—in the life of the congregation as a whole.



I think it's fair to say these two guiding principles are a pretty good example of what love-in-action looks like.

A large part of love-in-action, in my experience, is the act of being aware of and responding to another's needs.

We've created weekly opportunities where children and youth can gather to play games, learn a new instrument, get homework help, sing and dance, and talk about our principles and values.

The goal of centering families, and especially families of color, is also part of what love-in-action is. But in this time of COVID, what does centering look like? I think it's fair to say that our Sunday online worship services are the most central "space" in our congregational life at the moment. And, so we've made a conscious effort to include our youth, children, and families in those services.

I'm very happy to report that since Christmas Eve, we've had at least one of our children or youth participate in every service (usually more) and a total of 18 individual children/youth have been involved! While participating in a service is not necessarily an end in itself, it is a step along the way to making the experience of our families, youth, and children a central part of our congregational life.



Natalia Molina - MacArthur Genius Grant awardee and UUism

by Nancy Fisk

Natalia Molina, a member of First Church until a couple of years ago, is a 2020 recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant. She moved with her family to Pasadena to become a Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. She was given the award because of her work around race and immigrants and has written several books on the subject.

Natalia has always been interested in how we think about race. Raised in Echo Park, in Los Angeles, she wondered when she was a little girl why people assumed her neighborhood was dangerous or thought certain things about her family, simply because they were Mexican American.

She asks, “If race is a social construction, who constructed it and how do ideas about race spread?” She studied sociology, political science, anthropology, and history in college to find some of those answers. Her undergrad degree is in History and Gender Studies from UCLA. Her Masters and PhD in History are from the University of Michigan. She’s the first in her family to attend college, go to graduate school, and have a career as an academic.

History for her is the study of how things got to be the way they are and how they keep recycling back. How we as a nation have come to the realization once more that the inequities of healthcare, economic status, and police brutality, are often based on race and immigration status.

She’s encouraged by the fact these issues have become part of the national conversation. She wants the solutions to include everyone, not just who’s deserving and undeserving. This is often used as an excuse to decide who will get what they need, which comes from a scarcity mentality, that there’s only so much to go around. We should work towards a time where everyone has enough of what they need.



“We’re in a moment right now where we have the power to change things, to deconstruct how we got here, and to move forward in a more hopeful way. The fact we’re saying we need to change is hopeful. It’s hopeful there’s a national conversation this time about the patterns that people have been showing us all along, people such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Sojourner Truth. The difference this time is the conversation is happening in a sustained way.”

She appreciates that Unitarian Universalism supports this kind of social justice. What she likes about Unitarian Universalism is it’s not a one cause faith. We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every being. As a faith, we’ve shone a spotlight on social justice with the intent of asking how we can help people live their lives. We believe in having a dialogue about important issues, such as Black Lives Matter, immigrant rights, unfair policing, and now with COVID-19, who should be next in line for a vaccine.

For her, First UU becomes a vehicle for enacting our mission. We donate to groups that support

causes we believe in, we participate in the Interfaith homeless shelter, we have created a prison ministry. We’re teaching our children our values by our example.

She liked this quote from an intern minister a few years back, who said, “The Internet won’t help you bury your grandmother.” Meaning the place of First UU is to be there for each other, to process the moment we’re in with our community. The meetings and Zoom calls we participate in help us to have those conversations. Right now, she attends Neighborhood Church and First Church in the Wilshire District of LA online.

Natalia intends to use her MacArthur grant money to bring this conversation to others digitally, in a more public facing way—including to First UU.

Rev. Dr. Andrea Travers

by Rhea Kuhlman



Rev. Dr. Andrea Travers began working in prisons through her experience with the Minnesota Model of Twelve Step Treatment, since addiction is often associated with crime. An ordained Interfaith Minister, she completed her doctoral work by translating the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous in eight faith traditions, now utilized in over 75 countries. (www.12wisdomsteps.com) Travers brought her expertise in Restorative Justice and Re-Entry to California when she “retired” here from Oregon in 2012. Retirement didn’t last long.

Restorative Justice is a transformative process whereby offenders and crime victims come together to seek reconciliation and healing for both. It’s not a simple process, usually taking 14 months of intensive rehabilitation. Travers explains that prisoners must first understand themselves as victims of their upbringing, often involving abuse, neglect, racial discrimination, or poverty. Only when offenders know what victimhood feels like can they begin to empathize with the victims of their crimes. Victims can then have a role in shaping a restitution process.

The aim of this work is to develop offenders who are honest, accountable, and who demonstrate remorse; and to help victims and offenders heal. Her pioneering work in Restorative Justice has led to reduced recidivism and successful offender re-entry into society.

Andrea first introduced Victim-Offender Education Groups (VOEG) in R. J. Donovan in San Diego, followed by Ironwood and Chuckawalla Valley in Blythe, CA. It was retired Summit Minister Rev. Dr. Frank Placone-Wiley who introduced Travers to the San Diego County jails, through Las Colinas Women's Detention Facility, based in Santee, near the

Summit UU Fellowship. She then co-authored a restorative justice reentry program for the San Diego County jails and began the Summit Jail Ministry program at Las Colinas.

Residing near the border in Imperial Beach, she has attended First UU in South Bay for the past two years, and leads a covenant group there.

Today, Andrea continues to work with the Insight Prison Project (VOEG program) which originated in San Quentin and now serves 21 state prisons, three county jails, several reentry facilities, and one juvenile institution. To better understand VOEG and restorative justice, Andrea recommends the award-winning documentary *The Prison Within*, available on Netflix. Andrea also introduced CoSA (Circles of Support and Accountability) into San Diego County last year which provides reentry support for registered sex offenders releasing from Coalinga State Hospital.

We’re indeed fortunate Rev. Dr. Travers chose the First UU community.

Why First UU Acknowledges We Occupy Kumeyaay Lands

by Jennifer Clay for *Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW)*

Halito Chim Achukma. Cho hochifo ut, Jennifer Clay, Chaht siah, Oklahoma.

Good morning my name is Jennifer Clay and I'm a member of First UU's JTW (Journey Toward Wholeness) core team.

As a Unitarian Universalist community engaging in peace and living our values of justice and equity in relationships, and while we move forward in living the 8th Principle of "actions that dismantle racism and other oppressions within ourselves and our institutions," we recognize that, as settlers and allies on unceded land, the intent we have of doing a Land Acknowledgement is to give respect to the Kumeyaay people and raise awareness of the many issues that continue to affect the original people.

There are 18 Kumeyaay bands in San Diego. They represent a concentration in San Diego County larger than any other county in the United States. Do we know them?

The purpose of a Land Acknowledgement is to show respect yes; to raise awareness of their history and their beautiful culture, yes; but it's also an opportunity for us to be intentional in living our values of dismantling colonistic practices through acknowledgement, through reaching out in sincerity, and in creating relationship.

A Land Acknowledgement should open our hearts and hands that transforms into action.

- How can I be a part of restorative repair? How can I be in relationship to so many that are often unseen?
- What does this transformation look like for myself and my community so patterns of oppression are clearly recognized and addressed?

Ani-shin-aabe writer & educator, Hayden King, writes that a land acknowledgement needs to go beyond the recognition of where you stand. It must include a commitment to social and political action.

So today, I ask, "Can we weave together our voice and our action?"

I look forward to the day when Land Acknowledgements aren't needed.

I look forward to a community fundamentally aware of the ripples of what privilege has done to people of color and that this awareness evolved into systemic change.

I look forward to a community where the land and the history of the original people is an obvious fact. May we be a part of the healing and hope.

Until that time, may we open our hearts and examine how we can move from the spoken values we cherish into accountability & action.

Yomika Am Ano Achukma, Yakoke. I wish you wellness and peace, thank you.

To learn more about the Kumeyaay:

Watch:

- Emmy Award Winner *Our People. Our Culture. Our History* [48:08]
- *San Diego's First People – Kumeyaay Native Americans* [51:43]
- California Emmy Nominee *The Kumeyaay Indians – Survival in the Weave* (Part 1) [7:10]
- *Celebrating Community: The Kumeyaay People of San Diego County* [2:29]
- *Kumeyaay Songs & Stories, told by Stan Rodriguez* [18:46]

Read: "*Decolonizing San Diego's History An Iipay Reflection on the Context & Impact of 1769*"

Excerpts from “Living Legacies”

by Kiona Daelyn

From the October 25th service, “*Many Paths to the Ancestors*” by the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle (ECSC). To hear the entire piece, go here <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/messages/many-paths-to-the-ancestors-by-the-earth-centered-spirituality-circle>

Each life is shaped by its ancestors. Yours, mine, every person, every being on this earth owes their existence and the shape of the world they’re born into to the actions of our ancestors. And we, as future ancestors, shape the world for every generation to come. While this may sometimes feel like a daunting responsibility, we have hindsight on our side. Thousands of years, generation after generation, of hindsight.

Let’s zoom out to a larger picture, and, forgive me, do a bit of math. Ancestor math is exponential. One generation—two parents, the next generation four grandparents, the next generation eight great grandparents, and so on. If we go back 400 years, assuming the average of 12 generations in that span of time, each of us has 4,094 ancestors . . .

I am a witch and my spiritual practice is grounded in the awareness of the wheel turning over and over, from birth to life to death to rebirth to life to death, in both my own soul and my ever expanding family tree. When I’m making conscious choices, I not only check in with my values and principles, but I also check in with my ancestors. Sometimes that means listening for their wisdom. Sometimes that means thinking about the impact of my actions on future generations. Sometimes that means finding ways to repair damages done both to and by my ancestors.

From that place of groundedness, I’m called to be something magnificent. I’m called to be their legacy, to enjoy the fruits of their labors and to learn the lessons they didn’t, so that our descendants may enjoy those new sweeter fruits. I’m called to end generational curses and the

reaping of crops made sour by sowing violence, hate, and injustice. I’m called to make reparations for the harm my ancestors have done. I’m called to be something more than they could have dreamed of in their time, just as I know that future generations will be so much more than I can imagine now . . .

We must hold ourselves accountable for the wrongdoings of our ancestors, so we may heal the wounds of those who were injured, and their children’s wounds. We have the power to heal our family tree and help others heal theirs all through the same action. We can teach the next generation to continue the work of reparations, so we all work together for equity and a society built on compassion and community and respect . . .

True reparations require engagement at every level. Not just donating to charities that will give you a tax write-off, but donating to small businesses, to individuals, to go-fund-mes, to artists, to activists, to the houseless on the corner in your own neighborhood, to the bail funds and legal fees of Black people taken from their families by the racist police you pay with your tax dollars, and to the Indigenous people on whose land you reside. It also means pushing your church, your community leaders, and your government representatives to engage in the work. There is no time for bureaucracy and committees. Speak directly to your leaders and demand swift action. Take the action yourself and lead by example. Talk to your family, living and deceased, about what you are doing and why . . .

We build our legacies every day. Carrying on the best of our ancestors and learning from their mistakes. But it’s in the correcting of those mistakes that we leave the world better than we found it. It’s through reparations that we build a better legacy. We have thousands of years of experience to guide us, if we choose to listen and engage with the wisdom and lessons of our beloved dead.

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