



First  
Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Diego

# FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

March 2021; Vol 15 No. 3

## Gardening at First UU During the Pandemic

By Nancy Fisk



All her life, my mother loved to garden. She had roses, irises, and bulbs that bloomed every year. A few years ago, following her example, I volunteered to redo the bell garden, the circular planter outside of the office. I also water the succulent garden outside the

Common Room, and the raised beds behind Room 113. I often worked with the plants after church and during the week when I could. For three years, I watched the seasons come and go in the gardens. Then came the pandemic.

In March, on the Wednesday before lockdown, Paula Johnson took a photo of me in front of the freesias that were in full bloom. On Friday, the schools where I substitute teach shut down until further notice. The preschool at First UU closed. The next Sunday, in-person services were cancelled for the foreseeable future. I stayed away from First UU for two months.

In May, I decided that watering was a solitary activity and it was easy to practice physical distancing doing it. While I was at church watering the bell garden, I occasionally saw Rose Van Oss, who made the raised beds behind Room 113 her project, to weed and ready the plant beds for a meditation garden. She'd like it to be filled with plants that smell good and look beautiful.

In July, I bought some new plants for the bell garden. It was a hot summer and David Sanders volunteered to help water the times I couldn't make it. I lost a couple of plants but the cosmos lasted a few months, and there is a Mexican sage I still have hopes for.

During the pandemic, we all looked for ways to be outside safely. I found it calming to be in a place I've known and loved for years, watching the breeze blow through the trees, keeping an eye on the resident hummingbird that lives in the canyon beyond the Common Room.

Another benefit to being at First UU during this time was seeing the occasional staff or church member while I'm watering. Rose and Robie come to the door to say hi. I've talked to Grace Lewis-McLaren when she comes to practice the organ, in preparation for recording pieces for online services. There's a certain thrill to seeing people you love in 3-D instead of on a screen.

In July, the preschool opened again. In September, I went back to in-person teaching. With the protocols that were in place, such as masks and temperature checks, I felt safe being at the school I was assigned to. I still came out to the church a couple hours a week after teaching, to water and garden.

It was a warm fall, and the paperwhite narcissus bulbs started blooming in late November, which was early for them. Right after Thanksgiving, I planted a Spanish lavender in the bell garden, decorated it for Yule and hung garland on the posts supporting the bell. The paperwhites lasted until New Year's. For the spring, I've sowed cosmos and lupine seeds to see what happens. There are sweet peas in the back that are taking off. The freesias and irises are getting ready to put on their extravagant show again. It's hard to believe it's been a year since the lockdown started.

I'm grateful to be able to come here every week. It keeps me grounded and connected to this place. I maintain the gardens for the people who are coming to campus. But I also do it for that time when all of us are allowed to be at First UU again and can appreciate the gardens together.

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# Prophetic Voices

by Matthew Waterman, *Intern Minister*



In a faith built upon a variety of sources, we honor the words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structure of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. Prophetic voices are one of the main pillars from which we, as Unitarian Universalists, pull our wisdom.

Listening to these prophetic voices is not to say these individuals were perfect or they

never made mistakes, but rather that they've shared with our faith and the world their extraordinary spiritual and moral insight. This month, we take time to explore and honor those words and deeds, to explore the voices long-known to guide our faith—as well as to lift the voices of those prophetic individuals that have been silenced, marginalized, quieted, hidden.

This month gives us time to explore the voices we listen to and those we aren't hearing, allowing us to listen a little closer, a little deeper to a diverse group of individuals that can help us confront powers and structures of evil.

To me, prophetic voices help me understand what it is I don't fully understand from my experiences, my traumas, my own journey. When I can more fully understand the world through the experiences and struggles and wisdom of others, I'm more adept at empathy and love, both for the world and, also, for myself.

I hope during this month, you'll do the same. Take some time to listen to voices you might normally not. Listen for the embodied wisdom that abounds in the voices and presence of those around us. Find love for yourself and others through the understanding of the perspective of others.

Finally, I emphasize—don't forget about your own voice. Only you have lived your life. Your words and deeds can be and are prophetic. Don't forget your own voice and the amazingness you can share with the world.

With love,

*Matthew*

## March Sermon Messages

### Worship Time:

Live Streamed Worship:  
Sunday, 9:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

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

### March's Transformational Theme is: "Prophetic Voices"

**March 7, 2021**

**"Finding Prophecy"**

Matthew Waterman, *Intern Minister*

**March 14, 2021**

**"Listening to Voices,  
Seeking Wisdom"**

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

**March 21, 2021**

**"The Fragmented Altar"**

Rev. Dr. William G. Sinkford,  
*Senior Minister, First Unitarian Portland*

**March 28, 2021**

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

# As the OWL Flies

by Käthe Larick, *Youth Program Coordinator*

It's been quite a while since I last wrote to everyone about the OWL (Our Whole Lives) program, so it seems like a good time for an update now. As I mentioned in my last note, the OWL program will not be going virtual. The program was not designed to be used in that way, and many of the resources in the curriculum were not licensed for online use.

The chief concerns for keeping the program as an in-person learning experience are safety and confidentiality, neither of which can be assured in online settings. This article is not an update about using OWL in virtual spaces.

However, a new virtual experience involving OWL is being discussed. If you've always wanted to be trained to facilitate the Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education program for youth in grades 7-9 and grades 10-12, then I have good news for you and we need to talk! Interest level is currently being assessed, and the training is targeted for some time in April and/or May, but the dates are still to be determined.

Again, this would be a training to learn how to teach the grades 7-9 and grades 10-12 curricula in person once it's safe for such instruction to resume. It's NOT how to adapt OWL for online usage. Even though OWL is not being offered online, both the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and United Church of Christ (UCC) have tons of resources for facilitators to use, and I'm happy to share them with you for use in your family.

In the continuing effort to have a program that lives up to the core values of self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, and (especially) justice and



inclusivity, and one accessible and relevant to everyone, the Program Coordinators at the UUA and UCC are constantly reviewing and revising all seven OWL lifespan curricula.

Since the first of the year, I've been engaged with a team of trainers to look over the grades 7-9 curriculum through an anti-racist/anti-oppression lens, and we'll meet very soon to review and discuss our findings. After our initial meeting, our recommendations will be presented to other trainers and facilitators as part of the "Taking Flight" monthly seminar series that began in spring 2020.

So, as you can see, even though you haven't seen them, the OWLs have not been sleeping and idle over the last year. The Our Whole Lives program will continue to assess and improve to keep soaring for generations to come. Please contact me at [kathe@firstuusandiego.org](mailto:kathe@firstuusandiego.org) if you have any questions or would like any of the resources I mentioned. Keep an eye to the sky, and to this publication for more OWL sightings because together, we'll continue to keep OWL flying high.

# The Eighth Principle

by Tony Brumfield

*In June, at our annual meeting, the church will be voting on whether to adopt an eighth principle to the current principles of Unitarian Universalism. For the full principle, click [here](#). The following are excerpts from what Tony Brumfield read at a forum on the Eighth principle: Watch the full statement on our Website's [Governance Page](#).*

Our congregation is participating in Beloved Conversations, a UU curriculum on anti-racism which is one way for us to build what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King called, "the Beloved Community." Dr. King often spoke of the Beloved Community and the power of love. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the Fifties, Dr. King said, ". . . the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends . . . It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."

Dr. King was not talking about romantic love, but what we know about romantic love can help us understand how Beloved Community can work.

The German social psychologist Erich Fromm advocated that love was not a feeling but an action that included:

1. care for oneself and care for the other,
2. respect for oneself and respect for the other,
3. responsibility for oneself and the other, and
4. self-knowledge and knowledge of the other.

The black feminist author, bell hooks, added a fifth: a commitment to one's own growth and a commitment to the growth of the other. These ideas can serve as a powerful guide as we build right relationship with each other.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and the words, "all men are created equal," he owned slaves and later engaged in a relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. Theirs was not an equal relationship. It was a relationship which lacked most of the characteristics that Erich Fromm and bell hooks wrote about. But their personal relationship

reflected in many ways the collective relationship between white people and black people at that time.

The Declaration of Independence was not enough to bring about right relationship. We needed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Later we needed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, and that was not enough. Sixty years after the Civil Rights movement, our country is still struggling, and we need more legislation to build back what has been torn down. Besides legislation, this country is undergoing a cultural shift, which is resisted by many who would like to go back to a time dominated by white culture.

The Declaration of Independence and the founding documents of Unitarian Universalism do not say anything about race. It's not even mentioned. Racism has always been the elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about. This reluctance to name racism is from a common belief that if we stop talking about race, then racism will go away. What I like about the Eighth Principle is that it names the elephant in the room.

The Eighth Principle names what we as Unitarian Universalists are going to do. We are going to dismantle racism and other oppressions. It names where the problem resides. While it is easy to focus on the KKK and similar groups in other places, the Eighth Principle states that racism resides in ourselves and our institutions. Changing ourselves and our institutions is where we have the greatest power to create change.

Lastly, the Eighth Principle names why we need to dismantle racism and other oppressions: so that we can have spiritual wholeness. Together, we have created a better world, and the more we have learned about racism and how it is reinforced by other oppressions, we see that there is much more to learn and relationships we need to nurture. The Eighth Principle affirms the work we've already completed and promises our commitment will grow even deeper. I support adoption of the Eighth Principle. I hope you'll join me.

## Poetry and Reflection

by Anna Liza Castel Smith & Quinn Riedel

*In honor of the one-year anniversary of lockdown, we present two pieces on the pandemic by First UU members:*

### Cessation

*by Anna Liza Castel Smith*

A futile purpose sinks in sand  
Lost amidst where nothing's found,  
But faint o'ershadows of one command  
Grinding towards the ground.

The bell, the toll, the day's last hour  
In the dissonance of an unheard sound  
In winter, withered earth's last flower,  
Forever's fall was crowned.



### The Burning World

*by Quinn Riedel*

My name is Quinn. This time has given me a lot of space to really think. You know, it might seem like this will never end or it's boring. I'm not going to lie, that's exactly what I've been thinking. But I've also been thinking about what the world will be like in the future, for the generation after me.

You know what's weird? The actions we take and the choices we make will change history forever. The people who are here with us will be remembered for hundreds of years—we'll be in history books, taught and talked about.

My generation will be remembered as the generation who lived through "The Burning World." I really think in the future people won't even be able to imagine the idea of a burning world—a world of complete isolation, racism, homophobia, and bigotry. I believe we all will be remembered as the people who lived through "The Burning World."

My name is Quinn Riedel and I live in the burning world and I'm making history.

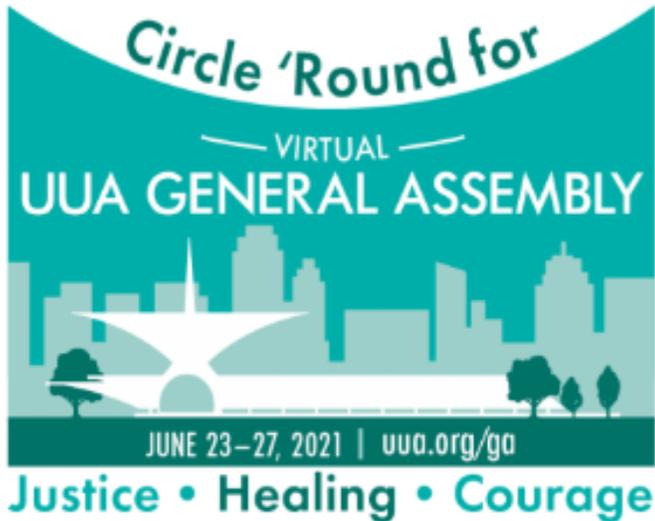
After reading this, I want you to proudly say, "I live in the burning world, and I'm making history."

*Quinn is a 15 year old transwoman, who has been raised in the First UU Community.*



# Delegates Needed for 2021 Online General Assembly

by John Schaibly & Jan Garbosky



Due to Covid-19, again this year, General Assembly (GA) 2021, the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), will be held online June 23-27. This year's theme is "Circle 'Round for Justice, Healing, Courage." Last year, nearly 5,000 adults, youth, and young adults attended GA to share in online fellowship, worship, and learning—including more than 30 from First UU.

All registrants (delegates and non-delegates) can attend all GA events:

- observe all business meetings,
- hear nationally known speakers,
- attend workshops on social justice topics,
- attend worship services led by the best UU ministers and musicians,
- make friends in breakout rooms, and
- participate in fun evening activities.

Delegates have the further privilege of voting on business items of the UUA and denominational positions on social justice issues. They can also propose amendments in live business session and participate in debates.

Because of our large membership, First UU is allowed 12 delegates. Last year, there were more congregation members who wanted to be delegates than there were openings so it's best to get your application in as soon as possible. If you'd like to

represent First UU as a delegate, please contact John Schaibly ([john@schaibly.com](mailto:john@schaibly.com)) for an application form.

Registration for GA 2021 is \$200 per person. A limited number of First UU scholarships are available for delegates via the application form. In addition, there are opportunities for UUA financial support for any registrant—including sliding scale options, a payment plan option, and scholarships. For more information, go to <https://www.uua.org/ga/registration/financialaid/scholarships>.

All GA registrants receive access to the 2021 Online Participation Portal, including live, simulated live, and on-demand video content, the virtual exhibit hall, chat features, support, and a (new!) GA mobile app.

Here are some comments from last year's attendees:

- "GA was a personal, spiritual, and emotional journey and holiday for me. I feel more grounded, rooted, and connected to the UUA and our First UU community."
- "It was a wonderful experience. All the workshops were well done and as informative as those I had attended in person in the past. Worship services were deeply meaningful."
- "I found GA to be inspiring, rejuvenating, and revelatory."
- "The ability to watch presentations on my own schedule (after the fact, if necessary) allowed me to get more out of the experience."
- "This experience was rich and rewarding in so many ways. . . I got to see how topics were discussed, decisions were made, and efforts to unite us as UUs were accomplished."

As you can see, GA is a great way to participate in the life of our denomination and to attend workshops on topics reflecting our UU values that can help First UU in the work we do within and beyond our congregation. For more information and/or to register go to <https://www.uua.org/ga>. If you have any questions, please contact John Schaibly ([john@schaibly.com](mailto:john@schaibly.com)) or Jan Garbosky ([jgarbosky@cox.net](mailto:jgarbosky@cox.net)).

**To: First UU of San Diego Members**

**From: The Nominating Committee**

Your Nominating Committee (NomCom) is preparing to develop a slate of candidates to fill the upcoming vacancies on the Board of Trustees of our church.

We are looking for members who support the 8th Principle, understand or are willing to learn the arts of Reflection and Discernment, and have a deep love of our shared community.

Please contact members of the NomCom if you are interested in learning more about this opportunity to help FUUSD live its values and do our part to help heal the world.

In Faith,

The Nominating Committee

Kia Bordner, *Chair*  
[kiakiali@gmail.com](mailto:kiakiali@gmail.com)

Susanna Concha-Garcia

Adrienne Kaplan

Wayne Savell

Rose Van Oss

## Exchanging the Love

April 17, 2021, 9 am –12:30 pm Pacific. In conjunction with our annual business meetings, the Pacific Southwest District of the UUA (PSWD) & Camp de Benneville Pines (DBP) are offering an opportunity to Love Right Through locally, by connecting with other UU Pacific Southwest Service Area congregants. You can exchange ideas, actions and thoughts in breakout rooms on a variety of topics. A draft agenda for the business meeting is available now, and registration and delegate certification information will be available here: <https://pswduua.org/pswd-event/pswd-annual-meeting-2021/>



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