



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

May 2021; Vol 15 No. 5

Identity

by Kiona Daelyn

I've met some extraordinary people in my life—people who live a kind of radical love every day that changes the world around them. These include anarchists who break the law to feed the hungry, water and land protectors who give up their way of life to put their lives on the line for the good of the Earth, future generations of teachers, activists and artists who help us all imagine a better world, and finally, mystics and witches who heal the unimaginable to make room for the highest good to manifest and flourish. All these amazing people have something in common. They live these ways of being every day. It's part of the lens through which they see the world and make everyday choices about how to think, speak, and act.

This can be applied to many aspects of being and identity, including being anti-racist. Being anti-racist cannot begin and end with thinking equity is a good idea, or attending a few marches, or donating to an organization, or participating in a committee once a week. For anti-racism to make real change it must become a part of our identities, a part of the lens through which we see the world.

I was always aware of racism as I lived out the effects, but when I dove deeper into anti-oppression work it changed me at a fundamental level. It changed how I digest news, entertainment, and art, as well as casual conversations. It changed how I speak and the words and phrases I use. It changed how I act when I witness oppression and how I choose to spend my money in the world. It changed the way I think and perceive.

This shift can bring great discomfort to some who

are used to having the option of seeing and acknowledging power and privilege at play. It can be scary, sad, enraging, and exhausting in new and profound ways. In some ways, I feel sorry for that loss of innocence. In other ways, I feel a bit like welcoming them into the real world, where those of us who have been marginalized never knew the comforts of the grand illusion of fairness and never had the choice to ignore the reality of the situation.

I'm anti-racist. It's part of my identity, not just because I'm Black, but because I've learned to look, with a critical eye, for patterns and histories of oppression, power, and privilege. I seek out others who have this shared identity, who don't see anti-racism as part time volunteer work, but who understand it as an ever-present part of themselves and their continuing journey through life.

To make a better world, a better nation, a better city, a better congregation, a better person, we each must be mindfully aware of how our thoughts, words, and actions support or dismantle the oppressive structures that exist. We each must make that choice every day until it becomes a part of who we are.

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On Identity

by Rev. Tania Garcia Márquez, *Assistant Minister*



I think there's a correlation between change and identity, especially when it comes to the big changes in life: moving, choosing a career, joining a community, or experiencing a life event that shakes us up and leads us to ask ourselves who we are in light of those experiences.

When we chose this theme to explore this month, we'd no idea our church would be literally on the verge of change, of big change, and that the community, as a whole, would need to

begin the process of reflecting on its identity.

While many of you may feel like this community is falling apart, also know that anytime something is coming together or growing, it feels like it's falling apart first. In the process of coming together, there's an opportunity to reflect on the group's identity and, perhaps, the individual's identity within the group, too.

When you're walking or driving on an unfamiliar path and you come to a dead end, have you noticed that, suddenly, you see the edge you couldn't see before? It appears the road's come to an abrupt halt, yet your journey doesn't end there. It's during those times that a different part of your brain is activated to look for alternatives, for other paths to go down or to retrace your steps to find your way forward again.

As we explore the theme of identity this month in worship, in wisdom circles, and in our religious education groups, this time of transition at First UU is also inviting everyone to a collective effort, asking each other and wondering together who we are and who we want to be.

While filled with uncertainty, these times are also wonderful opportunities to look closely at our individual and collective ways of being and to reflect on what's been working and what needs to change.

Here are some questions to consider:

- What defines the First UU Church of San Diego?
- Who are their members?
- Who are you when you're with them and how is that different from who you are outside of the community?
- How would you like this community to be?
- What contributions do you need to make to make it happen?
- Who do you need to be to create the community you want?
- How would you like outsiders and community partners to describe us?

I hope this theme of identity opens up the opportunity to begin exploring those questions together, while, in the process, we keep our hearts and minds open to what we may learn and discover together.

May Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Live Streamed Worship:
Sunday, 9:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

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

May's Transformational Theme is: "Identity"

May 2, 2021

"Creating Our/Selves"

Earth Centered Spirituality Circle

May 9, 2021

**"The Eighth Principle:
Building the Beloved Community"**

Paula Cole Jones and Ministers

May 16, 2021

Matthew Waterman, *Intern Minister*

May 23, 2021

"Stories of the Pandemic"

Cluster Worship

May 30, 2021

"Once Upon a Time in Nepantla"

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

Tania

Planting Seeds, Meeting Needs

by Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*, Käthe Larick, *Youth Programs Coordinator* & Tony Bianca, *Program Director*



From Rev. Kathleen:

This month's worship theme is "Identity." It's a big topic and applies not only to our individual selves, but also to our congregation and our various ministry teams and programs. Because life is dynamic—ever-changing, so are our identities and the identities of our programs and institutions.

With our ministers preparing to leave the congregation later this summer, the congregation will enter into a time of interim ministry. This isn't an empty time nor is interim ministry a space-holder as you wait to call a new ministerial team. The interim time is an important time to focus on the congregation's identity.

As new people continue to join the congregation, while new and changed programs evolve, it will be important to think about and answer some important questions:

- Who is this congregation called to serve, and
- How will this congregation align its programs, resources, and energies to more fully serve the San Diego region?

Interim ministry will help people in the congregation reflect on these and other questions about how you want to be in the next era of ministry.

From Käthe:

We may not be able to offer the Our Whole Lives (OWL) programs online, but that doesn't mean the program coordinators at the UUA and UCC have been idle, and neither have the trainers and facilitators. OWL facilitators have been using the past year to sharpen their skills by attending the monthly seminars called "OWL: Taking Flight." Special emphasis has been placed on OWL and racial equity, and how to restart OWL programs when it's safe to meet in person again.

As a trainer, I was asked to join a team of other trainers to explore the cultural competency of the second edition of the grade 7-9 program curriculum from our various cultural lenses. The input of this meeting which focused on gaps, assumptions, microaggressions, and missed



opportunities will be used in the upcoming 3rd edition of the curriculum to create an even more inclusive program.

Meanwhile the Senior High youth group is making plans with the youth from four other congregations to participate in a "Project Octave" night, coordinating a group zoom event with First UU's 8th Principle team.



From Tony:

As fate would have it, we'll be entering this period of interim ministry at the same time as (fingers crossed!) we begin to think about returning to in-person programming. Many of the questions I've heard about the reopening focus on the "when" and "how," and we're also thinking very deeply about the "who," "what," "where," and "why."

There are aspects of our programming we'll likely pick up right where we left off. And, there are other ways in which this time has allowed us to imagine how we might do things with our RE programming that we've always dreamed of doing! While we don't have many concrete answers yet, the questions themselves are exciting!

Here are just a few of the big questions we're thinking about:

- **WHO?** How can we continue to center children and families of color? How can we create a truly multigenerational program that ministers to the needs of the entire family?
- **WHAT?** Is the "Sunday School" model of religious education meeting our needs? What other options are there that might better serve us?
- **WHERE?** How do we return to in-person programming without losing the benefits of virtual programming? What might a hybrid program look like? How do we maintain the rich interaction we've had between families from both campuses?
- **WHY?** What purpose does our programming serve? What are our big goals? Is our programming helping us accomplish our "why?"

These are just some of the questions we'll be considering in the months ahead. Please let us know how we might best serve you and your family during this time.

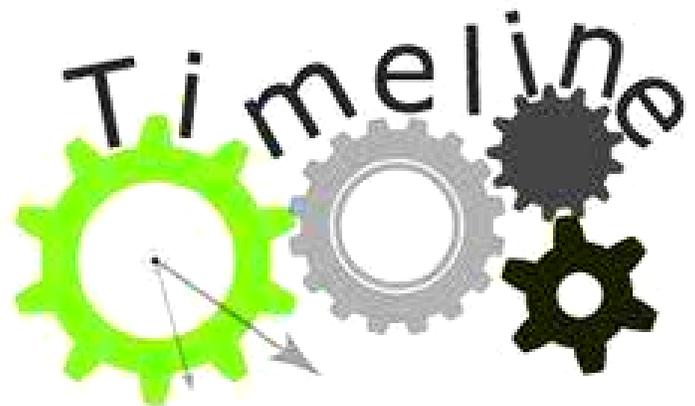
First UU Interim Minister Selection Process

by Angela Garcia-Sims, *Board Member*

In light of Kathleen's resignation, the following is a preliminary schedule for choosing the Lead Interim Minister at First UU:

- The Board of Trustees will follow the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) process to identify and hire an interim Lead Minister for the next two years.
- Search Committee members are:
 - Sarah Ormond, *Board President*
 - Angela Garcia-Sims, *Board Member at Large*,
 - Les GrantSmith, *Past Board President*,
 - Michanne Hctor-Thompson, *Past Board President*
 - Kia Bordner, *Journey Towards Wholeness (JTW) Core team member*.

Julie Forest, *Board Vice-President*, will provide assistance.



The following major milestones in the process indicate the preliminary steps, pending additional support from the UUA, the search committee, and contributions from the congregation:

April 2021: Contact the UUA for support in finding an Interim Lead Minister.

April / May 2021: The UUA Transitions Office sends each committee member resumés of ministers interested in serving in a congregation our size as interim minister.

May 2021: Committee drafts criteria for selecting the interim minister and solicits congregational input.

May 31, 2021: Committee considers the applicants and selects an interim minister.

June 2021: Congregation welcomes Interim Lead Minister at annual congregational meeting.

The 8th Principle Discussion and Vote

by Laura Ball

Proposed 8th Principle:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Nosotros, las congregaciones miembros de la Asociación Unitaria Universalista, nos comprometemos a afirmar y promover: el camino hacia la integridad espiritual para construir una Comunidad Amada diversa y multicultural a través de nuestras acciones responsables que desmantelen el racismo y otras opresiones en nosotros y en nuestras instituciones.

Sitting here in my home office where I've spent more time in the past year than in probably all past years combined has me recognizing the luxury and privilege of having such a space and the time to reflect on whether or not First UU should adopt this 8th Principle.

Since signing up last summer with Angela Garcia-Sims to help lead the Board and congregation's discernment process on the 8th Principle, I feel I've been steeped in considering the principle, while still experiencing the weird isolation that's been the COVID-19 pandemic. I've had the chance to engage with members and local and national leaders working toward adoption.

But, the funny thing about doing everything virtually, is I still don't have a great feel for how we've done at reaching folks. The 8th Principle discernment team, board members, our ministers, and others have tried to reach

out to as many groups as we could find that are actively meeting to engage members in Neighborhood Meetings, Board Forums, Chats, and Happy Hours. We even offered a virtual escape room experience focused on the 8th Principle. There's been a wide range of reactions: from "Yes!" and "What, haven't we already adopted it yet?" to concern the 8th Principle continues to separate or "other" Brown, Black, and Indigenous People of Color, and the seven Principles already cover anti-racism and anti-oppression—plus lots of questions and discussions on what accountability will mean. Straw polls from the meetings I've participated in indicate a high degree of support for adoption, but also folks who indicate they think we need more time to discern.

Wherever you are on that continuum, I hope you take the time you need to reflect on what it will mean to you personally and for us as a congregation, as part of the national UUA, and society at large up to the vote at the June 20, 2021 annual congregational meeting.

I've been grateful to see so many engaged in the not easy discussions. Thank you to all of you who've been engaged in the work, who've listened, joined in the discussions, have stayed, and who are committing to continuing.

If you or a group you participate in would like to further discuss the 8th Principle, please contact Angela Garcia-Sims and me at 8P@firstuusandiego.org. We still have time before June's vote, and even more so in the longer, harder, messier Journey Toward Wholeness and Beloved Community work after June's vote.

Resolution to Ratify UUA's Statements of Conscience (SOC)

by Kathleen McLeod

The Public Witness Guidance Team (PWGT) of the First UU Board is proposing a resolution for the Annual Meeting, asking the congregation to ratify all (15) UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association)-adopted Statements of Conscience (SOC) as authority for local advocacy on behalf of First UU.

The resolution is being considered for the Annual Meeting because our church constitution requires a two-thirds vote of ballots cast at a congregational meeting to support a public statement on behalf of the Church. The results of a recent survey of some congregants indicate support for all 15 SOC's ranging from 79% to 100%.

Statements of Conscience are part of the social witness process by which the UUA comes to understand and act on the social issues of our times, finally bearing witness through statements adopted as UUA policy by the delegates of a General Assembly (GA). The process has been an integral part of our faith since the merger between the Unitarians and the Universalists in 1961. This process is congregationally driven and is facilitated by the Commission on Social Witness (CSW).

The UUA makes two different types of social witness statements: Statements of Conscience (SOCs), which arise from Congregational Study/Action Issues, and Actions of Immediate Witness (AIWs).

SOCs come from Study/Action Issues (CSAIs), which are issues selected by Unitarian Universalist member congregations for three years of study, reflection, and action. In the third year of this process, delegates at GA can vote to approve an SOC, resulting from three years of congregational feedback on the CSAI.

The goal of the First UU resolution is to leverage the groundwork done by UUA delegates and congregations to empower us in more confident and effective public witness. The UUA, with local congregations, engage in a four-year process of discernment to adopt SOC's as authority for the UUA President to speak out publicly in its name.

Ratifying these SOC's will provide religious grounding for First UU to act without duplicating the discernment already invested in them and bring First UU up to date with the UUA. Without congregational authority, action can only be undertaken at the social justice team level, which cannot convey the moral authority of UU clergy.

For your convenience, here are the 15 SOC's and links to learn more about each:

[Our Democracy Uncorrupted,](#)

[Escalating Economic Inequity,](#)

[Reproductive Justice,](#)

[Immigration as a Moral Issue,](#)

[Civil Liberties,](#)

[Ethical Eating: Food & Environmental Justice,](#)

[Creating Peace,](#)

[Moral Values for a Pluralistic Society,](#)

[Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change,](#)

[Criminal Justice and Prison Reform,](#)

[Economic Globalization,](#)

[Alternatives to the War on Drugs,](#)

[Responsible Consumption Is Our Moral Imperative,](#)

[Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism: We Can Make a Difference!](#)

[Beyond Religious Tolerance: The Challenges of Interfaith Cooperation Begin with Us.](#)

In addition to the resolution, the Public Witness Guidance Team (PWGT) will develop and maintain a guide, similar to instructions from the UUA's Commission on Social Witness (CSW), that will include:

- the congregation's adopted positions for local action,
- how to study and discern a public issue from a UU approach,
- standards and procedures for proposing a First UU statement/action,
- local participation in UUA's Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAI) adopting future UUA Statement of Conscience for local use,
- how to determine appropriateness and address dissent, and
- how statements/actions can be done in the name of First UU.

Funding Our Future

by Isaac Castro, Craig Darling, Jan Garbosky, and Dave Hunt

Prior to Rev. Tania's and Rev. Kathleen's announcements about leaving, a group was involved with identifying congregational needs and how to achieve them. At their April meeting, First UU's Board of Trustees approved a process to involve the entire congregation in an opportunity to provide their input on present and future needs before any final decisions are made.

You're invited to attend one of our Focus Group Discussions. This is an excellent, welcoming space for each First UU member and friend to provide their thoughts on the best approach to improving the impact of our present and future programs, projects, and ministries. These gatherings are not for the solicitation of financial support, but rather to exchange ideas and engage everyone as we prepare for the upcoming changes of new ministerial leadership.

These gatherings will give us the opportunity for connection and visioning which will continue through the interim ministry period. Your input will be a springboard to our future together and will help us in calling a new Lead Minister. We want to hear from every one of you about your hopes and concerns as well as to celebrate this time of reconnecting and preparing to come back together for worship on our campuses.

Additionally, Rev. Kathleen and the Board have some important areas they want to focus on before she leaves and we want to share those with you.

A schedule of planned Focus Group Discussions is available on the First UU website at www.firstuusandiego.org/funding-our-future.html. Sessions will begin with a 20-minute presentation followed by discussion and questions from all attendees. We'll be asking you to register your participation. While many of the sessions will be held via Zoom, we're hoping

some can be held as in-person events at both Hillcrest and South Bay (location to be determined).

Together—in Beloved Community—we'll greet the future, strong in our faith and in our commitment to one another and our mission.

Funding Our Future Team: Isaac Castro, Craig Darling, Jan Garbosky, and Dave Hunt

Delegates needed for General Assembly 2021 Online

General Assembly, the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) will be held online June 23-27. All registered delegates and non-delegates can attend:

- Business meetings,
- Workshops on important justice topics including the Ware Lecture with Stacy Abrams,
- Worship services, and
- Fun evening activities.

Delegates vote on business items of the UUA and denominational positions on social justice issues. They can also propose amendments and participate in debates.

To represent First UU as one of our 12 delegates, contact John Schaibly, john@schaibly.com for an application. For information and to register for GA go to <https://uua.org/ga>. For questions, contact John Schaibly or Jan Garbosky, jgarbosky@cox.net.

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Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister
 Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister
 Matthew Waterman, Intern Minister
 Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Löne Broussard, Affiliate Ministers
 Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey, Rev. Julie Forest
 and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
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 Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator
 Rose Riedel, Office Manager and Scheduler
 Tony Bianca, Program Director
 Chase Pado, Pianist
 Lorelei Garner, South Bay Music Coordinator
 Andrea N-L, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
 Connie Hayes, Bookkeeper / Contoller
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
 Revs. Dr. Carolyn and Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti

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South Bay Campus:

<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/south-bay-campus.html>

To view sermon video casts, click on these

YouTube or Vimeo buttons:



Giving: <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/giving.html>.

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