



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

Special Reopening Issue Summer 2021

From Your Reopening Team

Our Reopening Team has been hard at work since July, 2020. A reminder about the qualified First UU people at the core of our team: (1.) Emily Fletcher Kaestner, M.D., pediatrician in current practice, with much focus on behavioral and mental health. (2.) George Longstreth, M.D., gastroenterologist with more than 40 years experience, retired from Kaiser Permanente. (3.) Rebecca Fielding-Miller, PhD., assistant professor at UCSD's Division of Infectious Disease and Global Public Health, a font of current knowledge. (4.) Stephanie Webber, PhD., retired from Agouron Pharmaceuticals where she led a large group of research scientists, our team's able coordinator. Bringing their own brand of expertise and rounding out the team are Harry Griswold, Nina Douglass, Robie Evans, Rev. Kathleen Owens, and Tony Bianca.

In this time of hope and looking forward, we as a community are embracing the challenges of a new future for First UU.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus is causing increased cases everywhere. We no longer have any true "no risk" situations. Fortunately, the vaccines are highly effective, though slightly less so among the elderly and those immuno-compromised. The variant is as contagious as chicken pox and can hit the not vaccinated really hard, including children. Vaccinated persons are FAR less likely to face possible hospitalization or worse. The disease can surely be spread by those not vaccinated who pick up the virus, but also by fully vaccinated people who may become infected even without showing symptoms. Getting vaccinated is the primary responsible thing we can do, for ourselves and others. We surely don't want to help perpetuate health disparities among those who are marginalized in any way, who may face more crowded living conditions and fewer work options than some do.

This situation means masks will be necessary for the foreseeable future at all church gatherings. We

can't take chances. "Soft reopening" is where we start. This means an in-person worship service, but not Religious Education, youth group, nor social hour just yet. The team believes it will be acceptably safe for some in-person worship gatherings at our Hillcrest campus, with certain rules/expectations. (1) Rev. Kathleen's final Sunday, August 22, in the Meeting House. This will be with masks, some seating limits, social distancing, and hopes that all who come will be vaccinated. No receiving line, no social hour. (2) Sunday, August 29, IF AND ONLY IF all goes well, then with masks, etc. with Rev. Arvid Straube leading worship. (3) Sunday, September 5, Rev. Jim Grant leading, with our transitional minister, Rev. Michael Brown, present to meet/greet us. With masks, followed by a beverages-only social hour.

An online service will be presented at 11:30 a.m. on each of these Sundays for those who prefer. If you have unvaccinated persons in your household you may wish to choose this safer alternative. We encourage families to come, we'll have some activities available for youngsters who want to play while the adults worship (or the other way around!) Families, please come.

We had hoped to give the go-ahead to South Bay for a similar start-up, but this can't happen until October when the Food Pantry is relocated and space is cleaned, any needed repairs made, and freed up for services. Our hope is that if our South Bay members are inclined to worship in person, to please consider attending in-person worship at the Hillcrest campus until the South Bay campus is ready for you. Rev. Michael Brown will preach for the first time on September 19. That will also be a soon-to-be Reverend and Assistant Minister Omega Burckhardt's first day and she'll be in person to begin her ministry. At that time, or on September 26, she'll be very interested in meeting specifically with our South Bay members and friends.

Kathleen's Goodbye to You

By Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*



One educational requirement for becoming a Fellowshiped UU minister is to have chaplain experience through the Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE). And though mine happened long ago in the summer of 2003, I still remember the hardest lesson I learned from that time. It was the importance of saying goodbye. I would often end a pastoral visit with a patient with the words, 'see you later.' One day my supervisor asked, "How do you know you'll see that person later? They might be discharged from the hospital before you visit again or worse, they may die before you return. It's important with every visit to say 'goodbye.'" And there were times during that summer that proved he was right – I didn't always get to see someone later. I think that's what's really hard about endings, about farewells. We live with the hope that of course we'll see each other again, and for much of the time and for most of us, that will be true, but sadly not for all. None of us have the promise of tomorrow as life and this pandemic continues to remind us. It's also important for churches to have a good goodbye with their ministers because it helps the congregation

to then have a good hello with incoming ministers. So, as hard as it is, this is my letter to you, dear First UU members and friends, to say goodbye. I can't express how privileged it's been to have served you as minister. That I've played a part in First UU's story for a while is an honor I will relish for a very long time. I will remember this chapter in my life with great joy.

You've given me so many gifts and a great deal to reflect upon in the coming year. In the shared ministry we've had, we've accomplished a great deal on many levels. We've started various affinity groups, some which continue to this day; strengthened the lay ministry program and been involved in numerous acts of social justice in the larger San Diego County. We've had some hard conversations among us including how to balance spiritual nourishment and social justice, about the languages spoken in the worship service, not only American Sign Language and Spanish, but also the language of reverence (like God, Spirit, and more). We've engaged each other around our values and what it means to live them through our finances, our budget, and our public witness.

What I'll hold closest in my heart are the many, many conversations we've shared together over the years. The conversations that revealed our hearts to one another, the willingness to stay at the table in times of conflict and wanting to engage in the repair work that's happening and will continue to happen. We've shared significant parts of our lives, of ourselves with each other: celebrating births and adoptions; mourning the death of family members, friends, and congregants; celebrating love through weddings and anniversary parties; relishing a shared communal life together in sing-a-longs, Winter holiday parties, and rituals; and so much more. I will always be so very grateful.

I'm proud to have been part of the ministry here at First UU and I know a new era of ministry is waiting to be born in and created among you. I'm hopeful for First UU's future and will be cheering you on from the sidelines. I hope the work you'll do in this time of transition will give you more clarity, vision, and direction for this congregation to continue to make a lasting impact in this region -- that you'll become a more welcoming place to more people and live that welcome out in tangible ways. I look forward to hearing about the lives that will continue to be changed for the better because people have found in this congregation a brave space, a welcoming space, and a people who are invested in relationship building, and sharing this faith's promise. That people will have found a spiritual home that truly lives its mission of creating community, nurturing spiritual growth, and using your gifts to help heal the world. May it be so.

With faith, hope, love, and a good goodbye,

Rev. Kathleen

What to Expect When You Come to Worship

by Robie Evans, Director of Operations

Sunday, August 22, 9:30 am and future Sundays

We'll be worshipping live at the Hillcrest Campus! (Virtual Worship Services will still be made available for the next few months at 11:30 am). Masking will be required at all times while on campus, regardless of vaccination status. Please come early as there will be a two-step check-in process, unless you've registered ahead of time and signed the Health Safety Covenant (see actual covenant on page 7 of this special issue and online) by following these links:

1. <https://rsvp.church/r/0cQJU1PE>
2. Sign the Health Safety Covenant: <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/reopening-team.html>

Registration Required for Contact Tracing

Registration is required if you're attending in-person worship service(s). Use the above links before coming to church or complete the registration and HSC when you arrive (there may be long lines). As part of our institutional responsibility, we'll need to keep track of who attends services in person, in case some spread occurs.

Masks Required

This situation means masks will be necessary for the foreseeable future at all church gatherings. We can't take chances. Good masks are cotton, reusable, 3-ply or 5-ply. The best mask is the N95 type, made of non-woven polypropylene fabric and labeled "respirator." These should say "NIOSH" on them or show the NIOSH logo. Similar in many ways is the KN95 mask, not a true respirator but which can be very effective. We caution you to purchase these only from a reputable source. An article about the differences:

<https://www.rollingstone.com/product-recommendations/lifestyle/n95-vs-kn95-masks-1044184/>. Where to purchase masks: <https://www.projectn95.org/>, and also: www.wellbefore.com. Any mask you use should cover both the nose and mouth. No vented masks, please.

Wristbands Available

A wristband table will be available in front of the Book Room, near the entrance to the Meeting House. Pick up your green (hug me!), yellow (ask first), or red (6 foot distance) wristband when you arrive at church! These are disposable wristbands and will be available every Sunday for the foreseeable future.

Name Badges - Please wear them!

Please wear your church name badge, especially since we'll all be masked! Some of us may have let our hair grow longer or shorter or grayer or more colorful! If you don't have one, please contact Rose Riedel, Office Manager, at rose@firstuusandiego.org.

From Your Family Ministry Team

By Tony Bianca, Program Director



With the recent news about “soft reopening” and “official reopening”, the Family Ministry Team wanted to clarify for families with young children exactly what that means for Children’s and Youth in-person programming.

First, we want to stress that our most important goal is to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible. This includes the youngest among us who are not eligible for vaccinations yet, those among us who cannot receive vaccinations due to medical reasons, those who may be vaccinated themselves but have family members at home who are not vaccinated, and all of us who might still be susceptible to Covid despite being vaccinated. These concerns are especially timely given the emergence of new variants, and rising case numbers and hospitalizations.

We’re also aware young children are likely to be the population for which masks and other social distancing protocols will be most difficult to observe. I’m sure we can all understand how difficult it might be, for example, to provide a playground or childcare

space for young children while asking them to maintain social distancing protocols. With these challenges in mind, we’ve tried to make Program decisions that are as welcoming as possible for families with younger children, and simultaneously protect the most vulnerable among us.

So you can make decisions that best meet the needs of your families, we’d like to clearly spell out what will and will not be available on specific dates moving forward. We’d also like to stress we’re adapting to the unfolding reality of our current situation, and will do our best to communicate any changes to this plan should they become necessary. Below are some FAQ’s we hope you find helpful. If you have additional questions, please contact tony@firstuusandiego.org.

Will there be RE Programs for my child?

On August 22, 29, and September 5 there will be NO in-person Children’s Religious Ed or Youth Programs. We’ll gather in person on the Hillcrest campus only for worship service and on September 5 there will be a minimal, beverage-only social hour. For families attending worship on these three Sundays, we’ll provide individual bags with a variety of coloring, reading, and other options for children of various ages. It will be the expectation, however, that all children will be the sole responsibility of the adults with whom they come to church.

Beginning September 12, we’ll offer one, outdoor Children’s Program option for all elementary age children. On September 12, families should begin service in the meeting house as usual and children will be dismissed to the upper patio with the RE leaders after the time for all ages. We won’t be calling children forward for a story, but there will be a Time for All Ages all will enjoy while staying in their seats. Masks will be required and we’ll socially

distance. Youth are invited to enjoy the worship service. Regular Middle school and Senior High youth programming will begin on September 19.

We'll then reevaluate the program from week to week and expand the number of groups/options we offer based on the number of children attending each week. Our goal is to provide engaging activities in groups that are as age-appropriate and safe as possible.

Will there be childcare?

At least through September, we won't be offering childcare. As you might imagine, caring for young children is practically impossible to do without close contact and other high-exposure variables such as the aerosols produced when a child cries and the need for diaper changes. We recognize not having childcare is an added burden for families with young children, but we don't yet feel it's safe enough for the children, their families, and our childcare providers. Additionally, our quiet room ("cry room") has no ventilation and will be unavailable for use. We'll do our best to provide a designated area outside where adults with young children who need space can still hear the service. We recognize this space may not be ideal for feeling fully part of the service. Please know that you're an important part of our congregation and we're doing our best to provide a space that is as welcoming and inclusive as is safely possible. We'll reevaluate our childcare policies as the situation

evolves.

How can we all help?

One lesson we might all take away from this pandemic is that we're all, as our principles tell us, part of an interconnected web of life. All of us, from our youngest children to our oldest elders, depend on each other to stay healthy and safe. While we recognize this places an additional burden on families with young children to do things differently, it's a burden we all share whether our families include young children or not. We hope those without children will do their best to help our children and families feel welcome. With the doors of the meeting house open for ventilation, there might be more noise than some of us are used to. We hope all of us can appreciate those sounds as the joy of being part of a multi-generational community. All of us, regardless of our family make up, will be faced with changes to the way we "do church." This might cause additional stress for some, and we might not realize the full weight of this stress until we're in it. We hope, therefore, we might all do our part to be gentle with each other as we navigate this new landscape. Those without young children who feel safe doing so might take time to engage with families that include younger children in a way that makes them feel welcome and a full part of our church family.



Rev. Michael Brown, Minister-in-Residence



We're happy to share the very good news that Rev. Michael Brown is coming to serve as Transitional Lead Minister from September through December. He'll focus on

preaching, pastoral care, and Board support. He looks forward to meeting members and friends of the congregation beginning on Sunday, September 5. After December, other transition ministers will come January through June and your Board will keep you posted on this as we continue to work with the UUA's Transition Office.

We look forward to working with Rev. Brown and are excited about his arrival. Rev. Brown writes he recently completed a 27-year ministry at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria, a pre-civil war church with Universalist roots. During Rev. Brown's tenure the church grew by nearly 250 adult members, built a new church home, played a leadership role in the community, and received the UUA's Breakthrough Congregation award. Rev. Brown was a co-founder of the local Interfaith Alliance and received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Service Leadership Award. After retiring as Minister Emeritus, he and his spouse, lifelong UU Diane F. Brown, moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to start a new path which unexpectedly led him to First UU San Diego for a new chapter of ministry. He joins us with a sense of excitement, appreciation of our congregation, and readiness to serve in a time of transition and new possibilities for caring, community, and transforming action.

Omega Burckhardt, Assistant Minister

We're very pleased to announce the FUUSD Board has hired Omega Burckhardt as our Assistant Minister with a two year contract. She'll begin her ministry with us effective September 19. Here are some words from the soon-to-be ordained Omega Burckhardt:

"¡Es un gran honor andar por este camino con Uds.! I am honored to serve as your Assistant Minister beginning in September. In this time of tremendous transition, I look forward to learning about this vibrant community within and beyond the walls of the church buildings, fostering relationships with ministerial and lay leaders, and working towards a shared vision of the Beloved Community of Now and the Future while honoring the traditions and complexities of the past. Juntos honramos el pasado, celebramos el presente, e imaginamos el futuro.

I will be moving to San Diego from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I served as Ministerial Intern at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church in Racine, Wisconsin and The Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, Illinois. I was a student and lay staff



member of the UU MidWest Leadership School, and have been active in state and regional interfaith collaborative work. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, however I lived as a child in southern Mexico, and later as an adult, in Spain. I have spent periods of time in Brazil and Chile, and hold an M.A. and Ph.D. in Latin American Poetry. I worked for several years as the Director of a program at Marquette University dedicated to intercultural communication and language acquisition. In addition, I worked as a Spanish-language educator and liaison in the craft brewing industry. Ha sido un camino de aventura y de aprendizaje, y sin duda habrá más oportunidades de aprender y experimentar juntos en el futuro.

De manera de introducción, mi página profesional tiene más detalles con enlaces a servicios y charlas que he dado: <https://www.omegaburckhardt.com/>. I

hope my website gives you a brief introduction to who I am and what I bring with me into the experience of shared ministry in San Diego. I will be splitting my time between the South Bay and Hillcrest campus, so I hope to have the opportunity to meet you all very soon! ¡Hasta pronto!"

FUUSD Health Safety Covenant

Your Reopening Team is asking all members and friends to complete a Health Safety Covenant as you return to in-person activities at church. You only need to do this once. You may do this online [here](#). Our Covenant reads as follows:

I enter into this Covenant to do my part to keep our church and community in good health as I return to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.

I understand I have a role in the fight against COVID-19 and commit to responsible actions and to being an accountable member of both the Hillcrest and South Bay communities.

I covenant to uphold our Affirmation and our UU Eight Principles every day by demonstrating personal integrity, respecting others, and supporting my church by:

- *Following public health guidelines in place to help protect myself and others.*
 - *Getting vaccinated if I am eligible to do so*
 - *By wearing a face mask*
 - *Social distancing*
 - *Using hand sanitizer frequently*
- *Protecting myself and others in high-traffic areas of campus or situations where physical distancing isn't possible to reduce the spread of COVID-19.*
- *Keeping my hands clean and sanitized while on campus and at home.*
- *Adhering to capacity limits in social situations to prevent high-spread scenarios.*
- *Modifying my actions and encouraging others to do the same as guidelines and recommendations adapt over time.*

By entering into this Covenant to keep the church in good health, I accept responsibility for myself and my actions and will do my best to prevent the spread of COVID-19.





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