



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

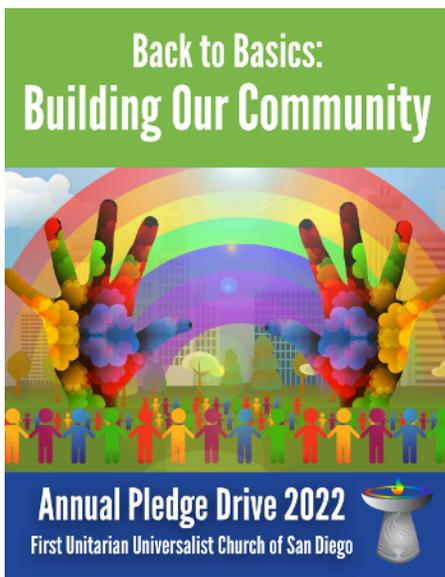
FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

October 2021; Vol 15 No. 8

October: Tricks, Treats, & Fun(draising)

by Rhiannon Roselle, *Board Trustee*



October is a month of many spooky things—pumpkin latte, bats, ghosts, and goblins. It's also time for one thing that ISN'T scary . . . a return to the Annual Pledge Drive! First UU's yearly operations are made possible by member and friend financial commitments which make up 60% of our annual operating

budget. It helps keep the programs, facilities, and music you love running.

This year's Pledge Drive theme is *Back to Basics: Building Our Community*. With everyone longing for connection, the Annual Pledge Drive Team is planning something special. By the end of the month, every member will have received an invitation for a personal phone or zoom call or, if they're comfortable, an in-person visit. These personal calls and visits will be a chance to spend time with a fellow First UU congregant and are much more than simply making your financial pledge.

At this past May's Funding Our Future forums, congregants expressed this year is not a good time to embark on a Capital Campaign. A Capital Campaign would have funded new programs and addressed many deferred maintenance items. This is different than the Annual Pledge Drive which supports our everyday needs and keeps First UU running smoothly month to month.

The Annual Fund Drive is a time to build our connections with each other and with our First UU community. It's a time to get excited about the things we

can do in the future—things that will only happen with our financial and energetic volunteer involvement.

When we come together to support our community, we can do amazing things. That deserves celebrating! At the end of the Drive, on Sunday, November 7, we'll have Celebration Sunday, to honor all the hard work we've done to keep our community going.

Did you know?

- A gift of \$4,000 pays for a Sunday Morning worship service.
- A gift of \$800 allows us to put on Social Hour for three months or cover our kitchen expenses for six months.
- A gift of just \$100 covers our cost of art supplies for our children or pastoral care for someone in crisis.

Your financial gift isn't the only contribution to make! If you're interested in donating time or talent, ask your Annual Pledge Drive Team member about volunteer opportunities.

Please contact [Dave Hunt](#) if you'd like to schedule your call or visit in advance or if you'd like to volunteer to be part of the fundraising outreach. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Look for more information at upcoming Sunday worship services, in *The Window*, and in a special letter you'll be receiving shortly.

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A Message from Rev. Michael

by Rev. Michael Brown, *Minister in Residence*



I want to thank you all for the warm welcome I've received since Diane and I joined this community just a few weeks ago. There's a sense of caring here, and a beauty that's expressed in many ways throughout this campus. I'm impressed by the quality of our staff and lay leaders as well. I'm inspired by your commitment to nurture two

locations. Many things are going very well here.

I feel I'm a "formerly retired" minister now; I'm completely engaged in getting to know this congregation and how it works. It's a good stretch for me and I'm grateful I can share this time with you. As a person who likes UU churches, I love hearing and singing our music, greeting each other before and after the service—feeling the flow of friendship all around, and I love to hear an inspiring sermon.

Of course, we can't do everything we want to just yet, but we are opening up for outdoor services and that's a wonderful development. I think that will lift our spirits considerably.

And of course, I've been listening to your concerns, trying to understand those as well. I think right now listening is the best thing for me to do, but I will keep my eyes and ears open for possibilities to make a helpful contribution. These are tough times, of course, but they're creative times as well. Rachel Maddow has said more than once that the cure for despair is innovation and inspiration. Hmmm . . . that could be a sermon title.

I really look forward to meeting all of you in person. When it's safe to do so, please come join us on Sunday and give me the pleasure of greeting you. I think we're in a creative time together.

Yours on the journey,

Michael

PS

In 1893, Unitarian minister Jenkin Lloyd Jones and others founded the Parliament of the World's Religions. The 8th Parliament convenes online Oct. 16-18. Go to www.parliamentofreligions.org for more information.

October Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

In Person Worship:

Sunday, 9:30 am, Hillcrest Campus

Live Streamed Worship: Sunday, 11:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

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

**October's
Transformational Theme is:
"Letting Go"**

October 3, 2021

"Navigating the Swells"

Dr. Omega Burckhardt, *Assistant Minister*

October 10, 2021

"The Joys of Generosity "

Rev. Michael Brown, *Minister in Residence*

October 17, 2021

"Making, Breaking and Remaking Covenants"

Rev. Michael Brown, *Minister in Residence*

October 24, 2021

"Honoring Ancestors and Loved Ones"

Dr. Omega Burckhardt & Worship Team

October 31, 2021

"Worth, Dignity and Justice For Real"

Rev. Michael Brown, SOLACE & JTW

Welcome Kate Collier, Program Assistant!

by Tony Bianca, *Program Director*



It's my pleasure to welcome our New Program Assistant, Kate Collier! Kate has been a part of our congregation since 2001. She was a member of the Youth Choir, and you may

also recognize her from her Looking Glass Theater roles as Penny the Swan in "Honk" and Gertrude McFuzz in "Seussical the Musical."

Kate is a musical theater lover and performer outside of the First UU Community as well. She graduated from the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts where she studied Musical Theater. She then attended Grossmont College and Mount Holyoke where, in addition to continuing her theater work, she studied Political Science and Gender Studies. Kate was also a dog trainer at PetCo, and First UU staff were delighted to meet her dog,



Karl, a chiweenie, who attended her first Zoom staff meeting with her.

Most recently, Kate's been a valuable volunteer at our South Bay Food Pantry since July 4, 2020. She started working at the Food Pantry during the pandemic as a means of doing something safe that also had a positive impact in the community. She's helped with client intake and picks

up the biweekly bread donation from one of our Pantry partners, Con Pane. Kate enjoys volunteering at the Pantry, getting to know the regular clients, and learning more about how the Food Bank Systems in San Diego work.

As Program Assistant, Kate will be providing logistical support to our Family Ministry Programs as well as assisting with logistics on Sunday mornings

at our Hillcrest Campus. We're delighted to have Kate join our First UU staff family and we hope you'll join us in welcoming her as well.

Introducing Reverend Michael Brown, Minister in Residence

by Nancy Fisk, *Editor*

Rev. Michael Brown has come to San Diego to serve as our Minister in Residence until December 31, 2021. Previously, he was the minister for 27 years in Illinois where he served the Unitarian Church of Peoria. He and his wife, Diane Fuller Brown, retired to New Mexico in 2019.

Rev. Michael was born in Chicago. When his father died in a car accident when Michael was four, he was sent to live with his uncle for a while. His uncle was a Southern Baptist minister and Michael would discuss the sermons with him on the way back from services. One day Michael asked, "Are Buddhists going to hell?" His uncle's response was unsettling, "There is only one way to heaven, accepting Jesus. But we have to trust that God will do the right thing." This was the beginning of Michael's spiritual questioning.



At 12, he was able to rejoin his mother in Chicago. He went to high school there, attended St. John's College for a year and a half, and then traveled in Europe. He lived in Canada for five years and received his Bachelor's degree in computer science from a university in London, Ontario. He eventually taught computer programming.

After he met Diane, they began attending the Second Unitarian Church of Chicago, near Wrigley Field. (Not surprisingly, Rev. Michael is a Chicago Cubs fan.) They liked 2nd Unitarian because it was a lively place to be. Within two years, he was the Board chair, serving for four years. The church often held lay led services, which he participated in. The congregation also sponsored people who wanted to attend seminary. Diane began seminary, but decided to pursue a career with non-profits, instead of becoming a minister.

After one of his friends died in their early 40's,

Michael did that friend's eulogy and it made him think about becoming a minister. He attended seminary at Meadville-Lombard, at first part-time and then full-time. When he became the minister at the Unitarian Church of Peoria, they had 140 members. In the 1920's it was rumored to be one of the largest Unitarian churches in the country, with 1,000 members. While Rev. Michael was there, the congregation grew to 388 members and built a new church building. He thinks they were successful because they were one of the few progressive places in a very conservative town.

While serving in Peoria, Rev. Michael co-founded the Central Illinois Chapter of the Interfaith Alliance, served on the Central Illinois Workforce Development Board, and helped create the YES (Youth Employment for Summer) job program for Peoria area youth. He received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Service Leadership Award, the Faith and Freedom Award from Interfaith Alliance, and the Love in Action Award from Common Place.

Michael and Diane have two adult sons, and hosted an international exchange student 15 years ago that they consider their "international daughter." They Skype with her every week.

He likes Unitarian Universalism because it's an inclusive faith, with an inclusive approach to religion. People don't need to share the same religious points of view to belong. He also likes it because it's socially progressive. He's a fan of interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

We're grateful to have Rev. Michael and Diane in our midst for the next few months and encourage everyone to welcome them into our First UU community.

Member Profile: Kathy Smith

as told to Laurie Gerber

As a child, I wasn't aware of race or skin color. My nearest play companions were Frankie and Martin Martinez, neighbors to my family's farm in National City. One day, my mother said I could no longer play with them. I thought it was her inborn prejudice all these years; however, she said it was the fact that they were boys.

I started to see the world within the prism of social justice--who was allowed to do what, where people could live. My junior year in high school, my family hosted an American Field Service student, Mariane Ackermack, from Finland. She stretched my mind and helped me to think, reflect, and question authority. She ran into trouble with teachers: she out-proved the Math teacher and spoke of realistic sexual translations in literature class. She also refused to attend gym class as the teacher was rather bossy and heavy handed with various rules.

This led me to try to understand the greater world and human rights in general. One of my earliest causes was Amnesty International. I was active for several decades writing letters for Prisoners of Conscience around the world, hosting Chapter 471 in my house, and, hopefully, influencing my sons while doing so. Since my chapter was assigned India State Action Files, I got more involved with the Indian student group at UCSD and a Gandhian nonprofit benefiting projects in India. We created a speakers' forum, highlighting a massacre in Gujarat State in India. Decades later, I am still a supporter of this Gandhian group and went to India to learn more about sustainable development aid and women-centered rural projects.

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) has been a long-time calling for me. It's a national/international movement. This method of teaching, learning, and deep listening is transformative in both the greater community and prison system. It's more of a way of being than a social justice movement. It flattens the notion of hierarchy, and exposes prejudices we humans have. AVP is an amazing way to develop a trusting



community—particularly within the walls of prison.

These days my dedication is also to SOLACE (Souls Offering Loving And Compassionate Ears) and Project New Village.

Our SOLACE program sprang out of the UUA's Immigration as a Moral Issue study course held at First UU. We listened to many people's stories, some sharing their trauma traveling here from as far away as Pakistan, West Africa, China, and Russia.

I learned of Project New Village (PNV) after attending a Hunger-themed conference at SDSU with many workshops. There I met Diane Moss, the managing director of PNV. She is passionate about health equity for her Mt. Hope community and surrounding communities. She established a community garden there that hosts food distribution and teaching events. She gave me the opportunity to join the San Diego Food Alliance which PNV is part of.

In the past, when I felt I was putting too much effort or feelings into SOLACE, I wanted to give up. Burn-out is an important issue. It's complicated, too. One needs to know help is on the way, through shared leadership.

I stuck with it though, in spite of wanting to let it go—it's hard work, very emotional and draining. SOLACE has been suspended three times already. Two times over first amendment rights issues and the last time because of the virus.

Angela Garcia-Sims led the charge with her team the first time to get us reinstated. Her leadership is inspiring. Today, I'm heartened by volunteer leaders such as Jane Uhle and Mayra Jones who maintain our lists and have created resources for our present PenPal Program. Other community volunteers have stepped up to address medical and mental neglect at Otay Mesa Detention Center run by Core Civic. Burn-out is reduced when there's shared leadership in whatever social justice work one is involved in. Taking time out for fun and family is also crucial.

Looking Glass Theatre

is proud to release our latest virtual production

The Edge of Noir!

THE EDGE OF NOIR!

Written by Gary Peterson

Directed by Kimberly Price

This 20-minute short play follows night-desk journalist Rocky Rockford and his PI contact as they try to solve a gem heist, because breaking the story could launch Rocky's career to the next level.

Professional actors and LGT veterans Grant Ferrier, Linda Ullrich, Wendy Hovland, and Flash Kellish make up the cast for this virtual production, all of which was filmed safely and remotely via Zoom.

Watch now on LookingGlassSD.org, www.firstusandiego.org/looking-glass-theatre.html or our Facebook Page @LookingGlassSD to see if you can crack the case before Rocky does!



LGT is a 100% volunteer-based organization and we need your donations to continue being a presence in San Diego theatre. Donations encouraged at:

<https://www.firstusandiego.org/donations.html>

In fund select "other," in comments write "LGT" or "Looking Glass Theatre."

Building a Bridge to the Next Place

by Rev. Julie Forest, *Board President*



Greetings from Interesting Times, and not just in an ordinary year, but a full catastrophe time. We're in the tunnel of COVID. We're finding out more and more about dangerous attacks on our own soil to weaken our democracy. Our world is hungry for climate and

social justice. Here at First UU, we've suffered the loss of both our ministers, as well as members who can't endure any more stress and conflict in their church lives. I get it. I, too, experience how hard it is just to be a caring person right now.

This is an unusual time for our Board as well. Some members are interested in policy. Some are interested in finances. Some are interested in justice and working to learn and incorporate what we're learning about white supremacy to soften the ugly, damaging characteristics of it, to heal from it, and to find more sustainable ways for us to be together, with agreed up social norms that value us all.

In a Journey Towards Wholeness gathering, we were asked to imagine a bridge that had meaning for us, to draw it, and then share a story about it. I drew the bridge that Indiana Jones used to get to the next safe place. Some monsters were chasing him through a cave, and he found an opening, but below him was a deep, canyon-like ravine.

The map he clutched in his hand said this was the way to the next place. Even though he couldn't see the bridge, he threw some stones out. They didn't clatter far below, but bounced at his feet. Running out of options, he put one foot forward and then another into the stomach-lurching emptiness. The bridge was revealed as he walked upon it.

That is how we're proceeding at this time. We're finding the things we need to keep the church going and making it stronger as we go. This is good news.

One of our challenges is moving forward without a Lead Minister in place, when so much of policy governance revolves around that position. Not having a Lead Minister, along with all the other challenges we're facing personally and collectively, is stressful. People are irritated with this uncertainty because it's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable for all of us.

From now until April, (which is far as I can project), here is a look at the structure, the bridge we're creating to get us to the next place. We have an Interim Committee (Exec), whose members are the Board President (myself); Vice President, Cora Pendergast; Director of Operations, Robie Evans; and congregational member, Dave Hunt. We meet once a week and, also, do staff supervision. I supervise Dr. Omega Burckhardt. Cora supervises Robie. Robie supervises the rest of the staff with the exception of the maintenance staff. Dave supervises the maintenance staff.

Our Minister in Residence, the Rev. Michael Brown, will provide spiritual leadership, worship, and pastoral care through December. We hope to have more visiting Ministers in Residence through March providing those same services. Our hired assistant minister, Dr. Omega Burckhardt, will be here for the next two years. She'll provide a wonderful sense of continuity, which we'll all appreciate.

Finally, a few words about me. I joined this church when my wife and I moved to San Diego. I joined the handbell choir and later became a Wisdom Circle facilitator. In addition, I facilitated, along with Kay Chandler and Everett Howe, a Beloved Conversations class. Prior to that I was a parish minister. The last congregation I served was the Rancho Mirage, Palm Springs church. As I reflect upon our tumultuous time, I'm picturing it like our beloved Pacific Ocean. Perhaps a bit choppy at the surface, but such lovely and nurturing depth below. And a bit of choppy, wavy water just means better surfing.

Staff
 Rev. Michael Brown, Minister in Residence
 Dr. Omega Burckhardt, Assistant 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
 Robie Evans, Director of Operations
 Rose Riedel, Office Manager and Scheduler
 Tony Bianca, Program Director
 Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator
 Käthe Larick, Youth Programs Coordinator
 Kate Collier, Program Assistant
 Chase Pado, Pianist
 Lorelei Garner, South Bay Music Coordinator
 Andrea N-L, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
 Connie Hayes, Controller / Bookkeeper
 Ray Evans, Maintenance
 Joshua Morrison, Janitor
 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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