



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

December 2020; Vol 14 No. 10

Gratitude for Our Callers

By Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

When the pandemic reached our county and we were asked to stay home back in March, we had no idea our need to maintain physical distance was going to last this long nor did we imagine wearing face masks would become a part of our routine. Back then, as we asked ourselves what it meant to be a virtual church and found ourselves learning to create online worship, our Caring Ministry Team rushed to reach out to members in our community to make sure everyone felt connected and had the support needed during such difficult times.

For the last seven months, a group of volunteer callers, organized by Chris Smith with support from Craig Darling, have made hundreds of calls and sent many emails. In the process, I learned so many of you were already reaching out to one another and finding ways to connect. As I've received feedback from our callers, I've heard that by volunteering their time to this outreach effort, they were able to meet members of our congregation they didn't know and to foster new friendships.

At our last meeting with this group of volunteers, I shared a concept I recently learned from Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés when she talks about the "church beneath the church"—caring individuals that reach out to each other. They're the heart of the community, the connections, the embodiment of the institution's highest ideals. The work our group of volunteers engaged in, from my perspective, is an example of the church beneath our church. Despite the possible awkwardness of calling someone they didn't know, or the fact it's not our practice to make cold phone calls, our volunteers leaned into this work because they believed it was important to keep everyone connected.

Now, seven months later, it seems the time has come to wrap up this program. Most people in our congregation seem to have figured out ways to stay connected with their loved ones and friends. I'm grateful for the ways

in which our members leaned into learning new technologies to keep them connected to their friends.

Our caring team will move on to finding other ways to connect with you and to remind each of you there's a community here that cares for you and your well-being. Of course, we'll make sure those who would like to continue receiving phone calls remain connected with their assigned person or another volunteer.

Thank you to the following callers: Everado Aguilar, Norma Almanza, Laura Ball, Marcy Beaty, Benita Berkson, Nedra Bickel, Marcia Biller, Kay Chandler, Allyn Charney, Caroline Clark, Susanna Concha-Garcia, James Crosley, Craig Darling, Nancy Fisk, Alyse Ford, Jan Garbosky, Marilyn Hanson, Mary Ann Harper, Nancy Hazelton, Kathleen MacLeod, Sue Marberry, Ann McDonald, Julie McKane, Alan Nicol, Susan Oliver, Cora Pendergast, Kay Phillips, Susan Riegel Harding, Wayne Savell, Elsie Sleeter, Chris Smith, Loretta Solsbery, Lisa Thurn, Les Vivian, Karin Walin, and Marge Wurgel.

I'm moved and inspired by our wonderful volunteers who made time to call, email, and listen with care to our members. Thank you to all our callers and thank you to Chris Smith and Craig Darling who took the initiative to oversee this program and offer support to our callers. All of you helped us live into the weekly promise of helping one another in fellowship.

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Celebrating A Hope That's Real

By Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*



What brings you hope? Is it too hard to think about right now? In the midst of the pandemic that's only getting worse, in the midst of what feels like a never-ending election or its drama, in the midst of missing loved ones and friends and being physically together—I understand how hard it can be to think about hope.

And yet, in spite of our shared reality right now, the various winter holidays we celebrate offer this gift to humanity—that hope is real and possible, even now. Hope isn't a feel-good, Pollyannaish quality, like a wish. Hope is something that rises, despite the current circumstances of our lives.

Hope rises because it can. Michelle Obama writes, "You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."

Hope comes when we choose to live in a way that honors our truth and the truth of others; hope for change linked with our works that move us toward change—this takes on a life of its own. I'm reminded of Yule and the mighty struggle between the sun and moon. That in the deepest dark of winter, we celebrate the returning light, even when the return is still months away.

The sun doesn't shine brightly all at once after Yule, but incrementally, day by day. So, too, it's true with our works, day by day, little by little, the work of love and repair, the building and re-building of healthy communities, relationships, and bodies. Over time, hope is made real.

Vaclav Havel writes, "Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good." Today I admit it's hard to feel hope, so much is uncertain and unknown. Yet I'm buoyed by leaders and many of you who remind me that we, and this faith, refuse to give up, because we can grow wiser, learn more, and create change.

We can celebrate a hope that's real as we continue living our mission of creating community, nurturing spiritual growth, and acting on our values to help heal the world.

Happy Holidays!

Rev. Kathleen

December Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Live Streamed Worship:

Sunday, 9:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

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

December's Transformational Theme is: "Hope"

December 6, 2020

"The Color of Hope"

"El color de la esperanza"

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

December 6, 2020, 5:30 pm

"Blue Holiday Vespers Service"

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

December 13, 2020

"Music Sunday" / "Domingo Musica"

December 19, 2020, 6:30 pm

"Yule Ritual 2020"

Earth Centered Spirituality Circle

December 20, 2020

"A Light in the Dark"

Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

December 24, 2020, 7 pm

"Christmas Eve Service"

Rev. Tania Y. Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

December 27, 2020

"Finding Hope"

Matthew Waterman, *Intern Minister*

A Whisper of Hope

by Käthe Larick, *Youth Programs Coordinator*

As I sit here on this breezy, cool (for San Diego) day, I find myself contemplating the words of an often used hymn, “Come Sing a Song with Me.” Good old number 346 from Singing the Living Tradition has been used in many a youth service, mainly because of the chorus which says:

“And I’ll bring you hope
when hope is hard to find,
and I’ll bring a song of love
and a rose in the wintertime.”



Now I know a lot of folks, ministers and seminary students, youth advisors and youth leaders groan when somebody suggests using this song in a worship service. Some feel it’s been overused, and some feel the words and melody are too “sing-songy” or corny. But there’s something about the easy melody and the sentimental lyrics that I find very comforting, especially in these times, because for me, hope has been hard to find on some days.

This hymn feels comforting because it makes me think of hearing it sung by everyone in the meeting house on the Hillcrest campus or in the worship space at South Bay, and that reminds me of community and connection. When I reflect on that, I’m reminded I still have community and connection, it just looks a little different these days. The last phrase of the chorus, about bringing a rose in the wintertime, gives me a sense of joy for the beautiful things I have right now, as well as hope for the times ahead.

What brings you hope and joy? This question has been used a few times over the last eight months in various online youth group meetings and gatherings, and I’ve noticed a theme in the answers each time the question is posed. For almost all of us, the answer is community and connection, whether that’s in person with our family/pod members, on the phone with a close friend and confidante, or in virtual space with many friends and familiar faces.

Sure, phone calls and Zoom meetings lack some of the intimacy we experience when meeting in person, but virtual meetings do allow us to look into each other’s faces, hear each other’s voices, and experience the communal sound of hope, sometimes expressed in warm raucous laughter, and sometimes just a quiet smile or a whisper.

That whisper reminds me that I, and all of us, have already made it through some difficult times, and just as surely as the light will return and the days will grow longer and warmer once again, it offers encouragement and hope to hold on to for the brighter days ahead. Hold on to that smile and that whisper—admire the beauty and hope that’s embodied in that winter rose, even if it’s just a song or a picture on a page or a memory. I’m with you, and your community is here, always.

The COVID-19 Tsunami

by Allyn Charney, from the August 16, 2020 service "Once Upon a Pandemic"

COVID-19 crashed into San Diego like a tsunami
And destroyed what was my safe harbor.
The foul tidal wave spread inland and
Submerged desert towns and fertile valleys.

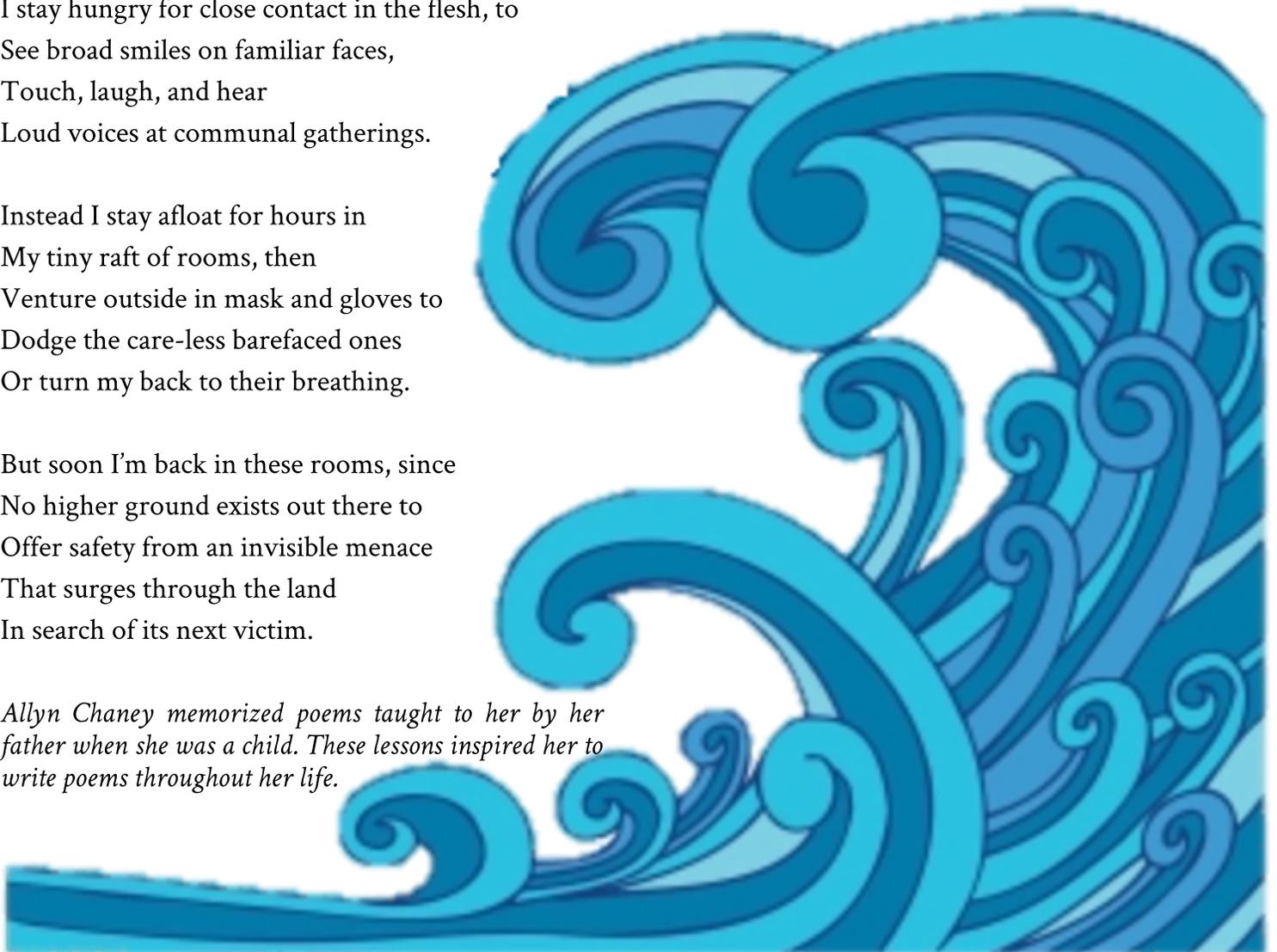
Now the virus floods hospitals with patients
While doctors, nurses, orderlies and staff
Don their lifejacket layers of protective gear to
Stay buoyant as they try to rescue the drowning.

And I resist the undertow of this strange reality;
I stay hungry for close contact in the flesh, to
See broad smiles on familiar faces,
Touch, laugh, and hear
Loud voices at communal gatherings.

Instead I stay afloat for hours in
My tiny raft of rooms, then
Venture outside in mask and gloves to
Dodge the care-less barefaced ones
Or turn my back to their breathing.

But soon I'm back in these rooms, since
No higher ground exists out there to
Offer safety from an invisible menace
That surges through the land
In search of its next victim.

Allyn Chaney memorized poems taught to her by her father when she was a child. These lessons inspired her to write poems throughout her life.



In These Times of All at Once

by Harry Griswold, *from the August 16, 2020 service "Once Upon a Pandemic"*

I can't even see
this virus enemy
as it lays waste to the life I knew—
of people in the flesh, of simple
shopping for grapefruit at Sprout's
or socks at Macy's. And that
turns out to be the easy part—

being revealed as a satisfied person
who loves his white life is harder—
who knew how many layers would get
exposed? I haven't started
to drive my white privilege
into the cage it deserves, with the key
turned over to down-trodden others

to be thrown away. I had no idea
how far down they were trodden.
I've climbed from the rolling deck
of the ship we're tossed about on
to the captain's quarters and found
them empty—
crows have settled in, issuing
rounds of raucous calls,

watching us slide toward the fall-off edge
of the sea. In streets below,
people are hauling statues down—
Confederate generals, slave-owner
presidents, even Columbus who
opened the door for invasion against
Native peoples. At least Columbus

showed us we won't sail off the edge,
despite the crows. With good fortune
our ship can reach a less white place,
a more rainbow place
where we can marvel
at the color of the stars we find
in each other's eyes, each other's hearts.

Harry Griswold holds an MFA degree and leads poetry-writing workshops.



First UU Cookbooks Then and Now

by Maureen McNair

The “Burnt Offerings” cookbook, assembled by this congregation in 1983, is a collection of over 100 recipes with a hint of religious satire. Member Dana Tomlinson recently gave me her copy.

The recipes are from many people including current members, Carolyn Owen-Towle and Ardath Schaibly. Some recipes are for home cooking, such as marinated mushrooms and chicken Parmesan. Other recipes are for church potlucks many of us miss right now, such as an easy Casserole for 50.

The title “Burnt Offerings” probably refers back to the Hebrew story of Noah, who made the first burnt offering as a sacrifice to his God on an outdoor altar. However, the cover art, by Alan Coates, introduces an early man more akin to Fred Flintstone than Noah. The man is not making an offering to God. Instead, a lightning bolt sent from the heavens is apparently destroying the man’s meal with fire.

One of my favorite interior illustrations depicts the same caveman spit-roasting a dinosaur outdoors. Some evangelical Christians believe people and dinosaurs lived at the same time. But; the US Geological Survey reports that after the dinosaurs died out, 65 million years passed before people appeared on Earth. Clearly, the cookbook committee who put together this book had lots of fun.

All the recipes are neatly typed. The cookbook was available for purchase for \$5.50, or \$6.25 if you wanted to have it mailed to you. My copy is priceless.

And now, 37 years later, First UU has a new recipe collection “The South Bay Food Pantry: The Best of 2020.” Members Jan Carpenter Tucker and Laurie Gerber used their considerable talents to create the first cookbook, to be distributed as a gift this December to our food pantry clients.

The genesis of this recipe collection comes from the Covid-19 pandemic. Late last year when the food pantry was started, I joined a nonprofit organization

called Leah’s Pantry that offers training programs on how to educate their clients about good nutrition and food preparation. But the pandemic does not lend itself to in-person classes or demonstrations. Instead, the pandemic forces pantry volunteers to distribute food from a safe physical distance.

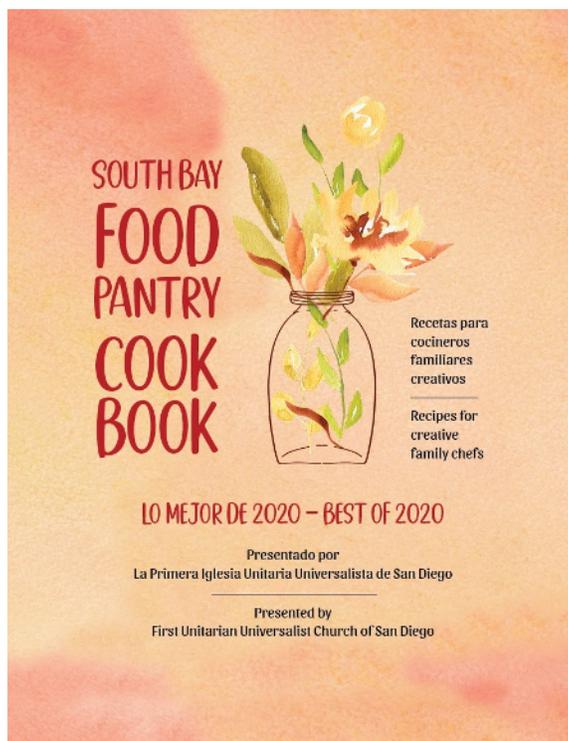
So, instead of inviting pantry clients indoors to learn about healthy food choices and preparation, and to select the food they want off our shelves, we have to preassemble bags of food that clients can grab on the go from the parking lot. This process eliminates client choice of food and has concerned me since we started. After all, who goes grocery shopping to get a random bag of food?

I’ve tried to make sense of what is in each bag by selecting only nutritious food and by including a recipe with as many of the main ingredients from the recipe as I could find. The pantry has been

distributing a recipe a week since mid-March. Compiling those recipes and others into the “The Best of 2020” is our end of the year gift to our pantry clients so that they have a collection of recipes in one place that uses the food the pantry commonly distributes. Altogether, the cookbook has 24 pages of short, easy to prepare dishes.

Laurie Gerber has considerable knowledge about cookbook editing. She sourced recipes, organized them into sensible categories, and provided helpful hints for how to substitute ingredients. Rose Riedel, our Office Manager extraordinaire, contributed several recipes.

Jan Carpenter-Tucker is a graphic artist who owns JL Carpenter Design. Jan contributed her high standards for quality and beauty to every page. Special thanks go to Rev. Tania Márquez for her translation suggestions. Angela Garcia-Sims enthusiastically reviewed the entire manuscript in English and in Spanish. We would not be able to serve our pantry clients properly without their translation skills.



The working cover of the South Bay Food Pantry Cookbook

Celebrating Yule in 2020

by Jenner Daelyn, for *Earth-Centered Spirituality Circle*

Even though 2020 is a year full of unexpected changes, the world still turns as it always has and the dance of solstices and equinoxes continues throughout the seasons. This season, the wheel of the year turns again to the winter solstice, celebrated by pagans of many paths as the holiday of Yule. Traditionally, Yule celebrations center on the return of the light and the lengthening of days following the solstice. Candlelight, bonfires, singing, feasting, and revelry kept the cold and the dark of the longest night at bay and marked the joyous return of sunlight and longer days ahead.

For 24 years, the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle (ECSC) at First UU has celebrated winter solstice with a Yule ritual full of singing, merriment, and dancing. The ritual is a December tradition that many in our community look forward to throughout the year. This year, amid the upheaval of the pandemic and the many losses and the sadness so many of us are dealing with, ECSC decided that not holding a Yule ritual was not an option! We believe rituals can help people through hard times, and now is a time when we need each other more than ever.

To keep everyone as safe as possible, the Yule ritual will be held completely virtual this year, and you're invited to participate wherever you are!

We've tried to incorporate as many familiar elements of the ritual as possible while also including some

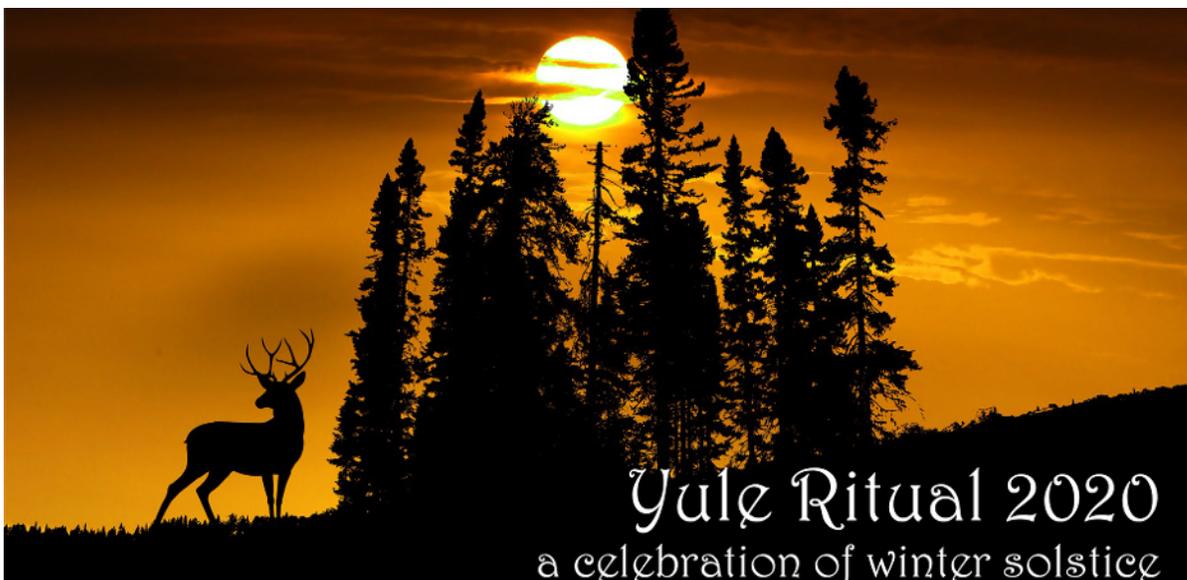
new pieces. For ease of access, the Yule ritual will be livestreamed using the same platform as Sunday Services and will feature ASL interpretation and Spanish translation. Following the ritual, we'll hold a Social Hour over Zoom so we can be together in community. Yule will take place on December 19th, at 6:30 pm. Please watch *The Window* for details on how to watch and how to join social hour.

Although this year's ritual will be different in so many ways than it would be if it were held in person, we hope it can bring some of the light of the season into your home, hearth, and heart.

In addition to joining in the livestreamed ritual, this year would be a great time to begin a personal Yule/Winter Solstice spiritual practice if you've not done so already. Simply lighting a candle on the night of the solstice and meditating on the connections that help you make it through the darkest times, or on what brings you the most warmth and joy can be a meaningful practice. Singing or chanting songs that bring you meaning this time of year while sipping a cup of warm cider or cocoa can be a comforting act of self-care. And, there's always the option of either staying awake through the night of the solstice (or waking up early enough) to watch the sun rise on December 22nd, marking the turn of the year towards longer days and brighter tomorrows.

No matter what your spiritual path may be, taking some time to honor the return of the sunlight and the changes in the natural world this season can be a meaningful way to connect with the Earth and with yourself.

We look forward to celebrating Yule with you!



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