A little over a year ago, we asked you to consider including First UU when you’re creating your will, trust, or estate plan. Or, to simply tell us that you’d already done so we could include you as a member of Sustainer of the Flame, joining the 200 others who’ve already made a Planned or Living Gift at First UU.

We also told you about a Legacy Challenge, sponsored by Shelter Rock Congregation of New York, that would match new and increased Planned Gifts. Well, now it’s time to tell you the great news—responses received far exceeded our expectations!

By the end of 2018, less than 12 months from when we had our first Planned Giving announcements, 28 church members and friends joined, the most in any single year since the start of First UU Legacy Endowment fund. Seven other current SCFF members told us of increases made to their Planned Gifts. All together, these new and increased commitments to First UU Endowments, totaled 2 million dollars! And, many of these Planned Gifts were eligible for the Shelter Rock match. Later this year, First UU will receive a check for $73,000 we can use now to support our programs.

Should I Be Thinking About A Planned Gift? Maybe the time is right for you to consider this, as many others have. Most of all, we think you should plan ahead! People of all ages and family types plan for the distribution of their assets and the care of their children and other loved ones. Planned Giving can be part of this consideration and can include supporting this congregation now and after you’ve passed on. To do this, you don’t need to have funds set aside to give now or even a specific amount defined. You simply need to plan for the future, for yourself, for your heirs, and for this place because of its meaning in your life. Many people do this through a Planned or Living Gift to First UU.

How Do I Do That? You become a “Sustainer of the Flame” by making a Planned Gift — a gift or bequest valued at $2,500 or more that will be made to this congregation upon your death. Some people elect to make a Living Gift now.

Once you’ve decided what you want to do, which may include working with an estate or financial planner, the rest is easy.

You complete a simple form to identify where you’d like your gift to go (most people choose the First UU Legacy Endowment), and you’re done!
New Life
By Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

This month we celebrate the themes of New Life, as we experience super blooms throughout our region, and the longer days of sunshine after such a cold and wet winter. New life is celebrated every spring as we honor the act of resurrection — be it through more bird song and the budding of new leaves on trees or through the stories of the world’s religions.

And, given the speed of climate change, it seems more and more of us are longing to celebrate a new life for the planet, a life that includes less waste, plastic, and toxicity. Especially this year, I think Earth Day and Easter are linked in a calling for new habits, practices, ways of thinking, and living on this fragile planet that is our home. Our sixth source calls us to the spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instructs us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. Now, more than ever before, this source must be heeded if we are to have a sustainable future.

We all have a role in helping the earth resuscitate from humanity’s harmful choices — there is much to do and if each one does what they can, in little actions, such as engaging our elected leaders to make policy changes, it all can add up to create meaningful change.

This spring and summer we also will have opportunities to create a new life in our congregation. The Board is taking action to engage the congregation in revising ourselves and creating a new strategic plan. There will be a variety of opportunities to participate and contribute to the processes that will eventually help us answer the questions of who we are now, who we’re called to serve, and where and how we will live our values into greater action, spreading the good news of Unitarian Universalism. Our faith is one that holds sacred the act of resurrection, that proclaims new life is possible. This truly is good news in a country that is in desperate need of hope and renewal.

Faithfully Yours,
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AprilSermonMessages

Worship Times:
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“The Gift of Presence”
Rev. Tania Marquez, Assistant Minister

A Deeper Blooming
By Rev. Tania Marquez, Assistant Minister

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But no matter the reason, the others on the planning team (Lynda Gilgum, Pat Schmidt, Maria English, and Mary Byrne Hoffmann) crafted a weekend that invited participants into deeper reflection, and spiritual growth as well as rest and renewal.

Retreats offer the opportunity to create community and to explore our spirituality in ways that are not always possible at church. During the weekend, I was moved by the willingness of women to try new rituals and to engage in different activities around the camp. Mary Byrne Hoffmann started our gathering by inviting us all into the bigger story we all carry within. And I witnessed, throughout the weekend, women opening up to one another, sharing part of their stories, being vulnerable sometimes. There was also time to have fun and, above all, to just be.

What I’ll continue to carry with me from the weekend, is the gift I received of bearing witness to how the participants took care of each other. I’m sure friendships and connections were strengthened, that some felt seen, others felt heard, and many others affirmed. We offered each other company, joy, reflection, and space.

No human gathering is ever perfect, but when I reflect about the weekend we spent in Camp Stevens, these words I found in the book “Sacred Circles” remain true:

“When sisters gather and the wind/breath/spirit blows and seeds are scattered, nurturing happens even when we are unaware.” - Margee

I’m grateful for the work of the planning team, the help of our Connections Coordinator Jenner Daelyn, and the offerings of our presenters (Gail Edwards, Mary Byrne Hoffmann, Pat Schmidt, Sharon Goodlove, Rev. Andrea Travers, and Rev. Kathleen Owens) for making the weekend possible.

My hope is that the seeds planted and watered during our time together, will continue to grow, and bloom, and enrich our lives.
A Few Little Nips – An Art Show
By Nancy Fisk

When Alison Aguilar Lopez Gutierrez McLeod was asked to write the story of her experiences as a professional of color by the Commission on Institutional Change at the UUA, she discovered it wasn’t a simple matter of putting pen to paper and writing about a particular incident. She found herself writing and drawing out numerous storyboards, each one more detailed than the last. “This is an art show,” she finally decided.

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A Few Little Nips Unos Cuantos Piquetitos

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Finally, consider bringing new life to your spiritual journey by registering for our annual All-Church Camp! Camp will take place from May 31 to June 2, 2019, at Camp deBenneville Pines. It’s a great opportunity to take some time away from your daily routine to nurture your spiritual growth, deepen your connection to our church community, and get back to nature. Register online at www.firstuusandiego.org/all-church-camp or pick up a paper registration form on the patio between services.

I hope you’ll join us as we celebrate New Life this month and, even more, I hope those of you with young children will bring them to celebrate with us. More than any service, festival, or ritual; our children are truly the most important and exciting sign of new life among us!
A Day in the Life of Karla Alvarez-Malo

By Rhea Kuhlman

Karla Alvarez-Malo, our Administrative Assistant for the South Bay campus, holds down the fort at South Bay when no one else is there. Although she’s often the only person in the office during the week, she doesn’t get lonely. That’s because the phone is constantly ringing. Often the call is from the Hillcrest campus, with which she’s in frequent communication. “It’s all about teamwork,” Karla explains, “and we’re a beautiful team.” In addition to the 10 hours per week Karla puts in as South Bay’s Gal Friday, she’s First UU’s Scheduler 12 hours a week, a job she took over from Rose Riedel in August. As Scheduler, Karla says she’s not always the most popular person. She sometimes has to tell people “No, that room isn’t available,” or send them an invoice they’re not happy about paying. But she figures it’s all part of the job, and she takes it in stride.

Her duties for the South Bay Campus, on the other hand, are a source of joy. “I feel very fortunate, very grateful,” she says. “From the moment I started in August, the South Bay congregation welcomed me with open arms and made me feel comfortable. I love them all.”

Karla is primarily responsible for getting the facilities ready for Sunday services. In that capacity, she coordinates which volunteers are on duty each week to pass out Orders of Service and handle refreshments, orders the necessary supplies for each service, and keeps up the Service Board displayed in the front window, which announces what the next several weeks’ services are about, and who will be speaking. She also keeps up a bulletin board in the reception area which shows upcoming South Bay events, as well as a schedule of volunteers, and helps set things up for the Sunday service. Although it’s not her job, she often makes the coffee for the post-service coffee hour and puts on the hot water for tea. “People are so nice, and I just like to help them however I can,” she explains. Karla is also responsible for putting the headphones that people need for translation of the services from English to Spanish. The translator sits in the back of the room, and quietly speaks into a microphone. His words are picked up by the people wearing the headphones.

Karla commutes to work from Tijuana, where she lives with her mother and her 14-year-old son. She explains she used to rent a house in San Diego, where she went to school. But it’s much less expensive to live in Tijuana, which is important for her as a single parent.

Although Karla is Catholic, she thoroughly enjoys the services at South Bay. She elaborates that at her church in Tijuana, they say the Mass and that’s about it. “The UU services,” she’s noticed, “talk about values. They talk about ethics. They talk about the importance of being kind to people. This is a message that the world needs to hear.”

We hope Karla gets to enjoy these South Bay services for a long time to come.

Embodyed Balance Reflection

By Everett Eastman

When I was a boy, I didn’t pay attention to my body. I was busy . . . looking at stars, wondering why they looked so cold if they were so hot; peering down the road, seeing it bend, wondering where it went. My body? It . . . just . . . was. It did what my mind and spirit wanted, without objection.

Years of this arrangement flew by, but, eventually, I noticed my body because it started to develop an identity of its own. It seemed to have its own ideas of what I should be. My mind did not like this, not at all! My spirit was being crowded out. To quote a wise friend, “This all happened, and without my consent.”

As I grew older still, I would read Whitman, Thoreau, Emerson, Alcott. They gave me the words to express the idea that union with spirit and body was in union with the mind. In Whitman’s Leaves of Grass, he celebrated this union:

“Come, said my Soul, Such verses for my Body let us write, (for we are one) Ever and ever yet the verses owning . . . as, first, I here and now Singing for Soul and Body, set to them My Name.”

Spirit and body and mind are one? As a biracial boy in Wisconsin of the 1960’s and 70’s, I thought I was like everyone else — but others taught me that I was different. “Where were you born? Where is your family from? Where is your family really from? How long have your people lived here? You don’t look like you’re from Wisconsin.”

This ceaseless barrage of questions took a certain toll. I coped by sometimes fantasizing a body prayer. It was about how good it would feel, and how great I’d be treated, if I could just be a little, 62’ swimmer, with blue eyes and lightly wavy blond hair. My mind was convinced, my body might have chuckled, but I think my spirit might have laughed.

By my late 20s, I gave up on Everett the Blond Swimmer. I was not going to dye my hair and get a wavy perm, though I could have. I was not going to grow any taller. And, I hated swimming laps in a pool.

In my mid-30s, as an out gay man, I read about body types, and so my body prayer was to become what gay men seemed to want of me . . . a muscle butt with exotic looks. If I couldn’t be Mesomorphic Blonde Swimmer Me, I could be Endomorphic Mysterious Muscle Me. My mind was skeptical, though, and I recall it wondering how long this would last. For a while, my body and mind were like Whitman, who wrote in Song of Myself:

“I celebrate myself, and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. I loaf and invite my soul, I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.”

Yet . . . maybe . . . I did not self-confidently “lean and loaf at my ease.” I worked and worked in the gym. The physical one I felt yielded to seeing the empty quest to gain the approval of others.

Releasing this version of me was helped by my getting older. My body, without my consent, shifted and became unfamiliar to my mind and its past visions of me.” Today, my embodied prayer is not about “looking like,” it’s about the dynamic and complicated relationship amongst mind, body, and spirit. It’s about fully inhabiting and becoming comfortable in my own skin.

This is not a resigned surrendering to age, gravity, and disease. It’s cultivating an attitude of loving kindness. Some days, it might mean having a sliver of pumpkin and pecan pie; and other days it means passing on them both.

This embodied prayer is a journey. It’s a daily act of faith and effort.
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A Few Little Nips - An Art Show Opening Night April 12, 2019 7:00 p.m.
First Unitarian Universalist Church

FirstWords 6
April 2019; Vol 13 No 4

Celebrate New Life With US
By Tony Bianca, Interim RE Coordinator

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My hope is that the seeds planted and watered during our time together, will continue to grow, and bloom, and enrich our lives.
A little over a year ago, we asked you to consider including First UU when you’re creating your will, trust, or estate plan. Or, to simply tell us that you’d already done so we could include you as a member of Sustainer of the Flame, joining the 200 others who’ve already made a Planned or Living Gift at First UU.

We also told you about a Legacy Challenge, sponsored by Shelter Rock congregation of New York, that would match new and increased Planned Gifts. Well, now it’s time to tell you the great news—responses received far exceeded our expectations!

By the end of 2018, less than 12 months from when we had our first Planned Giving announcements, 28 church members and friends joined, the most in any single year since the start of First UU Legacy Endowment Fund. Seven other current SCFF members told us of increases made to their Planned Gifts. All together, these new and increased commitments to First UU Endowments, totaled 2 million dollars! And, many of these Planned Gifts were eligible for the Shelter Rock match. Later this year, First UU will receive a check for $73,000 we can use now to support our programs.

Should I Be Thinking About a Planned Gift? Maybe the time is right for you to consider this, as many others have. Most of us, we think you should plan ahead! People of all ages and family types plan for the distribution of their assets and the care of their children and other loved ones. Planned Giving can be part of this consideration and can include supporting this congregation now and after you’ve passed on. To do this, you don’t need to have funds set aside to give now or even a specific amount defined. You simply need to plan for the future, for yourself, for your heirs, and for this place because of its meaning in your life. Many people do this through a Planned or Living Gift to First UU.

How Do I Do That? You become a “Sustainer of the Flame” by making a Planned Gift—a gift or bequest valued at $2,500 or more that will be made to this congregation upon your death. Some people elect to make a Living Gift now.

Once you’ve decided what you want to do, which may include working with an estate or financial planner, the rest is easy. You complete a simple form to identify where you’d like your gift to go (most people choose the First UU Legacy Endowment), and you’re done!

Now & Tomorrow

An Update on Planned Giving and Sustainers of the Flame (SOTF)

By Dave Hunt, Chair, Planned Giving Committee

In years to come, you’ll be someone others will gratefully remember as one who “went before” and enabled First UU to do so much for them and others. If you’re willing, you’ll be remembered today as well. Your name will be engraved on the beautiful Sustainers of the Flame sculpture, located on the outside of the Hillcrest campus’ Welcome Center in the upper piano. Take a look and see how many of the 200 members, whose names appear on the sculpture, that you know—who loved this congregation and made a Planned or Living Gift. All SOTF members are invited to a special reception held each year. The next one will be in May.

Who Can Help Me?

Address any questions to Dave Hunt, Planned Giving Chair, at unscfellatr.com or 858-945-4825 or speak to any Planned Giving members. Their names and more detailed information is available on the Planned Giving section of the church web site. If you don’t yet have a will or estate plan, we urge you to consider this as well, with the help of a trusted attorney. The Planned Giving Committee can share with you their personal experiences in drafting an end-of-life document and direct you to others who can suggest professionals who they found helpful in this process.

You’ll be hearing more about Planned Giving in the month of April.

First UU is here today because of the commitments and dreams of those who came before us — whose vision, hard work, time, talents, and planning got us here — from our beginnings almost 150 years ago, right up until today. Your Planned Gifts will help sustain us in the years to come. First UU’s Legacy Endowment has grown to $1,050,000 and generates over $45,000 each year to help fund our operating budget.