Celebrate Yule on Winter Solstice with ECSC

By Rhiannon Roselle

The Earth Centered Spirituality Circle (ECSC) is pleased to invite you to our yearly Yule Ritual, on December 21 at 5:30 p.m. It's an annual celebration of the longest night of the year and the return of the sun. We raise up both the sun and our own light with song, dance, storytelling, and drumming. It's a wonderful family friendly event that will remind both young and old of the magic of the season.

A question the ECSC is asked a lot recently is why the name of this celebration changed a few years ago from Winter Solstice to Yule. The reason is fairly straightforward. The Earth Centered Spirituality Circle nurtures the spiritual growth of First UU's Pagan community. In the Pagan faith there are eight Sabbats (or holy days) throughout the year, all of which are celebrated by the ECSC. These Sabbats align with astronomical occurrences such as the solstices and equinoxes. The winter solstice is a secular astrological happening marked all over the world by different cultures and religions. Pagans celebrate the Yule Sabbat on this date.

The ECSC changed the name for two reasons. First, because the Pagan community we serve deserves the respect of having all its Sabbats recognized. And, secondly, because we believe that the wider congregation has grown enough to be able to accept diverse faiths without needing to couch it in secular words.

We're excited to welcome friends and family from both our Pagan and UU communities to join us in this ritual which has become an important tradition for many at this time of year. As we gather around the bonfire, drink wassail, and joyfully celebrate the birth of the Sun, we ask only that all attendees engage in good faith. This is far more than a theatrical reenactment of an ancient tale. This is the sharing of sacred story and ritual that is deeply meaningful to those of the Pagan faith.

Yule is the ECSC's only ticketed event. Tickets will be on sale every Sunday at Hillcrest, after both first and second services. Ritual starts promptly at 6:30 p.m., but come early to enjoy festivities on the patio starting at 5:30 p.m.

Also in this issue:
- Restoring Community by Rev. Kathleen Owens  Pg 2
- Moral Tales by Kathleen Swift  Pg 3
- Visioning the Future Update by the VTF Core Committee  Pg 4
- Chase Pado, Our New Pianist / Organist by Elaine Twamley  Pg 5
- Holiday Craft Fair  Pg 6
- First UU 2019 Holiday Calendar  Pg 7
Restoring Community
By Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

I’m so excited about this month’s worship theme — Restoring Community. There’s so much about this theme that’s applicable to what’s needed right now, in our country and in our congregation.

Like you, I’ve noticed that the anxiety in our country over various policies and behaviors in the current administration, is especially affecting people seeking asylum or who are being detained, the families that have been separated and still are not reunited. Along with rising gun violence, this societal anxiety seeps into our beings and takes a toll. And, of course, there’s anxiety in our congregation as we continue to explore the implications of possibilities regarding our Hillcrest campus and how much more we might fulfill our mission and be of service to the larger community.

With this level of anxiety, relationships can easily become strained because we know this is about more than decision-making—it’s about identity and exploring our fuller potential. The theme of Restoring Community is essential for this time and this means we all need to participate in many ways to live this theme into our shared reality. For me, it means daily practicing our affirmation—of having open minds, loving hearts, and welcoming hands. This affirmation is not just something nice to say on Sunday mornings—but it’s an invitation to a way of being, a way of life that invites curiosity and wonderment into our conversations and deliberations.

I think this theme is also perfect for the holiday season. We restore community in many ways—sharing our talents in services through our many choirs, through worship co-leaders offering reflections on and their insights about what this theme means to them. ; We restore community by participating in rituals and offering acts of generosity, justice and healing.

In various sermons this month, I’ll be exploring how different faith traditions practice restoring community and what we can learn from them to better live this theme into practice. This season is made holy by our attention and care of one another and all we meet. Acts of kindness and hope offer healing and peace and help us celebrate the return of light.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Kathleen

Worship Times:
Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am and 11:30 am (ASL Interpretation)
South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am (Intergenerational, Bilingual)

December’s Transformational Theme is: "Restoring Community"

December 1, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Following Love"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

South Bay Service—
"Restoring Community"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

December 8, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Interconnection: Buddha and Jesus"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister
& Sangha Leaders

South Bay Service—
"The Bodhi Tree"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

December 15, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Community for the Holidays"
Music Sunday

South Bay Service—
"Music Sunday"
Lorelei Isidro-Garner, SB Music Coordinator

December 22, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Nature’s Great Lesson"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

South Bay Service—
"Christmas Service"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

December 29, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"On the Threshold"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

South Bay Service—
"Following Love"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister
Our children face an increasingly complex world where they are often faced with difficult situations and decisions. We want to provide them with tools, both spiritual and ethical, that can help them and inform their decision-making skills.

For our children in grades 2 and 3, we’re using a UUA curriculum called Moral Tales. Each week, we concentrate on a UU value. Through stories portraying situations of moral courage and hands-on learning activities that reinforce the message, our children will develop and strengthen their own identity as Unitarian Universalists and practice making decisions in a safe, thoughtful environment.

I’ve been comparing the curricula we use at First Church to the Stages of Faith identified by James Fowler. Our 2/3 kids are in the later (but same) stages as our K/1 children. To read more about these, go to: https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop2/167602.shtml

Goals of the Moral Tales curricula are to provide participants with:

- An ethics- and faith-based framework for thinking about what it means to be just and good, and introducing and reinforcing positive UU concepts.
- Strengthened Unitarian Universalist identities by demonstrating the connection between the choices we make in our lives and the beliefs and attitudes we hold as Unitarian Universalists, including our Principles.
- Stories drawn from a range of our Unitarian Universalist Sources including Christian and Hebrew scripture; worldwide cultural and religious sources; and biographies of Unitarian Universalists and others who have demonstrated Unitarian Universalist values in their actions.
- Explication and experiences to acquaint participants with some key tools and resources we use to search for truth and make moral decisions, including conscience, faith, prayer, empathy, and external help from wise others.
- Spiritual growth by fostering spiritual practices such as generosity, forgiveness, empathy, faith, non-violence, and living in balance.

- The empowerment to act as agents of justice and goodness by providing them with opportunities to share real life dilemmas and solutions—including their own, concrete actions—that reflect their learning in the Moral Tales sessions.
- Encouragement to be responsible, courageous, and persistent in working for goodness and justice in the world.
- The creation of a learning community in which everyone is respected, welcomed, and honored; diversity is embraced; justice is practiced; and children can learn, grow and have fun together.
- An understanding of the world’s interconnectedness, reinforcing cooperation, non-violence, responsibility, and balance as necessary to moral, ethical and spiritual health.

The sessions in Moral Tales present children with difficult justice issues, including racial and economic disparities, developing empathy and the inner voice—known as the conscience—and forgiveness. There is a focus on good and bad decisions, as opposed to good and bad people.

Each week, children participate in the Gems of Goodness activity. We have a large clear container in which, each Sunday, children are asked to identify one or two acts of goodness they accomplished. For each act of goodness, they put a “gem” into the container. We are watching the level of gems rise each week!

There is also a large Moral Compass pointing to a new virtue each week. These include interdependence, conscience, faith, empathy, forgiveness, compassion, awe, respect, non-violence, responsibility, courage, perseverance, cooperation, ecological balance, fairness, and being welcoming.

As always, we encourage parents to become familiar with what their children are learning from our Religious Education program and First Church. Parents are the primary teachers of their children’s religious and spiritual journey and we are here to support and inspire them. The goal is to bring intentionality and excitement to their children’s faith and moral development.
Visioning the Future Update

By the VTF Core Committee

When you visit the First UU web page, you’ll see a bright orange symbol on the left side, emblazoned with the initials VTF. If you’ve spent time on the Hillcrest campus between services, you’ll have noticed the crowds in Bard Hall. Both of these are telling you that the Visioning the Future (VTF) initiative described in the September issue of First Words is off and running.

The objective of the VTF is “to provide to the congregation . . . recommendations for the future of our Hillcrest campus, whether it remains in place, or moves to a different location.” The impetus for all this activity is:

- the prospect that changes in the UCSD hospital complex may sharply reduce parking revenues (currently over 25% of our budget) and
- UCSD’s offer to buy our campus for about $36 million (actually whatever the current appraised value is at the time).

In September, the Board set up a structure to accomplish this work. It consists of a Core Committee that includes the Board President, the heads of four Subcommittees, the Ministers, and the Director of Operations.

The four Subcommittees are:

- Stay: Doug Diamond and Kathleen Brand, chairs
- Go: Benita Berkson, chair
- Real Estate: Stephanie Webber, chair
- Negotiations: Dave Hunt, chair

All these committees have started their work. And, all have met with the congregation in open Forums in Bard Hall which have been streamed to South Bay. Each week, a video of those Forums has been posted on the website, with a link at the bright orange VTF symbol.

Many of the comments and questions in the initial forums were focused on clarifying what these committees are NOT doing. The Core Committee is NOT going to decide what happens next, but rather use the reports from the Subcommittees to formulate one or more proposals that they think are capable of reaching some broad consensus of support within the congregation. First UU and UCSD have agreed this will not happen before Spring.
Chase Pado, Our New Pianist / Organist

By Elaine Twamley

Have you noticed the musical whirlwind on our church campus in the last three months? Meet Chase Pado, our new Pianist / Organist. Chase is on our campus at least four days a week, planning the music for worship service, accompanying the Chalice Choir and the Women’s Choir during rehearsals, playing for the Sunday services and frequently helping with weddings and memorial services.

Chase is pleased with his new job. He says, “I love the campus at First Church, the physical space. The Meeting House itself is open and beautiful. And the people I work with are so helpful and talented!”

Chase, age 25, is a third generation Californian who grew up in Poway, attended public schools, and graduated from UCSD with a degree in music. His family was not particularly musical but did have a piano in their home. His older brother took piano lessons and one day, when he escaped the prepaid lesson, Chase’s mother had Chase take the lesson instead. This was at the age of four! The piano teacher recognized his obvious talent and Chase’s musical career was born.

When not at First Church, Chase teaches several instruments at his own music studio in North Park and plays in many different groups for weddings, parties, and other large events. Music in all its aspects consumes most of Chase’s life, but he does reserve some personal time to connect and become one with nature.

He recently backpacked Yosemite National Park and appreciated the solitude of the adventure. “I love nature in all its forms,” says Chase. “I like to be by myself in an environment where nothing is provided for you and everything is a challenge.”

Chase often played at South Bay a few years ago and then went on to an organist position at another church. That church ceased operations last summer and Chase heard of the opening for an organist / pianist at First Church. “One door closed and another door opened at the same time,” says Chase. “How lucky for me.” And how lucky for all of us at First Church!
Sunday, December 8 — 9 am to 1 pm — Bard Hall

Shop local and handmade for your holiday gifts, in turn raising money for Young Adult and Campus Ministry Program scholarships and supporting church members and friends who are artisans and craft persons.

If you have any questions, please contact firstuuyoungadultcraftfair@gmail.com
Celebrate the Season!

Holiday Events at First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

**December**

- **Sunday, December 1st**
  - 5:30 PM
  - Advent Service with Rev. Jim Grant at Hillcrest Campus
- **Wednesday, December 4th**
  - 6:30 PM
  - Blue Holiday Vespers Service
- **Friday, December 6th**
  - 6 PM
  - Tree-Decorating and Carol Sing-Along at Hillcrest Campus
- **Sunday, December 8th**
  - 9 AM to 1 PM
  - Crafts Fair at Hillcrest Campus
- **Saturday, December 14th**
  - 9 AM to 1 PM
  - Tamalada at Jamaica Village Clubhouse, 14 Jamaica Village Dr., Coronado Cays, 92118
- **Sunday, December 15th**
  - 9:30 AM & 11:30 AM
  - December Music Service at South Bay and Hillcrest Campuses
- **Sunday, December 15th**
  - 2 PM
  - Posada Sin Fronteras
- **Saturday, December 21st**
  - 6 PM
  - Yule Ritual and Celebration at Hillcrest Campus
- **Tuesday, December 24th**
  - 5:30 PM
  - Family Christmas Eve Service at Hillcrest Campus
- **Tuesday, December 24th**
  - 8 PM
  - Candlelight Service at Hillcrest Campus
- **Wednesday, December 25th**
  - 12:30 PM
  - Christmas Day Potluck at Hillcrest Campus
- **Sunday, December 29th**
  - 9:30 AM
  - Children’s Chapel at Hillcrest Campus