

First  
Unitarian Universalist  
Church of San Diego

# FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

January 2020; Vol 14 No. 1

## South Bay Campus Opening a Food Pantry

By Rev. Tania Márquez and Maureen McNair

Our South Bay campus is opening an all volunteer food pantry! Rev. Tania, who maintains offices at both the South Bay and Hillcrest campuses, says the South Bay Food Pantry “will offer people who experience food insecurity access to free food when they need it and it will give us the opportunity to serve the community in a way that is both meaningful and needed. Our food pantry also seeks to serve our own members who may need access to food as well.”

Our South Bay campus is located in southwest Chula Vista, a mixed commercial and residential area. Currently, there are only seven hours a month of food banks open in our zip code. Those food distribution events are held for a couple hours during each of the first three weeks of the month by Feed America, one of the two major regional food banks.

The need for access to food is not always easily visible in our communities, but we know that the high rents take so much of the earned income of people. We’re already receiving encouragement from community organizations who had identified this need in our zip code for a while and who are looking forward to the opening of our food pantry.

Because we know we’ll be addressing a real need in our community, we want this food pantry to last and grow. Our desire is to serve the South Bay community as we continue to raise our awareness of systems of inequality in our communities and continue to mobilize against them.

But, we cannot do this without your help. We’ll not open until the food pantry has at least four months of sustainable contributions. Our intention is to apply to the San Diego Food Bank where we’ll be able to purchase food at 19 cents a pound. However, the SD Food Bank wants to see at least three months of data on how many people a food pantry is serving and what food they are being given before the Food Bank will consider an application.

It’s important to self-support for at least four months — three months to collect data and a month in which to apply to SD Food Bank and pass their inspection.

Then, of course, our food pantry will need sustained monthly contributions to purchase food for 19 cents a pound. Even though we have all been very generous during the pre-holiday giving season, the food pantry volunteers are asking everyone to consider a monthly recurring donation to the pantry of \$19 a month. Once we’re able to join the SD Food Bank, we’ll be able to buy 100 pounds of food for \$19!

Please consider making a monthly recurring donation to the pantry of \$19 a month!

Tania stresses that “no amount is too small. Give what you can, whether it’s \$5 or a few cans of food. And, of course, no donation is too large.”

You can make a recurring donation by credit card [HERE](https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/FirstUnitarianUniversalistC/OnlineDonation.html). <https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/FirstUnitarianUniversalistC/OnlineDonation.html>

Under “Gift Information,” please select “Fund,” then “other.” In the comments box, please write “SB Food Pantry.”

If you prefer to make a donation by check, please make the check to FUUSD and on the memo line, write “SB Food Pantry.” Send the check to Angela Fujii, FUUSD, 4190 Front St., San Diego, CA 92103 or drop it off in the office.

We also need volunteers to interview clients for data collection purposes, distribute food during the hours the food pantry will be open, and collect day old bread from grocery stores and bakeries. We’ll train all volunteers. If you’d like to volunteer, please contact Maureen McNair at [memcnair948@gmail.com](mailto:memcnair948@gmail.com) or 619-427-1769.

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# What Can We Put To Rest?

By Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*



I know it's weird and I can't explain it, but I've always experienced even-numbered years as somehow feeling more momentous than odd-numbered years. And this year, for many reasons, 2020 feels very momentous. So how do we want to start this new year, this new decade?

While I'm not big on making resolutions—the older I get, the more I find myself reflecting on milestones, including new beginnings. How shall we begin this new year and this month's theme asks an important question: what can we put to rest? What feeling is stirred in you when you read that question? It's deeper than a resolution or a desire to change a habit or start a new one.

It asks me to go below the surface, beyond the pat answer, to think and ponder more deeply. Pondering this question encourages a review of my habits of thought, to become more aware of the routine responses and surge of emotions that are not helpful in creating a more meaningful life—one with more joy, more compassion, and more energy for acts of service.

Timothy Egan, an op-ed columnist for the New York Times, tells a story about writer and storyteller Brain Doyle who, when dying from a malignant brain tumor, wrote, "We're only here for a minute—for a little window. And to use that time to catch and share shards of light and laughter and grace seems to me the great story." Being aware of what we can put to rest helps us to share light, laughter, mercy, compassion, and grace with one another to create a healing, restorative community; a community that learns together and discerns the wisdom between what we can put to rest and what needs to be energized, supported, and strengthened to live our mission and vision more fully.

This new year will offer many opportunities to ponder together what we'll choose to put to rest so that we might fully focus our time, talents, treasures, and energy into creating a more inclusive and welcoming community, for people longing to have meaning-filled experiences and conversations that help us all live lives of joy and wonder.

Let us celebrate this New Year!

Faithfully,

*Rev. Kathleen*

## January Sermon Messages

### Worship Times:

Hillcrest Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am and 11:30 am (ASL Interpretation)

South Bay Campus: Sunday, 9:30 am (Intergenerational, Bilingual)

### January's Transformational Theme is: "What Can We Put to Rest?"

#### January 5, 2020

Hillcrest Services—

**"The Benefits of Putting It to Rest"**  
Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

**"Rest and Healing"**  
Isaac Castro & Rev. Tania Márquez

#### January 12, 2020

Hillcrest Services—

**"Midnight Sky and Silent Stars"**  
Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons, *Guest Minister*  
Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

**"To be a Good Neighbor"**  
Rev. Tania Márquez, *Assistant Minister*

#### January 19, 2020

Hillcrest Services—

**"Be Love, Be Loved, Community!"**  
Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

South Bay Service—

**"MLK Service"**  
Isaac Castro

#### January 26, 2020

Hillcrest Services—

**"Pastor, prophet, teacher, scholar: Ministry roles we all take on"**  
Everett Howe

South Bay Service—

**"The Benefits of Putting It to Rest"**  
Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

# Why Should Our Youth Go to General Assembly?

By Käthe Larick, *Youth Programs Coordinator*



Before I take on the subject of this article, I'd like to say, "Thank you—a BIG thank you to everyone in our congregation who continues to support the youth program and our fundraising efforts." All the money we've raised goes directly into the youth program scholarship fund

that allows youth to attend camps, cons (convocations), District Assembly, Regional Assembly, and the UUA national conference, General Assembly (GA).

Which brings me to the topic, why should our youth attend General Assembly? The short answer is community building, and faith and leadership development, but as our youth and youth advisors can tell you, I rarely offer a short answer and this is no exception.



District, regional and national youth events have at their core the six components our denomination deems necessary for a balanced youth program: Community building, worship, learning, social action, leadership and youth-adult relations. These key elements work in harmony to create a deeper connection to our faith. They help youth to generate worship experiences and discussions that facilitate a clearer understanding of each individual's personal faith and values and encourages them to express their faith to the world around them, by living and acting on their values to help heal the world.

If you think this sounds like our church mission statement, you're absolutely right! Going to district cons and camps strengthens the bonds of community and connection to our UU faith. Just as

in our First UU youth program, the youth enjoy program activities and worship services designed by other youth, who are selected by their peers to fulfill these roles. The youth leaders know they can count on the support and help of their adult advisors.

The same is true of General Assembly, only on a much larger scale. This experience can be life changing to your youth, who, as Unitarian Universalists, often feel quite isolated and alone. GA is an opportunity to connect on a meaningful level with those who share their UU values, helping to ease that feeling of isolation, while feeding them spiritually and encouraging them to continue to grow in their faith and leadership skills.

It allows them to travel through one of the most transformative times of their lives, when they bridge from youth to young adulthood at the

Synergy service, held at GA. Three of the six youth who want to attend GA in June 2020 are graduating

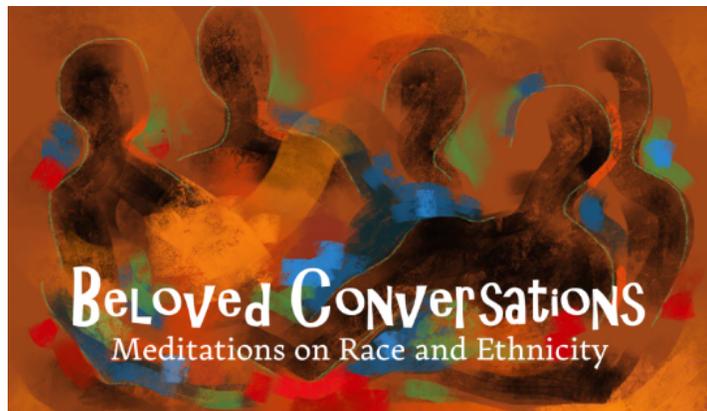
high school this year, and have formed deep friendships with other youth from across the country. Many of the friendships formed at these local, regional, and national gatherings continue into adulthood to create a community of support and a culture of compassion and caring.

So, I offer you a great deal—for just a simple donation, you can be a part of this wonderful process. By continuing to support the youth program fundraisers, you're assisting in the faith and leadership development of the amazing young people you see in our worship services.

All of which brings me back to where I started, by thanking you. Thank you for all the support you've shown our youth at their salad bars, crafts fairs, etc. You're helping them to live out their faith and act on their values in the world.

# Building Beloved Community Through Beloved Conversations

By Jan Garbosky for *Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW)*



Think about your best or long-time friend, your partner or spouse, the people you feel closest to. How did that relationship develop? How long did it take to develop? Weeks? Months? Years? How did it move from acquaintanceship to a meaningful relationship? What were the highs and lows, the misunderstandings, the messy times, the frustrations and tears, and the pathways back to relationship?

Our deepest relationships take time and trust. They're built on common interests, open and honest interactions and discussions, laughter and tears, and time—time spent together creating that trust. In our busy lives, we often don't or can't find the time to develop new relationships unless we're intentional about it—by joining groups that allow us to be in more than simply passing contact with others. That's what First UU's many opportunities for small group ministry are all about—being among a group of "acquaintances" or "others" who, through ongoing common activities and discussions on important topics in a safe environment, become "known," better understood, and, often, friends.

Building relationships and building Beloved Community involves taking a risk—a risk of opening ourselves to the courage and messiness of learning about ourselves and others. Often it's being able to look at ourselves and admit a need to learn to be "known" to ourselves and others.

At last January's Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, enough money was raised to offer three cohorts of

Beloved Conversations: Meditations on Race and Ethnicity—as specific opportunities for small-group work to build relationships and understanding to transform us as individuals and a congregation into the Beloved Community at the center of Dr. King's work.

Our first two cohorts included ministers, staff, and congregants—64 in all. Lives have been changed; much has been learned; and new relationships built. We're now ready for our third cohort (February/March 2020)—and invite you to participate. Participants must be able to commit to a weekend retreat followed by eight required weeks of 2-hour small group meetings led by First UU facilitators.

**Weekend Retreat:**

Friday, February 7 — 6:00-9:15 pm

Saturday, February 8 — 8:30 am-5:00 pm

**8 Weekly Small Group Meetings (Choose one):**

TUESDAYS	SATURDAYS	SUNDAYS
7-9 pm	1-3 pm	1-3 pm
February 11	February 15	February 16
February 18	February 22	February 23 (1:15-3:15)
February 25	February 29	March 1
March 3	March 7	March 8
March 10	March 14	March 15
March 17	March 21	March 22(1:15-3:15)
March 24	March 28	March 29
March 31	April 4	April 5

To sign up for February/March 2020, get on the interest list for future session, or have questions answered, contact Jan Garbosky at [jgarbosky@cox.net](mailto:jgarbosky@cox.net) or Steve Howard at [stevh4544@icloud.com](mailto:stevh4544@icloud.com).

# Our Partner Church in the Philippines

By Liz Jones and Rick Zemlin

First UU San Diego has two partner congregations through the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council. One of those is in Romania, and the other is in the Philippines. We've partnered with the congregation in Malingin on the island of Negros in the Philippines for over ten years. Over the years, there have been several visits to Malingin. We have developed a scholarship program to assist students to attend elementary and high school. We continue to work toward strengthening our connections. In recent years member Rick Zemlin has been able to combine his trips to that part of the world with visits to our partner congregation. This relationship has opened a more personal relationship between our congregations.

Here's Rick's story from his last visit:

"On Easter Sunday, 2019, I had the joy and honor of visiting the small, village partner church in the Philippines of our First UU San Diego. I visited there two times previously.

Early that April morning, before making the bumpy, hour-long "tricycle" (pedicab) ride out to the remote community, I was first met by Dr. Elvie Villagracia Peras-Sienes. Elvie is our main contact person at the denomination

headquarters of the UU Church of the Philippines and has worked hand in hand with us in nurturing our partner relationship. She, along with her husband, and their two children, made the seven-hour, grueling journey from Dumaguete City to accompany me out to the village. (They would make the same journey back at the end of the day.)

The church is the heartbeat of the mostly UU hamlet we were visiting. The building is such a rich space! Even though rough hewn and smaller than a school classroom, with an aging, corrugated steel roof over a bare, cement slab floor, and no real walls, it's filled to the brim with life and love when we gather. Glorious!

During this visit, the long-time, volunteer pastor, Rev. Mike, sadly, was not with us. He passed away eight months earlier. With dedication to their community, his son, Noe, and other young members of the congregation have stepped forward to bravely and beautifully take up leadership roles.

In this community of subsistence rice farmers, we help most of their children—about 50—go to school by paying for school fees, uniforms, tricycle fares, etc. The youth who now help lead the worship do so through benefit of their education that First UU sponsors. It was a sweet treasure for me to witness this.

After our worship service (done mostly in the local dialect), the children performed a heart-touching dance and song for their guests—Elvie and family, and me.

Then we all enjoyed a delicious community meal. Finally, we walked out to the edge of the hamlet to observe some inspiring, organic-farming; livelihood projects of the village women's association.

All together, with each step we took that morning we saw wonderful evidence of new life rising in the community—so fitting for Easter."

Friends, we continue to work toward maintaining the relationship with this lively and joyous congregation. Our scholarship program for elementary and high school youth continues and we are now working on ways to support some of these young people to go on to college. We are also supporting ministerial formation training for the new leader of this congregation. It's exciting work and we invite you to become part of it.

On January 12, there'll be a Generosity Offering for the scholarship fund. Please give generously. We'd also love you to become active in our group which meets monthly on the first Sunday of the month, and you could even join us on a future trip to visit our Philippine partner church.



## Save the Date - Spring / Summer 2020

### **April 17-19, 2020 Men's Fellowship Renewal at DeBenneville Pines**

The Men's Fellowship Renewals offer a safe place in which we, as brothers, can be open to the issues that challenge us to the core of who we are and help us to begin the process of unpacking them. In addition, there will be time for music and singing, hot tub and hiking, drumming and ritual, conversation and renewing friendships, and meditation and quiet time. [Click here to register.](#)

### **April 24-26, 2020, Pacific Southwest District Assembly, San Luis Obispo, CA**

Theme: "The Climate of Justice." District Assembly is a meeting of the 50 churches that make up the Pacific Southwest District. The keynote speaker this year will be Aly Tharp, the program director of the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth \(UUMFE\)](#) and leader of the UUA & UUMFE's [Create Climate Justice](#) initiative.

Aly Tharp will join UUs from throughout PSWD as we strategize for a future in which our congregations are at the forefront of the fight for climate justice in their communities.

The 2020 PSW District Assembly will be the best opportunity this year for UU congregations to share how they are working for climate justice and learn from one another about how to live out our seventh principle: "*Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*"

[Click here](#) to register now for District assembly!

To become a delegate for First UU, contact Denominational Relations at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/denominational-relations> and fill out the delegate application form.

### **May 29 - 31, 2020 All Church Camp at DeBenneville Pines**

All-Church Camp provides us with an opportunity to spend an extended time with members of our community, becoming more connected, and deepening our commitment to our community. Registration begins in April. Scholarships are available for those who need them. For more information, click here: <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/all-church-camp>.

### **June 24-28, 2020 UUA General Assembly, Providence, Rhode Island**

*Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!* is the theme for General Assembly in June 2020. We are in touch with our theological roots, we are engaged in transforming our faith, and we are fired up to take action in the wider world. [General Assembly](#) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Attendees worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend; congregations must [certify](#) annually to send voting delegates. Delegates may also attend online. Registration opens March 1. For more information go to: <https://www.uua.org/ga>.

To become a delegate for First UU, contact Denominational Relations at <http://www.firstuusandiego.org/denominational-relations> and fill out the delegate application form.

# Reflections on Community

By John and Peggy Holl, *given during the November 17, 2019 service*

## John Holl:

In two months, Peggy and I will be celebrating our 50th year of membership here at First UU. That goes all the way back to the days of Rev. John Ruskin Clark, a smaller Bard Hall, no administration building, and no memorial wall. This community and campus have been our refuge during the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, 9/11 disaster, 2008 economic crash, and now the pending ecologic crises and threats to our democracy. I now remember these experiences as an ever-changing kaleidoscope of individuals, ideas, activities, challenges, successes and failures.

Every time I set foot on this campus, I am drawn not only to the beauty and function of it, but, more often, to the individuals memorialized on the wall and in soul sketches that Rev. Kathleen shared at their celebrations of life. Most of them I knew and on whom I now often reflect. Each of them had their own unique story; each of them contributed to this community in their own manner.

This community and campus are sacred to me; I feel entrusted to pass it on to others who may follow me on this journey. As I've grown older, I've become more aware of how important this community is to me. Next to food, shelter, and clothing, there is no greater need that we as humans seek. Community offers us support, sustenance, and adds meaning to our lives. It enriches our existence and allows us to see beauty, friendliness, compassion, and joy all around us so that we may share it with others. The extent to which we're able to experience this is directly related to how much we choose to become involved and how much we consider ourselves an active part of this community.

Out of these bonds, service grows naturally and almost without thinking. We all have time, talent, and treasures. For Peggy and me with our nursing and medical backgrounds, it was only inevitable that our service to our Church community would flourish along these lines. To us this has been a most gratifying and fulfilling experience — to be able to give back to this, our beloved community.

The time until we join those remembered on the wall is growing shorter. We have had our glorious time here; may you find your experience here in this community and build on this with your time, talent, and treasure for the next generations to come.

## Peggy Holl:

I am third generation Unitarian and this church community is where I know I belong, I can be myself, I am challenged to grow without judgment, and I can give of myself. Over the years, I've volunteered in many areas from R.E., ushering, Lay Ministry and being co-chair with first Rev. Kathleen, and now Rev. Tania, of the Caring Ministry Team. I have experienced Wisdom Circles and workshops.

All of these have helped me to learn more about myself and more importantly have enriched my life by interacting with other church members I might not know today. There is NO QUESTION in my mind that I get more out of what I give than what I put into it. It is especially an honor to be asked to journey with members during their health challenges.

The church community is part of my fitness program. We pay dues at the gym, we pay HOA fees for our condo, and we pledge to the church. Our gym and condo fees increase, so why not our pledge? Years ago, John and I were members of a team that visited church members during the pledge drive month. We now have pledging by the month you joined the church. During the visit we talked about what the church meant to us and what changes might be considered. Some members felt a personal visit was more meaningful than YET another letter from the church. Please consider this our personal visit to you when you receive your pledge reminder.



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