The 16th annual Dining for Dollar$ (D4S) returns! What’s this you ask? You host an event and others bid on your event in an online auction through the month of May. Your event can be a dinner, museum tour, park party, craft workshop, an outing or tour, game night, young adult gathering, donated service, creativity workshop, poetry reading, or vacation getaway—or anything else you’d like to host. The best part of Dining for Dollar$ is the community-building you’ll experience—there’s nothing quite like it!

This is the time to begin planning what you’d like to offer to host. You can also get together with others to co-host an event. Look for information about Dining for Dollar$ on the patio starting March 1st and in upcoming issues of The Window. Through the end of March, you’ll be able to submit your offers to host an event. Your event will then be submitted with a beautiful photo into the auction website where they can be viewed once the bidding begins. Colorful bidding books will also be available in Bard Hall once bidding commences.

Many people have enjoyed hosting their events so much they sign up every year to host again. D4S activities are a fun way to meet new people and strengthen community. Memories are made and stories are told for years to come.

The bidding starts on May 1st with events scheduled for any time from the beginning of June 2020, until the end of May 2021. Over the past 15 years we’ve had over 1,500 events offered and raised over $500,000 in winning bids for the church’s budget. This is our most important annual fundraising activity!

This is our second year since changing to an online bidding system. Throughout the month of May, you’ll be able to make your bids from anywhere you have internet access. And, those of us who may need techie help can still make our bids at church for four Sundays in May in Bard Hall where we’ll have trained assistants standing by with computers to help you make your bids. And, every Sunday we’ll re-print the bidding sheets so you can still view who’s coming to an event and if there are spaces left—combining the best of both worlds!

Click here to go to the church website to get an event submission form and more ideas for possible events. You can also email Robie Evans at robie@firstusandiego.org.

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On Loss
By Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

In March, our congregation will be exploring the theme of loss. What a paradox, don’t you think? To think, talk, and bring our full awareness to this topic in a month when nature all around is blooming and we’re reminded of life springing up again after loss. But we, ever-changing humans, with ever-changing bodies living in an ever-changing world, experience life in this ongoing exercise of loss and beauty.

One of the aspects of loss that often goes unnoticed is what some call secondary losses. Those are the losses one doesn’t expect after a big loss. Secondary losses also come in many degrees; they are the aftershocks after the earthquake of a loss. They may seem minor or not as impactful, but they do add to the sense of grief a person experiences. They are constant reminders of what no longer is and of the new normal.

Not all losses are major or traumatic, there are also the more ordinary losses that can also create confusion when we don’t recognize them as such, or the gradual losses we only notice over time. And some losses we even welcome, like those that allow us to live more fully, that liberate us, when we lose our fears, anxieties, unhealthy habits, or ideologies.

In our worship services, we’ll explore this topic from different angles. Our lay ministry team will be leading worship on this topic on March 8th at the South Bay Campus and on March 29th at the Hillcrest campus. I understand that for those of you who find yourselves in the liminal space created by loss, this can be a difficult topic.

If you need a listening ear, a helping hand, or a compassionate presence, please remember you have a community here you can reach out to by calling our pastoral care phone, speaking to one of our lay ministers on Sunday after the service, or reaching out to your ministers. We are here for you.

Faithfully,

Tania
Recently, I spent a few days with some of my colleagues at de Benneville Pines, the Pacific Southwest District UU camp, located in the San Bernardino Mountains. During our three-day retreat, we laughed and talked, relaxed before a lovely fire, hiked in the beautiful mountain air, and rejuvenated ourselves. One of our topics was the value of getting away from the city and partaking in nature. Nature truly impacts our well-being.

The research is clear: Being in nature not only increases pleasant feelings, it reduces stress and other negative emotions such as anger and fear. Along with increasing positive emotional health, exposure to nature contributes to physical well-being—it can reduce blood pressure and muscle tension, for example. And, being in nature can help you cope with pain.

This was demonstrated in one research study by Dr. Robert Ulrich. A group of patients all underwent the same surgery. During their recovery, half of the patients had a view of trees and the rest had a view of a wall. The results? The patients who had the view of trees had fewer negative effects, tolerated pain better, and spent less time in the hospital. And this was just a view of trees—imagine the positive effects that can come with spending several days in the mountains. According to a 2019 study by White, Alcock, et al, spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature strongly contributes to better physical health and well-being.

The benefits for children are even more striking. Playing outdoors in nature benefits children intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Outdoor activities, such as exploring rocks and bugs, build brains as well as bodies with numerous long-term benefits. The natural world is a giant learning laboratory, providing opportunities for discovery, creativity, and problem solving.

Children in nature explore, make noise, and run about in ways that can’t be done inside. Sometimes, nature even brings out nurturing qualities in children. In addition, several studies have found that exposure to nature can reduce symptoms of anxiety and ADHD. It can even help brain functioning. For example, a 2009 study by Nancy Wells looked at children who moved to new environments. Those whose move provided the most improvement in exposure to nature showed the most improvement on cognitive functioning.

Our annual First UU Church camp this year is Friday, May 29th, to Sunday, May 31st. Camp gives us all the opportunity to unwind, partake in new adventures, and associate with like-minded people. Imagine leaving the city behind, as you drive into a mountain retreat. There are cabins to stay in, with bunkbeds for everyone and bathrooms with showers. You’ll need to bring your own blankets or sleeping bags, but all the cooking and dishes are done for you, leaving you with ample opportunities to swim, participate in workshops, do archery, explore and hike, or just relax in the mountain air. I hope you consider attending this year.
Flowers Are a Part of Our Ministry!

By Robie Evans, Director of Operations

Flowers in front of the pulpit became part of our ministry here at First UU. "Many people meditate before service using the display to help center themselves. It's about our sacred stories, deeper losses, celebrations, diverse religious holidays, monthly themes, sermon highlights and a wider opening so that more people see their cultural roots more often on a Sunday morning. Even children pay attention to the flower display," says Maggie Marshall.

At the end of January, Maggie ended her three-year flower ministry at First UU San Diego. Before that, Martha Woodworth ministered to our pulpit flowers for ten years. Luckily for us, Julie McKane has stepped forward to be our Flower Coordinator. She will handle this differently than before in that church members and friends will contact Julie directly by phone or email to let her know what date they'd like to donate flowers. She will then let them know when to bring their completed flower or plant arrangement to the church’s front office (or have it delivered) and what they’d like the dedication to say in that week’s order of service.

So, we are looking for members and friends and family to sign up to provide flowers for our Sunday services at our Hillcrest campus. These could be fresh cut flowers or a plant, something you arrange or have done by a florist. If you want to create your own display, we have plenty of vases and floral supplies in the administration building; just ask for Robie or Rose.

There are many weeks available, so if there is a date that is meaningful to you, or you just want to be of service, contact Julie with questions, or to sign up at jmckane38@gmail.com.

Living Our Values

By Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

We’re excited to share some news about First UU’s change in medical insurance benefits. You’ll remember that three years ago, we made a change in medical insurance benefits to ensure that our long-time custodian, Antonia, had medical coverage, even though she is a contracted employee through an outside vendor. This was the first time in twenty years of her career that she has had medical insurance coverage!

In the centering of our Journey Towards Wholeness work, the staff recently spent time reviewing our policies and practices to ensure alignment between them and our values. In this review, we found a change that was needed in our medical insurance benefits. For many years, First UU has paid 100% of an employee’s medical insurance benefits. We did not, however, pay anything toward an employee’s dependents. And, we found we weren’t following best practices put forth by our UU Association.

After looking at the costs, the staff recommended a change in benefits to the Board. After discussion, the Board approved the benefits change and we’re happy to announce First UU now pays 80% of an employee’s medical insurance and pays 50% of an employee’s dependents. This change doesn’t cost First UU significantly more money, yet it does ensure more coverage for more people and a better alignment with our values.

Faithfully,

Rev. Kathleen
Palestine-Israel: A Compelling Film and an Action of Immediate Witness

By Rhea Kuhlman

Film and Pizza on March 15
On Sunday, March 15, at 5:30 pm, in the Common Room (112), the Palestine-Israel Justice Group will offer free pizza and screen the documentary film The Occupation of the American Mind. Ed Sweed, founder of the San Diego chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, will provide a short introduction and conduct a post-film Q&A. Narrated by Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters, this moving film explores how US media cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict quite differently than media in other countries, resulting in Americans having a very different perception of the conflict than the rest of the world. CNN commentator and CUNY Media Professor Douglas Rushkoff calls this film “a stunning exposé on how propaganda drives public opinion and, in turn, our understanding of reality. Here’s the story of how American perceptions of the Middle East are engineered: from focus groups to talking points to mortar fire.” According to Neve Gordon, Politics Professor at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, “Not only land, but also minds can be colonized.” Gideon Levy, columnist for Israel’s Haaretz newspaper, says “I wish every American would watch this powerful documentary. Not only every person of conscience, but every taxpayer must see it—and then ask themselves if the status quo is acceptable and can continue deep into the 21st century.” After watching this film, you may never view US media coverage of Israel-Palestine the same way again.

An Action of Immediate Witness at 2019 GA
At the 2019 UUA General Assembly, delegates adopted an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) calling on the UUA and UU organizations to protect the First Amendment right to boycott by opposing the rash of anti-boycott laws being introduced in Congress and many state and local legislatures. These laws represent attempts to suppress Palestine’s Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, a non-violent, grassroots form of civic action to protest Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands and inhumane treatment of Palestinians. BDS is modeled on the international campaign that ended apartheid in South Africa, and is one of the few non-violent tools at Palestine’s disposal to influence Israeli actions. Since 2014, over 100 local, state, and federal laws have been introduced to target boycotts in support of Palestinian rights and punish participating organizations. Many have passed into law despite the Supreme Court’s 1982 ruling that the right to boycott is a constitutionally protected form of free speech. See the full AIW here. Once an AIW is passed, the UUA and UU congregations are urged to act on it. To this end, the Palestine-Israel Justice Group plans to partner with the ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties to present a workshop on this issue. Stay tuned for details, and in the meantime, you can support the right to boycott by signing this UUA petition.

Join the Palestine-Israel Justice Group
Over the past year, the Palestine-Israel Justice Group of FUUSD, under the auspices of the Social Justice Ministry Team, has been studying these and other issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group meets the first Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm, in the Library. All are welcome.
Be Love, Be Loved, Community!
By Jan Carpenter Tucker, Read during the South Bay MLK Service on January 19, 2020

In a recent DRUUMM (Diverse, Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries) People of Color group discussion it came out that many of us are multiracial or intercultural. This may be one reason some of us have been able to navigate the spaces in a predominately non-People of Color denomination. We also agreed it’s very easy to be misidentified, and that’s one reason it’s important for us to be able to self-identify. I’d like to share a story.

I’m 13 years old. My parents put me on my first Greyhound bus ride alone, from Chicago to Milwaukee, to spend a week with friends. Halfway into the two-hour ride, an elderly Black gentleman across the aisle speaks.

“Beverly,” he says to me quietly, coaxing, beseeching. “Beverly, your mother misses you. You need to come home. How can you do this? Please, Beverly, come home.” He says this over and over again.

My name is Jan, so naturally, I don’t respond. I ignore him as my mind conjures up trouble. Is he planning to kidnap me? I’m frightened. At the end of the bus ride, I rush ahead of everyone to tell the driver and ask him to watch out for me. My friends meet me on the pavement. I glance around to see if I can identify the man. Thank goodness he has quietly disappeared. I’m relieved to be whisked away to safety.

Fast forward a quarter of a century. A business maven in my new town’s Black community says to me, “You must meet my niece. You have some things in common.”

On the appointed day, I ring my friend’s doorbell. A white woman with green eyes greets me at the door. Who is this woman, I wonder, and where is my friend’s niece? We sit down to tea. I suddenly realize, this woman who appears to be white with light eyes, IS the niece, and these happenstances of appearance are the things we have in common.

I invite myself to visit her at her home a few hours drive away. She gives me an address and a specific day and time to arrive. Then she says, “Please, be careful what you talk about, my white husband doesn’t know I’m not white. He would hurt me if he found out.”

I respond, “I’ll see what I can do.” She must know I’m not interested in that kind of safety. I make the long drive. I find her address. I ring her doorbell and no one opens the door.

I stand alone in the apartment breezeway, listening to the gentle wind moan and cry with the voices of spirits, ancestors, loved ones departed, forgotten, ignored, buried, hidden away, denied. All the Beverlys who refused to come home.

I could tell you stories of emotional trauma, the ways in which I’m buffeted about in the raging waters, caught on the craggy protruding rocks of racism or sailing the calm of certain privileges between my two cultures. One thing of which I’m particularly proud is that I’m not a girl who left, passing silently out or into the night to wrestle my demons in the glaring light of the privilege and anonymity of whiteness. That space is most assuredly no safe space at all.

Remembering is the spiritual work we do to commemorate this long and arduous journey toward racial justice. The emotional labor can stop a person in their tracks, and I guess that is appropriate as holidays are holy days when we pause to reflect. Sometimes I feel the weight of the world, yet I’m confident I’m capable of loving and ministering to self and others even through the sadness. Love shall prevail.
Beloved Space
By Jan Carpenter Tucker

Safe space
An illusion
A magical myth
A place to suffer silently
Your free expression, my oppression
Your privilege, my pain
Step lightly, remind gently
Disarm, yet do no harm
Hold safe space so all are heard and none are hurt
Hold the tongue so none are heard and all are hurt
Brave space
A hope
A prayer
A wish
A place where
Words are spoken
Tears shed
Hearts rendered
Dreams realized
Shared space
Now feels unsafe
Growth demands new depths of comprehension
Wide berth for acceptance
Tougher skin
Steel-toed boots
To shield our weary, marching, stepped-on feet
Sanctuary for unconditional love
Replete with conditions

Your building up might tear me down
Your tearing down might kill me
What foundation exists
To fill the voids
Crowd out the noise
To make this place, this space
Beloved?
If love holds power
How much will it take to
Be love, breathe love, be loved, Beloveds
In this Beloved Space?

*Appreciation to Lisa and Phillip Brown, who connected me with their friend, Stephon Ferguson, who impersonates Dr. King, for inspiration as I began writing this piece. It was as if I was talking to Dr. King himself.
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