



First
Unitarian Universalist
Church of San Diego

FirstWords

Our Monthly Magazine

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From Your Reopening Team

While our church has curtailed in-person activities due to the pandemic, we remain open, supportive, and actively adapting to congregational and community needs.

The Reopening Team will help facilitate carrying out church activities under current restraints and will recommend to the board and congregation safe, gradual ways to resume in-person Sunday services and other gatherings at both campuses.

The team sees complex health and safety risks involved with returning to in-person services, but also recognizes personal health benefits in meeting in community. The team will aim for the best balance.

Team members include:

Nina Douglass: Clinical social worker/therapist experienced in providing crisis intervention counseling and training to hospital providers. Was clinical supervisor to SDSU social work interns at San Diego International Rescue Committee.

Rebecca Fielding-Miller: Specialist in behavioral sciences and health education, currently assistant professor at UCSD's Division of Infectious Disease and Global Public Health and the Center on Gender Equity and Health.

Emily Fletcher Kaestner: General pediatrician with Children's Primary Care Medical Group in Chula Vista. Also, provides healthcare for teens with mental health concerns.

George Longstreth: Retired gastroenterologist, with more than 40 years of practice and research in gastrointestinal disorders.

Lynn Northrop: Clinical psychologist, Supervisor of Psychological Services at Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital. Helps oversee hospital's pandemic strategies in providing healthcare and reducing exposure risks.

Stephanie Webber: Retired research scientist, was responsible for pre-clinical pharmacology, toxicology, and virology studies to support clinical trials and FDA approval of HIV and cancer drugs.

Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

Robie Evans, Director of Operations

Harry Griswold: Helping with communications.

The team will:

- gather evidence-based information about the coronavirus and practices for minimizing transmission in group settings;
- engage with many members of our diverse community to determine practices suited to safety, comfort, and dignity; and
- collaborate with other faith-based organizations developing similar practices.

The priority will be physical well-being and safety for all, over factors of speed in reopening. Our approach will be cautious and gradual, assessing the consequences of steps taken before taking more.

The team will draw upon reopening efforts of local health agencies, churches, and other organizations—adapting, plans and practices to meet our specific needs.

Recent data show a disproportionate Covid-19 impact on people of color and other vulnerable populations. The team will suggest to the board and congregation possible ways to support those who have endured job loss, eviction, loss of a loved one, or other suffering during the pandemic.

The UU Association's spring 2020 guidelines said in-person gatherings will not be appropriate through May 2021. While this date may have sounded too cautious, it could prove optimistic, though no one can foresee the pandemic's impact months from now.

Our recent forms of online services and group meetings will continue. They provide opportunities for worship, fellowship, and communication. They allow us to offer and receive support, address new challenges, and increase access for people not yet connected with our community.

As some in-person gatherings are gradually judged safe to resume, online services will continue, serving those who for any reason are not able or do not wish to be physically present. Online services may evermore constitute a part of what our church offers.

While we can't fully replace the value of former in-person gatherings, we're confident we can adapt and live our values in new ways during these times. We are no less interconnected spiritually while we're physically separated, and we'll seek to engage through online worship with the same fervor in the future that we brought to our campuses in the past.

The team will post ongoing information to the [*First UU website*](#).

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From Change to Reimagining Community

By Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*



I sat mesmerized watching the musical tribute to John Lewis' life. Every performance was stunning, accentuating his life. But it's been Billy Porter's and Jon Batiste's version of Sam Cook's "A Change Is Gonna Come" singing in my heart and mind ever since. I feel the song's truth in my being and see it happening in our country.

Change is absolutely needed if we're to thrive. The theme of *Change* is our focus in the month of

September—beginning our new cycle of thematic worship and programming. The worship team, members of our Journey Towards Wholeness (JTW) core team and worship lay leaders met to imagine together the year ahead and share topics that would be meaningful, engaging, and needed in our congregation.

After we explore the theme of Change and how it plays out in our lives, October has us going deep into the theme of *Reparations*. *Democracy* is the theme for November, where we'll explore our fifth principle and live it into being more fully. December, with its many holidays, invites us to reflect on the theme of *Hope*.

January, the darkest time of the year, and a time of introspection, brings the theme of *Centering*. February is a month full of meaning—so the month's theme is *Love Is a Verb*. March brings the theme of *Prophetic Voices*. As spring blossoms more fully in April, we'll explore the theme of *Creativity*.

May's theme is *Identity* and June has us exploring the theme of *Power*. *Interdependence* is July's theme and we round out the summer with August's theme, *Reimagining Community*. This arc throughout the year, from Change to Centering to Identity to Interdependence and more, asks us to consider these questions:

- How is being involved in this spiritual community making a difference in your life?
- How might you evolve and grow within these themes this year?

Change will come and we can choose our response to help that change bring more justice, more equity, more love into this region. Welcome to this new worship and program year.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Kathleen

September Sermon Messages

Worship Time:

Live Streamed Worship:
Sunday, 9:30 am

(Bilingual & ASL Interpretation)

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

September's Transformational Theme is: "Change"

September 6, 2020

"The Changing Cost of Labor"

Rev. Kathleen Owens
Lead Minister

September 13, 2020

"Embodying Change"

Matthew Waterman
Intern Minister

September 20, 2020

"The Paradox of Change"

Rev. Tania Y Márquez
Assistant Minister

September 27, 2020

"A Change that Heals"

Rev. Kathleen Owens
Lead Minister

Changes in Children's Religious Education and Family Ministry

by Rev. Kathleen Owens, *Lead Minister*

This month's theme of Change certainly resonates within our families right now. The ongoing struggle to effectively manage the novel coronavirus has meant a lot of change, especially for our families with school-age children and youth in school, and for those young adults transitioning into life beyond high school.

There's so much change in how school will happen throughout the county; and parents are trying to figure out how to manage a variety of needs to ensure their children and youth's safety, education, and well-being. The Parent Lounge, meeting on Sundays at 11:40 on Zoom, offers a time of support and discussion on topics and issues our families are experiencing.



Given all that parents are dealing with, I'm so very grateful for the following parents who are finding some time to serve (as they can) on our newly revised Family Advisory Board: Kia Bordner, Rosalba Ciampi, Maggie Frank-Hsu, Mindy Hochgesang, Alan Hsu, Vanessa Pool, David Rogers, and Rhiannon Rudisill, along with Tony Bianca, Käthe Larick, and myself. We look forward to inviting youth and older children to join the Family Advisory Board to ensure a larger perspective and to hear directly from our children and youth about their needs and hopes for our evolving program.

The purpose of the board is to assist in supporting the needs of the families, children, and youth of our congregation, while working to center families and individuals of color in the Family Ministry programs specifically, and in the congregation at large.

There are currently four areas of focus for the Family Advisory Board's work:

1) Working with a professional Religious Educator, who is a person of color, to assist in the creation of a program that centers around our anti-racist/anti-oppression/inclusivity work and faith development. Several parents have also volunteered to work with staff in creating curriculum based around the monthly worship themes;

2) Creating a survey specifically for our Families to ensure the work we're doing meets the needs of our families. Two of our parents with expertise in this area will be working with staff to create this tool;

3) Reading and studying the *Widening the Circle of Concern* report, put out by the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change, and implementing

the recommendations as they relate to Religious Education and Family Ministry; and

4) Communicating with families. A few parents will work with Tony to help ensure families are receiving the information they need. Other parents may write this column or shorter articles in the Window.

Programs for our children and youth will also be shifting later this fall as the program is created and implemented. We hope more children, youth, and families will participate in Sunday services by recording themselves leading our Affirmation, or telling the story in our Time for All Ages, or sharing a story or reflection in an upcoming service.

With all the change and uncertainty right now, we hope time spent within this congregation will be helpful, inspiring, and uplifting. Please contact Tony Bianca at tony@firstuusandiego.org if you'd like to participate in this effort.

First Timers Love Virtual General Assembly (GA)

by Tony Bianca, Loretta Solsbery & Louise Titlow

Last month reports from GA delegates were shared. More non-delegates than delegates attended this year's virtual GA and three—all first time GA attendees—wanted to share reflections.

Tony Bianca: I enjoyed having my first experience at GA be this year because I had no frame of reference to compare it to. Without worries about “what I would be missing,” I could just focus on what it was.

I also quite enjoyed having a real-time chat room. I like these in other meetings and presentations as well. There's something interesting to me about being able to see what others are thinking and feeling while having the same experience. It's a very “Mystery Science Theater” experience. I also liked the freedom that came with not necessarily having to miss a workshop because it was scheduled at the same time as another workshop that I equally wanted to attend. The ability to watch presentations on my own schedule (after the fact, if necessary) allowed me to get more out of the experience.

Also, as someone who's been involved in our own virtual services since we began them in March, I have to admit I enjoyed seeing what was produced at a national level. And I also have to admit being pretty impressed at how what we're doing at First UU compares pretty favorably. I was proud to watch the workshops and services and think, “We're really pretty on par with that!” And, there were even a few things with regard to language and accessibility where I think we're ahead of the curve. Not that we're perfect, mind you, but for a much smaller team of people, many of whom were new to this mode of work, we hold our own.

Louise Titlow: I became a new member and I attended my first General Assembly this year. GA was a personal, spiritual, and emotional journey and holiday for me. I feel more grounded, rooted, and connected to the UU Association and our First UU community. I attended many insightful workshops which raised my awareness and passion for social

justice work. I was very impressed by the richness of the worship services and the balance of the General Sessions. At GA, I came home to myself and found a welcoming place within the UUA. I appreciate the support of all our delegates, members, and staff who made it all so easy, fun, and wonderful.

Loretta Solsbery: I'm SO grateful to have been gifted the opportunity to attend my first General Assembly because all conditions came together simultaneously. I was thrilled; I was going to GA!!!

This experience was rich and rewarding in so many ways. First, it was great to see what goes on behind the scenes. I got to see how topics were discussed, decisions were made, and efforts to unite us as UU's were accomplished. The highlight for me during the General Sessions was when our President, Susan Frederick-Gray, spoke. Her words were inspiring and her beaming smile and spirit lit up those virtual squares and made them seem like soft, concentric circles.

Another area that stood out was the large array of workshops; my favorite being, “Having Anti-racist Conversations & Inviting into Action.” Chris Crass' whole approach was heart-centered and focused on how to draw people into the conversation rather than to alienate them.

I also loved starting the day with a worship service. I must say, though, that the thing that stands out most significantly to me about GA is that many of our BIPOC siblings held so many leading and supportive roles which helped make this GA the living example of what is possible! Thanks to all who made that a reality!

To learn more about Virtual GA 2020 and what you missed, take a look at the Program Book at https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/2020_program_book.pdf



Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!

General Assembly Delegates Take a Stand to Dismantle Anti-Blackness

Delegates at each annual General Assembly have the opportunity to take positions on issues that require immediate witness through the **Action of Immediate Witness** (AIW) process. An AIW expresses the conscience and carries the authority of the delegates at the GA at which it's passed. AIWs are initiated by individual delegates and move through their entire creation and adoption process during a single GA. Two AIWs were voted on and passed at Virtual GA 2020. Here's one of them.

Amen to Uprising: A Commitment and Call to Action BECAUSE Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations, we proclaim loudly, Black Lives Matter!

WHEREAS, police departments and officers across the United States have taken the lives of Black people, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, Rayshard Brooks and so many others;

WHEREAS, modern policing in the United States is a continuation of what began as slave patrols and have been used to control and harm Black people for generations;

WHEREAS, anti-racist protestors have been met by violence of an increasingly militarized police force;

WHEREAS, many of our faith communities have been complicit in creating the society and systems we currently live within; and

WHEREAS, our ancient and evolving universalist theologies call us to bring an end to all hells that exist and calls for accountability and transformation, not punishment.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, as Unitarian Universalists we commit to shaping a world in which love and justice may thrive, where Black leadership, creativity, and resilience is celebrated while Black grief is honored and held with love. We will use our voices to amplify the demands of Black Lives Matter, Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU), Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), Undocublack, and other organizations by and for Black people.

THEREFORE, we call upon the UUA to collaborate in education, support, and resource development for congregations and to take action through staff

commitments via the Organizing Strategy Team, Lifespan Faith Engagement, Congregational Life, and other groups.

THEREFORE, we will create systemic change within our congregations by:

- Revising agreements, and policies to create alternatives to policing (including developing plans for safety and accountability);
- Choosing not to involve police departments, and deactivating security systems that mobilize police response when triggered;
- Engaging in creative transformative justice processes;
- Pursuing abolition of policing systems within the congregations and institutions in which we have power;
- Moving congregational and institutional resources and endowments towards Black liberation organizing and long-term redistribution; and
- Rooting ourselves in theologies of liberation and abolition.

THEREFORE, we will support uprisings with spiritual and material resources, serving as places of respite during protests, funding movements through congregational budgets, and providing spiritual care for protestors and survivors of police and state terror.

THEREFORE, we will advocate in the wider world by:

- Following the example of institutions like the Minneapolis Public School Board in ending contracts with police, and directly intervening alongside communities experiencing policing and ICE raids;
- Joining in widespread calls for immediate defunding of police departments, ending immigration detention, and abolishing ICE; and
- Advocating for reinvestment in communities that have been victimized by policing and other forms of white supremacy.

THEREFORE, we commit to making our congregations and communities authentically multicultural, multiracial, anti-oppressive spaces that dismantle anti-Blackness; resisting a culture of perfectionism, and repairing our mistakes; and given that building the Beloved Community in an ongoing and ever evolving process, we commit to staying in this work for the long haul.

Why OWL (Our Whole Lives) Classes Won't Be Offered Online

by Käthe Larick, Youth Programs Coordinator



Recently, I received an email from a religious education colleague asking for information about ways to put their OWL classes that were interrupted by COVID-19 online. They weren't aware of the UUA and UCC guidelines regarding holding OWL classes electronically and wondered if I could offer any advice. My short answer was no, please don't do that. Here's my longer answer:

OWL group participants can be engaged through online check-ins, social gatherings, games, or even group home study time, but please don't offer OWL online. It wasn't

created for or tested for efficacy online. The in-person interactions and experiential learning cannot be instantly replicated on an online platform. The numerous hands-on group activities create a bond and a level of trust for the group participants and this is very difficult to achieve online without totally rewriting the curricula for that medium. More importantly, potential for harm exists in offering OWL online. If a participant is triggered, facilitators may not notice and may not be able to offer effective support. Lack of privacy is also a grave concern, as friends, parents, and siblings may be in the room, off or on camera. For youth and teen programs, parental permission is required to view the visuals, and that agreement can be broken if friends and siblings listen/view OWL workshops online. Lastly, the supplemental information and materials contained in the OWL curricula were granted permission to be used in print but not online.

In each OWL curriculum there are many resources to supplement each session, and these could be used by parents to have engaging, healthy conversations on a number of topics related to sexuality. I'm happy to give these resources to parents and will also loan curricula if you choose to do the class as part of your home school experience. As an OWL trainer and facilitator, I'm here for you, and I'm happy to do whatever I can to assist you in your role as your child's primary sexuality educator.

How We Do Online Worship Music

by Tony Bianca, *RE Program Assistant, Children's Choir, Summer Choir and Handbell Programs Director*

As you might imagine, this time of physical distancing has required music directors to get creative with the creative process. In times past, (in what is feeling more and more like “long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away”), putting together the music for a Sunday service could sometimes be as simple as a few emails and a quick rehearsal an hour ahead of time. But not anymore!

The process begins at our weekly worship meetings every Tuesday afternoon, just like it always has. Nowadays, however, the entire music staff is present at those meetings (which take place on Zoom) along with all the ministers and several new additions to the worship team who are responsible for directing the technical aspects of producing a weekly, live-streamed service.

Once the worship team as a whole chooses the music, we also have to check that our live-streaming license covers those particular songs, in order to comply with copyright laws. Lorelei then assigns to the music staff (Andrea and myself), and Chase, our accompanist, specific responsibilities for the week.

In the past, those responsibilities were typically: Who’s singing? and Who’s accompanying? Now, however, there are some additional steps to the process.

First, all the lyrics have to be added to two Google documents. The first document is translated into Spanish and that Spanish translation is then sent to the staff member who will be doing the Spanish captioning. The second document is sent to our Sign Language interpreter, Paul, for simultaneous translation on Sunday morning.

Next, the accompaniment is recorded and sent to the appropriate vocalist. While listening with headphones

on one device (a phone or laptop), the vocalist then records the singing on a 2nd device. In some cases, it’s preferable to record the audio and video separately and then sync them up using video editing software.

Once all the individual recordings are done, they’re individually uploaded to our Google Drive and downloaded again by the person responsible for editing them together. The editing process involves syncing the audio/video files, adjusting the audio to blend the various elements, and adding the videos and images you see on screen.

Lyrics are then added to the videos so they appear on the screen and the final product is once again uploaded to our Google Drive and

downloaded again by the music staff person who has been assigned to screen share them during the service on Sunday morning.

Finally, there is now a weekly rehearsal on Saturday mornings where everyone involved has a chance to practice playing live and/or screen sharing the music at the appropriate time.

In addition to the music staff, we’ve also continued to include music from our various choirs. Those pieces follow the same process but can include as many as 20 different audio/video elements, all of which need to be edited together.

While this process requires many new steps and skill-sets, it’s also been an opportunity for our staff and volunteers to engage with some fun, new ways of making music from a distance and, we hope, continue to provide the congregation with an engaging worship experience each week.



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Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister
Matthew Waterman, Intern Minister
Rev. Jim Grant and Rev. Löne Broussard, Affiliate Ministers
Rev. Bonnie Tarwater, Rev. Frank Piccone-Willey, Rev. Julie Forest and Rev. Katy Swanson, Affiliate Community Ministers
Robie Evans, Director of Operations
Käthe Larick, Youth Programs Coordinator
Angela Fujii, Social Justice Ministry Team Coordinator
Jenner Daelyn, Connections Coordinator and Scheduler
Rose Riedel, Office Manager
Tony Bianca, Program Assistant, Handbell & Children's Choirs Director
Chase Pado, Pianist
Lorelei Garner, South Bay Music Coordinator & Women's Chorus Director
Andrea N-L, JUUL Tones Ensemble Director
Connie Hayes, Bookkeeper / Controller
Ray Evans, Maintenance
Mark Epler, Event Coordinator
Revs. Dr. Carolyn and Dr. Tom Owen-Towle, Ministers Emeriti

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