

**Unfolding Peace Process Report:
First Unitarian Universalist of San Diego
15 April 2022**

FUUSD Unfolding Peace online container and resources:

<https://www.firstuusandiego.org/restorative-process.html>

Phase One Commitments:

Conversations with congregational and regional leaders, witnessing, grounding, and wondering together history and possibility

Creating congregational connection and commitment content, including newsletter articles and recorded greetings, invitations, and resources

Engaging in 2021 Listening Circle debriefs and leadership transitions

Phase One Insights:

Presence as healing

Trauma breaks down relationships. It damages human capacities for trust connection and mutuality. When these capacities are injured or destroyed, there is less resilience, and therefore greater vulnerability to additional trauma, which is frequently inflicted through the channel of broken relations.

“Trauma is not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness.” - Peter A. Levine, An Unspoken Voice

The trauma at First UU is not really just the story of what happened last spring or four years ago or ten years ago. These acts were triggers that acted as catalysts to reveal the trauma residue that's living inside of individuals and the collective. There has been lots of spillage into the

collective. There are and were a multitude of assaults on the human psyche sequestered and manifested during the pandemic. Time can be a healer and also allows unsurfaced assaults to fester and fuse creating the need to sort, separate and categorize what is the congregation's opportunity to help, heal, make right, and create new engagement guidelines for harm identification, reduction, correction and lesson integration of all assaults. It has been our honor to bear empathic witness to what has been held inside by this beloved congregation.

The listening circles provided an empathetic witness. The responses varied and the majority of responses indicated that participation in the listening circle was worthwhile and validating. The opportunity to expand the listening experience would greatly benefit this faith community.

Creating a container for light

Trauma constricts, reduces, and shuts down portions of the physical, emotional, and mental bodies. As a result traumatized people often experience reduced energy, lesser motivation, higher rates of depression and a subjective sense of separation and disconnection from others. It was quite clear that many people felt unable to respond to the world around them in an adequate or appropriate way according to their innate intelligence, perhaps due feelings of disempowerment or isolation.

The listening circles provided such containers for light in that each contribution made by participants was accepted with compassion and empathy without comment or question regarding the validity of a feeling, thought, or word.

The collective trauma integration process

This has come in stages and waves largely due to trauma recognition, impact discernment, impact effects and the ability or willingness to heal through trigger riddled spaces.

First UU is in the midst of this process. Certain elements are currently utilized in *cohering the group*, while others are in formation. In each of the gatherings where facilitators provide room for check-ins, space for healing becomes possible.

a. We celebrate that the Listening Circles as relational exercises provided opportunity for each participant to tune-in into the moment.

b. The work of healing collective trauma includes the facilitation of Subtle Attunement Practices, such as partner and group meditations with reflection, shared media review with discourse about its contents - including the practices that we have invited congregants to participate in this spring, found in The Window and on the Restorative Process page: <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/restorative-process.html>

c. Forms of Collective Movement Exercises where congregants build relationships “anew” are essential and will be included in our multiplatform gatherings later this spring. There is a need for collective movement beyond being talked to or being facilitated by another. There have been several opportunities for actual engagement with another in the group such as coffee gatherings, meditation, some service work, committee/team meetings etc. There is a great need of self-revelation that includes inquiry and mutual sharing. This has happened some with the facilitation and ministry teams but we have not witnessed this intentionality practice with active congregants nor those congregants “missing in action” (those who have distanced themselves from the congregation due to the experience of harm, trauma and the pandemic).

d. Group witnessing exercises would enhance the gift of presence in public ways to open opportunities for new information exposure such as expressive song, dance, art, mindfulness practice and - as demonstrated in recent sermons, eight principle advocacy, training, and witness.

Phase One: Witnessing, Wondering, and Grounding: Summary

1. The gift of presence is to witness. We have been bearing witness to this congregation since November - individual witness, collective

witness, reviewed written and oral reports, continually asking the question “who’s not there/here?”

2. We have witnessed the evolution of teams/committees in this process and have noticed that a small pool of people serve on multiple committees and the question we still ask is “who’s not there/here?”
3. We have connected with and witnessed to outside consultants who have served FUUSD and listened to members of the San Diego community outside of the congregation.
4. One wondering that has emerged from our witness is how to include the voices of the youth who resigned from congregational life in protest of the Board’s actions. We have been unable to determine if there was an accountability response to the Youth group from the Board.
5. We celebrate First UU’s adoption of the 8th Principle: *Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.* We are wondering about the gap between the congregation’s perception of itself on the journey toward diverse, multicultural Beloved Community and the lived experiences within the congregation of beloveds with targeted identities.
6. Our work continues to be grounded in the collective trauma integration process, which includes the identification of labels embraced by those in active congregation circles and by those on the margins. The process of identification becomes most clean when all of the informants have had an opportunity to weigh in on their experience, the impact, and their pending decisions to be fully active members or go somewhere else.

Phase 2: Relationships: Process Nourishment - Inviting congregants to move beyond behaviors that deny them a future together and accompanying them through the chaos of healing

We continue with Subtle Attunement Practices and all are invited to:

Topic: Unfolding Peace at the Movies conversation follow up

Time: Apr 22, 2022 06:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98794348989?pwd=VnNaNW9wdEhEOTJCYWhWWHdVNndjZz09>

Meeting ID: 987 9434 8989

Passcode: 545511

And we will be connecting with Robie, Rose, and the Minister-In-Residence shortly to plan facilitation of small group vision journeys with timeline review. These opportunities will be multiplatform, with Rev. Dr. Denise Graves joining First UU in person this spring and Rev. Deanna Vandiver handling the Zoom platform.

We are joyfully accompanying First UU through:

A collective experience of being deeply witnessed and honored in our inherent worth and dignity

and

Systemic shifts nurturing a faith community committed to a vision of shared liberation.

With love and liberation,

Rev. Dr. Denise Graves

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