Linking Diversity Action Discussions between Board and Congregation

By Maureen McNair, Member, First UU Board of Trustees

Communication between the congregation and Board of Trustees is getting a boost. Beginning this month, a few Trustees will be available to discuss diversity issues on both the Hillcrest and South Bay campuses. Discussions will be once a month at tables on the Hillcrest patio between services and in the South Bay social hall after the service.

This month, the Board is launching the monthly discussions with the topic “Food Insecurity and the Stigma of Food Assistance.” The first tabling event on this topic will occur on Sunday, November 3, in Hillcrest. People attending the South Bay service on Sunday, November 17, will also have an opportunity to discuss this topic.

The Board of Trustees has held diversity discussions at its monthly meetings “since before I got here,” said Lead Minister, Rev. Kathleen Owens. The Board members usually read a few articles on a specific topic about inclusivity and diversity before the monthly board meeting, then spend about half an hour sharing their responses at the Board meeting to acquire “a deeper knowledge about a variety of issues,” according to Rev. Kathleen. Past topics have included a wide range of issues, such as racism, micro-aggressions, disability discrimination, and holiday celebrations.

Now, the Board sub-committee that presents these discussions, the Diversity Action Group (DAG), will include the congregation in this self-education process. James Long, Board Treasurer and member of the current DAG, states he and the other current DAG members — Angela Garcia Sims and Andrea Gonzalez — will provide a wide variety of ways to include congregants in discussions. “We’ll be posting the monthly topic on the church website, firstusandiego.org, as well as running announcements in “The Window” (the weekly church bulletin), in the Social Justice e-newsletter, and with inserts in the orders of service,” he said.

The announcements will include links to the articles and videos the Board is reading/watching and three discussion questions. One of the key areas of discussion on which DAG wants to focus, Long said, is “What is the responsibility of First UU in the diversity area?” For example, this month, the focus questions about food insecurity are:

1. How is this topic of food insecurity relevant to us at First UU San Diego, and what is our responsibility?
2. How does listening to people’s stories help us at First UU Church to tackle food insecurity in a caring and inclusive way?
3. How does acknowledging white privilege enhance advocacy work at First UU church?

Past DAG teams have taken their discussions beyond education and into action. During Tony Brumfield’s Board presidency from 2014 - 2015, the DAG team organized the “March on Washington,” a protest on Washington Street in Hillcrest to bring attention to police killings of Black people. In addition, during Brumfield’s presidency, DAG supported displaying the “Black Lives Matter” sign in front of the Hillcrest campus.

With Belonging as this month’s worship theme, we’ll be offering a new element in our worship services. Every week at both campuses, you’ll hear from a variety of people in our congregation about what they have received from this congregation, how they give of their time, talent and treasure, and what this has meant in their lives. Rev. Tania and I may continue to ask folks to share on the monthly theme and how it plays out in their lives in future services. We look forward to seeing you in worship.
Meeting with new members is a favorite experience in the ministry. It’s a chance to get to know one another better - beyond the rush and crowd of Sunday morning. At some point in the conversation I often hear a new member say something like, "I'm not a joiner but..." or "I've never joined a church before but..."

As human beings, we have a deep need to feel like we belong. Some of us grow up asking ourselves, "Who am I?" "Where or to whom do I belong?" In our living, we search for answers and try fitting into different groups based on our interests, desires or skills.

In this congregation we work out our sense of belonging in many ways...seeking a balance between being comforted and inspired to grow. One of the ways we can feel a greater sense of belonging is through giving of ourselves, through our time, talents, and treasure. I know many people have felt a stronger sense of belonging when they joined a small group - sharing deeply and listening carefully to others in seeking wisdom and more ways to live their values. Others have joined one of our choirs and have found a place for themselves, a place to offer their gifts, to learn a new skill and feel a part of something bigger than themselves.

Sunday morning worship in this pluralistic community can feel overwhelming; it’s easy to feel a bit lost...but it doesn’t have to be that way. An intentional conversation during social hour after the service, can help one feel like they belong - and the reflection question in the order of service can be a way into a deeper conversation with people over coffee.

Teaching in religious education classes is a wonderful way to increase your sense of belonging, not just to the children and youth with whom you spend time, but increasing your sense of belonging to this faith tradition as you learn together.

Belonging is an intentional act and I hope you can find more ways to strengthen your sense of belonging this month.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Kathleen Owens

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**Worship Times:**

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

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

**November's Transformational Theme is: "Belonging"**

**November 3, 2019**

Hillcrest Services—
"Belonging and the Future of Church"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

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

**November 10, 2019**

Hillcrest Services—
"By What Name Would You be Called?"
Rev. John Millspaugh

South Bay Service—
"Belonging and the Future of Church"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

**November 17, 2019**

Hillcrest Services—
"A Life Defined by Generosity"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

South Bay Service—
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

**November 24, 2019**

Hillcrest Services—
"Star Stuff"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

South Bay Service—
"All the Lonely People"
Rev. Julie Forest, Affiliate Minister
Last month, I focused on the faith development of our preschool children and what we offer them at First UU Church of San Diego. I’m going to focus on grades K/1 this month. Children of this age are starting to develop toward what James Fowler has identified as the “Mythic-literal Faith Stage” of their faith development.

Children in this stage (ages 6-12) typically have these characteristics:

- They’re able to start to work out the difference between verified facts and things that might be more fantasy or speculation.

- Their source of religious authority starts to expand past parents and trusted adults to others in their community like teachers and friends.

- Faith is something to be experienced, because children think in concrete and literal ways. Faith becomes the stories told and the rituals practiced.

- Later in this stage, children begin to have the capacity to understand that others might have different beliefs than them. (Stages of Faith by James Fowler)

At First UU Church of San Diego, we are using a curriculum for our K/1 children from the UUA called Wonderful Welcome. Although their learning is still rooted in experiential activities and rituals, children in this age group learn about intangible ideas and the importance of welcoming behaviors.

Wonderful Welcome intentionally introduces our 5 and 6-year-old children to a number of “intangible gifts.” These are the positive qualities inside all of us, that challenge us to be welcoming to others in our lives. This includes not only our families, friends, and peers, but also strangers and neighbors and extends to animals and nature itself. Activities in this program offer children a safe and positive place in which to practice these gifts.

The idea of “intangible gifts” is abstract and represents high level thinking on the part of young children. But this kind of thinking, and intangible gifts, are central to being welcoming, which in turn is core to Unitarian Universalism. We’re welcoming when we love, when we forgive, when we learn to use empathy and kindness. As children investigate how to use these gifts that they can’t see or touch, they begin to think about the intangible gifts they receive and those they give to others.

Other program goals:

- Expanding children’s understanding of their relationships with others, including people they know, people they will meet and all life that shares our planet.

- Creating opportunities for children to identify and practice a wide variety of welcoming behaviors; activate children’s capacity to welcome many manifestations of the interconnected web of life, including people, animals and the natural environment.

- Teaching children the concept of "intangible gifts," qualities that can be shared but cannot be seen or held.

- Teaching the importance of welcoming as an act of Unitarian Universalist faith and as an expression of our Unitarian Universalist Principles.

- Developing and enriching children’s sense of belonging to their religious education peer community, their congregational community and the larger Unitarian Universalist faith community.

- Introducing practices of stewardship.

- Helping children create a shared atmosphere that encourages a sense of reverence, awe, gratitude and wonder. (From Wonderful Welcome, UUA website)

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. We are here to support and inspire families to bring intentionality and excitement in their children’s faith and moral development.
Reflection

By Owen Cooksy, Given during the September 8 service - Theme for the month: Community

As I stand here, I have one foot in the community I was born into and another on the college campus I’ll join next week. Changing between communities is an opportunity to consider what community is. This is not so much a process of leaving one for another as reconciling your place between them. I probably could try and talk about the community I’m most obviously a part of, the connected global phenomenon that is my ‘internet generation.’ But while I must be a member of this group, I’m not a part of it. I’m not alone in feeling something like emptiness, a sense that we can speak to anyone but are still very much alone, that perhaps our community has become so vast we’ve become lost in it.

I’ve been lucky to have this church, because whatever part I’ve played, it has always been here. As the prospect of leaving this community grows more tangible, I do feel the sense that I have lost something. The problem is, I don’t quite know what.

It’s difficult to define our community, isn’t it? What do we all share that brings us together? We’re somehow a church without a religion—we’re proudly a home of humanists, Unitarians, Universalists, and anyone in between. We have tables for Yule celebrations and Christmas pageants. What do we have in common? Do we share a god--do we have a god? We have ministers at least—we have traditions of course--but Dining for Dollars has never really felt like a holy duty, has it?

We don’t have commandments, but we do have seven principles. And I think it’s telling that among these are the recognition of each person’s worth and dignity, and acceptance of everyone, faith in democracy, and a recognition of the global community in which we live and the one we strive for. My problem in trying to find my church community was mistaking doctrine for law. Doctrine is the government of personal conduct; law is the rules by which the community lives. Ours tell us community begins with acceptance.

As our church has come more and more to understand this duty we all share, we have become an ever larger community, encompassing different faiths, politics, languages and cultures. I think the question about our church is similar for America as a whole--what can we all possibly share from sea to shining sea? And yet we are each, undeniably, all Americans.

We are all fellow Americans, who were once told to ask what we can do for our country. There’s a second part of the quote which is often left off: to my fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do. We cannot be defined simply as American, our community must accept more than just that. And that is where ours must become a brave community. We must each and together be willing to move this community to greater acceptance, greater change, greater works. We do not need to agree on our doctrines so much as we must agree to move forward. We do not need to be the same, because community is not the place where you fit in; community is the place where your talents are accepted and your work included to improve us all.
A Day in the Life of Käthe Larick

By Rhea Khulman

Käthe puts in 20 hours per week in their current role working with our Junior High and Senior High congregants. They loves working with these age groups, as the children gradually transition from very concrete thinking to the abstract thinking that prompts them to examine their beliefs and values. Larick views this as a sacred process, one which has the potential to set youth on a solid path to successful adulthood. They helps the youth to formulate and then implement group plans and projects, writes curriculum to supplement the UUA curriculum for these age groups, trains the church’s lay Youth Advisors and acts as an advisor to both the youth and their parents, when needed. These young people are at such a vulnerable point in their development, Käthe feels it’s critical for them to know there’s a stable, non-judgmental adult they can talk to when they need it. Their cell phone buzzes at all hours, with youth contacts on Instagram, Snapchat, or whatever online app is in style that year. But this is part of the job, Käthe notes. It comes with the calling, and Käthe does view this job as a calling. Growing up isn’t easy, especially if you think differently from your peers, have body image issues, question your sexuality, worry about your parents’ finances, or are concerned about the current political climate. These kids are deep thinkers, and it’s Käthe’s joy and privilege to help them on their way.

There’s still work to do in this role, and Käthe views that as part of the challenge, and the fun. “I have the best job in the church,” Larick asserts, and it’s precisely that attitude that makes Käthe the perfect person for the job.
SEEDS THROUGH SONG

A Concert Benefitting UURISE

Featuring Emma’s Revolution & Peter Mayer

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego
4190 Front Street, San Diego 92103
GPS: 298 W Arbor Dr. San Diego

Saturday
November 16
2019

6:00 PM
VIP Reception
7:30 PM
Concert

Join us for a magical evening of live music as we shift possibility into power with the seeding of a micro-loan program for immigrants & refugees.

$60 VIP Reception & Concert
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www.uurise.org
CELEBRATE THE SEASON!

Holiday Events at First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

November

Wednesday, November 27th
5:30 PM
Thanksgiving Eve Service and Potluck at Hillcrest Campus

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
4 PM
Tree-Decorating and Carol Sing-Along at Hillcrest Campus

Saturday, December 7th
9 AM
Tamalada in the Common Room at Hillcrest Campus

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
Noon
Christmas Day Potluck at Hillcrest Campus

Sunday, December 29th
9:30 AM
Children’s Chapel at Hillcrest Campus
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First Words Editor & Submissions, Nancy Fisk:
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To be added to the E-mail List:
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The Window submissions (Church bulletin):
window@firstuusandiego.org
Care Network: carenetwork@firstuusandiego.org
First Church Web Sites:
Main Website: http://www.firstuusandiego.org
South Bay Campus:
http://www.firstuusandiego.org/uus-of-the-south-bay

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