The latest Looking Glass Theater production, “Twelve Angry Jurors” (based on the play “Twelve Angry Men”), is coming to the Meeting House November 8, 9, 10, and 17—to entertain and inform us. Directed by church members Les GrantSmith, Tony Riedel, and Calina Newall, “Twelve Angry Jurors” examines one part of the American justice system. How does a jury reach a conclusion? How do jurors’ own life experiences determine a verdict? How do we reinforce the principle that reasonable doubt, even on the part of just one juror, means a not guilty verdict?

“Twelve Angry Jurors” tells the story of a young man accused of murdering his father. The young man comes from a low income neighborhood and one juror thinks that makes him a suspicious character. After all, slum kids are like that. Will other jurors exhibit bigotry also? Will the defendant be convicted even if reasonable doubt exists?

Looking Glass Theater members strive for multigenerational participation and Tony Riedel, 14, and Calina Newell, 16, make their directing debuts with this production. Both young people are thrilled with their new roles. Says Tony, “I really enjoy directing. I’ve already gained experience with backstage work and acting, so this expands my knowledge of theater production.” Adds Calina, “Directing is so much fun! But acting is my love—I like stepping into other people’s shoes and experiencing another way of life.”

Les GrantSmith is a veteran director of countless Looking Glass Theater productions, but finds joy in each new one. “Twelve Angry Jurors” has particular relevance for Unitarian Universalists, he thinks. How do we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person accused of wrongdoing? How do we promote justice, equity and compassion in our legal system? “This play,” Les says, “is a snapshot of the jury process at its best.”

“Twelve Angry Jurors” will be presented in the Meeting House on Friday, November 8 and Saturday, November 9 at 7 PM. There will be two Sunday matinees—on Sunday, November 10 and Sunday, November 17 at 3 PM. An additional performance will be presented at South Bay on Friday, November 15 at 7 PM.

Adult tickets bought on the patio on Sundays or from cast members are $13. Performance day at the door adult tickets are $15. Student and military tickets are $10 regardless of when or where purchased.

Don’t miss this engaging and timely production with the always talented actors who make Looking Glass Theater performances so eagerly anticipated at First UU! Further information is available at the LGT website: www.LookingGlassSD.org.
Welcome and Intentional Inclusion
By Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

Every week in our worship together we hear words of Welcome – in fact, Welcome is listed in our order of service as an element of the service. These words have changed from time to time to ensure we’re including a specific word of welcome to people religious institutions have typically shut out.

Traditionally, any person not fitting into the dominant culture or faith tradition was excluded or seen as sinful. This is not Unitarian Universalism (UU). As an example, at First UU, we have been welcoming people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer for decades. This doesn’t mean this welcome is offered to the LGBTQ+ community in every UU congregation.

Before we at First UU pat ourselves on the back too much, we need to look more deeply into who we welcome and who we don’t. Of course, we don’t come right out and say certain individuals aren’t welcome here (all need to be, but not all behaviors)...but through snippy remarks, or eye-rolling, or argument, there are times when we have not been as welcoming as we say we are.

I’m thinking of people who are longing for a spiritual community and someone argues that we’re not spiritual; or someone comes wearing a necklace with a cross on it and is told they won’t like it here, or that we don’t believe in God; or someone identifies themselves as conservative politically and hears that they should go somewhere else – that all of us here are liberals at least, progressive mostly.

I’m sorry to say these are not exaggerations, but real, lived experiences for some on a Sunday morning. This month’s worship theme is Intentional Inclusion and we not only have worship services that are focused on this theme (i.e., Celebrating Indigenous People’s Day, October 13, or Día de Muertos, October 27) – but we need to be practitioners of widening our welcome...of meeting people with curiosity and openness to learning together.

This is something done by every person, not just the ushers or welcome table volunteers or ministers. Creating a welcoming space that is intentionally inclusive takes some courage and a willingness to learn...so that we might truly create community for everyone who is seeking.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Kathleen

October 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)

October’s Transformational Theme is "Intentional Inclusion"

October 6, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Beloved Conversations: Reflections of Discomfort"
Rhonda Brown

South Bay Service—
"South Bay Comes of Age"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

October 13, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Honoring Indigenous People"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

South Bay Service—
"Radical Inclusion"
Rev. Jim Grant, Affiliate Minister

October 20, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"What a Question Can Give"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister

South Bay Service—
"What Local Justice Looks Like"
Rev. Kathleen Owens, Lead Minister

October 27, 2019
Hillcrest Services—
"Día de muertos"
Rev. Kathleen Owens & Lay Leaders

South Bay Service—
"Día de muertos"
Rev. Tania Márquez, Assistant Minister
Greetings! Children’s Religious Education for the year began with an intergenerational service on September 15th and regular classes started for all six levels of children and youth on September 22nd. The children are engaging and ready to build community, grow in their Unitarian Universalism, and have fun.

The preschool group is in what James Fowler has identified as the “Intuitive-Projective Stage” of their faith development. Children in this stage typically have these characteristics:

- Generally, they are pre-school aged children.
- The cognitive development of children of this age is such that they are unable to think abstractly and are generally unable to see the world from anyone else’s perspective. As Robert Keeley writes: “These children cannot think like a scientist, consider logical arguments, or think through complex ideas.”
- Faith is not a thought-out set of ideas, but instead a set of impressions that are largely gained from their parents or other significant adults in their lives. In this way children become involved with the rituals of their religious community by experiencing them and learning from those around them.

(Stages of Faith by James Fowler)

At First UU, for this age group (between ages 3-5), we use a curriculum from the UUA called Chalice Children. In this class, they’ll have opportunities to learn about Unitarian Universalism at a basic level. In fact, one of our goals is that they can say the words “Unitarian Universalist!”

Repetition and patterns work well with them, so each Sunday follows a typical pattern. We have a brief playtime followed by a simple song or two. A story with a children’s picture book follows, then it’s time for a fun activity!

Chalice Children delves deep into our Unitarian Universalist faith. It strives not just to teach about our faith, but also to provide experiences around the strength of community, the wonder and awe that transcend everyday understanding, and life issues we all share. In a group setting, with loving adult guides, our young children can engage in spiritual seeking, develop their openness to sharing, and experience the benefit of a supportive community. Their time in Chalice Children can set a pattern for the rest of their lives and bring lasting benefits.

The curriculum is based on the belief that preschool children gain a sense of belonging to their religious community and the Unitarian Universalist faith when they have concrete experiences with its people and places. The main goal of the curriculum is to nurture children’s sense of wonder and respect for the world around us.

Other program goals are to:
- Celebrate the diversity of families, of individuals, and of ways of being in the world
- Build children’s identities with a Unitarian Universalist congregation
- Teach to the importance of sharing and expressing love
- Support parents and caregivers in their search for a meaningful family life
- Nurture hope for a just and fair world.
- Focus on ritual and song—repetition is key to this age group

(From Chalice Children, UUA website)

Some of the first weeks will be used to explore each other and the beautiful campus we have here at First UU. Don’t be surprised to see teachers showing children around the campus as they start their journey toward developing their identity as Unitarian Universalists!

In this picture, children are creating tissue-paper hearts with the affirmation, “Love is the spirit of this church.”
Reflections on Beloved Conversations

By Scott GrantSmith (they/them and he/him)

I was a participant and facilitator in Beloved Conversations this spring. While looking for inspiration for participating in the service on October 6, I found a sermon by Amanda Udis-Kessler in the UUA’s new WorshipWeb app (https://www.uua.org/worship) titled “White Supremacy and Beloved Community” (https://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermon/white-supremacy-and-beloved-community). In it, is this quote:

"...one might envision at least eleven stages of emotional struggle around accepting white supremacy as a white person. The stages don’t always happen in order, they can overlap, and we may move back and forth between them. They are denial, resistance, discomfort, defensiveness, guilt, fear, paralysis, anger, sadness, resignation, and commitment."

I’ve spent most of my life in the denial and defensiveness stages when it comes to race, racism, and white supremacy. In the last decade or so, I find myself moving between fear and paralysis and, especially, discomfort. Maybe some of you can relate.

I know I need to do something but I’m so afraid of failure! Well, it turns out that not doing anything—paralysis—is also failure! So, when I was asked if I wanted to participate in Beloved Conversations as one of the facilitators, I said, “...Yes?”

And, just like that, a bit of commitment showed up. In the retreat and the sessions, we definitely touched on resistance and guilt and the rest of those stages.

The work in this conversation, this Beloved Conversation, is—obviously—relational, communal. I do it with other people—with you—and it’s okay to bring my whole—and imperfect—self. It’s haunting to delve into my personal and family history around racism. It’s challenging to learn the history of this faith and this congregation around race. It’s heart-rending to know that I and we—despite our best intentions—have not always done the right things. Those things, though, are useful. If we’re brave enough, they give us places to start, wrongs to right, bridges to build or rebuild, and reparations to make.

This discomfort is key, I believe. It can compel us to withdraw or it can inspire us to engage with it. Discomfort can cause—and has caused—people to leave our community. I know that people of color have left feeling marginalized or flat-out excluded or worse. I know that non-people of color have left feeling the congregation is changing too much or too fast.

I feel this discomfort and I choose to engage with it but—wow!—is it a lot of work! I kind of expected that, of course, but that’s not all. I got a lot in return.

What I hadn’t expected was the joy of working and renewing my connection with Jan Carpenter Tucker, with whom I served as co-facilitator. She is a passionate justice-seeker and truth-teller. Working with Jan is a privilege, full stop.

It was also a pleasure to work with our intern minister, Stevie Carmody. He brought clarity, relief, peace, and holiness to our work.

Building community with the rest of our group in this spiritual setting brought gifts of connection, intimacy, vulnerability, curiosity, love, even playfulness. And there were snacks! We took risks and made mistakes. And, we learned from them. We made progress. And, that gave me hope.

We have plenty of work ahead to build a beloved community that exposes and dismantles white supremacy. Beloved Conversations gives us tools to add to the ones we’ve built through the decades of our anti-racism and anti-oppression work here at First Church.

I look forward to talking with you and sharing this vital and deeply spiritual work.
A Day in the Life of Lara Korneychuk
By Rhea Khulman

This is one in an occasional series about the work of First UU’s wonderful staff members, who labor behind the scenes to make the wheels of the church turn smoothly.

Lara Korneychuk’s life revolves around music, and her work as the new Hillcrest Interim Music Coordinator at First UU and Director of the Chalice (adult) and Voices in Unity (youth) Choirs fits right into that picture.

In her role as Music Coordinator for the Hillcrest Campus, Lara is responsible for keeping track of the schedule that determines which First UU ensemble is making music when. With so many musical groups contributing to our rich musical program at First UU, that takes a lot of coordination. In addition to the Chalice and Voices in Unity Choirs, which she directs, there is also the Women’s Chorus directed by South Bay Music Coordinator Lorelei Isidro-Garner, the Children’s Choir directed by Program Assistant Tony Bianca, the JUUL Tones Ensemble directed by Andrea Newell, and both of our wonderful Handbell Choirs, also directed by Tony. In order to keep all this straight, Lara meets weekly with both ministers, Hillcrest campus pianist/organist Chase Pado, Tony Bianca, and with various of the Directors of the other ensembles. Together they determine the appropriate music to accompany the themes of each week’s service. Naturally, Lara works most closely with Chase, who accompanies most of the music during the service.

In addition to her coordination duties, Lara devotes Wednesday nights to selecting music for and rehearsing the Chalice Choir, and Sunday afternoons to coaching Voices in Unity. Altogether, she puts in 20 hours per week at First UU.

But Lara is a busy lady, and her work with this church is far from all she does. When she’s not spending time with First UU, she is a full-time educator on the Performing Arts faculty of The Bishop’s School. She teaches vocal music, drama, and musical theatre, and directs the middle school choir. In that capacity, she also serves as the School’s chapel cantor, and has sponsored the Drama Club, Boyband, and FEM Club.

Lara also serves as the Assistant Conductor of the innovative professional choral group Sacra/Profana and sings with that group as well. You can catch several of Sacra/Profana’s genre shattering performances at First UU in the months ahead.

A native of Irvine, Lara earned her B.M. in Music Education and Vocal Performance with a Certificate in Musical Theatre from Northwestern University in Illinois. She taught in Illinois before moving back to Southern California to be closer to her family, now living in Santa Monica. She comes by her love of music honestly. Her Dad was a choir director, and she grew up singing in church choirs.

Lara has been thrilled with the warm welcome she’s received at First UU, both from the staff and from the choirs. She had the opportunity to work with Rev. Ian before he left and is grateful for the guidance he provided. She looks forward to a happy and productive association with our congregation.
SPECIALTY BAZAAR
Saturday, October 12, 2019
8am to 1pm

Just in Time for the Holidays!
Unique Gifts
at Fabulous Prices!
A fundraiser for First UU of San Diego

ART & COLLECTIBLES
FINE & COSTUME JEWELRY
HATS, HANDBAGS & SCARVES
A Reflection for Labor Day
By Tony Brumfield, Given on Sunday, September 1, 2019, Hillcrest Campus

On this day that honors working people, I want to also hold up all those who work but are not paid, and those who work but are not paid enough.

On Labor Day, I’d like to hold up my mother. She was one of the first Mexican American women to join the Air Force after restrictions were lifted in 1948. Mom was trained as a dental hygienist and met my father while cleaning his teeth before he was deployed to the Korean War.

When I was little, I remember being awakened when it was still dark by the sound of my mother making breakfast for my father. Even though she was Mexican, she prepared a southern breakfast for him: slices of toast with apple butter, grits, two fried eggs, and bacon. After dad went to work, she prepared breakfast and lunch for her children. My mother was always taking gifts of jam or cookies to her neighbors, and after school, she welcomed children to play in her backyard until their mom or dad returned home.

I worked as a gardener throughout my school years and found it very satisfying. Looking back, I probably should have stayed with gardening but instead I earned a bachelor’s degree in engineering. I spent ten years working as an engineer, but it wasn’t a good fit for me.

Today, I also wish to honor the brave and courageous people who suffer from unemployment. For many, it can begin a spiral into mental illness, substance abuse, and/or homelessness, and some people take their lives when they’re unable to find work. The darkest days of my life have been periods of unemployment.

When I was offered work as an educator in San Diego County’s detention facilities, the idea made me cringe. I couldn’t imagine myself working in such a place. Fortunately, my first assignment was as a landscape teacher at the men’s facility near Descanso. One of my responsibilities was to maintain an organic garden. The inmates I worked with were thrilled to get out of the crowded jail dorms, to rake and sweep, to dig, to pull weeds, and water plants. They were paid only pennies, but it meant the world to them. We chopped up peppers, tomatoes, onions, and cilantro from our garden and made fresh salsa. I brought in corn chips and we celebrated the work we’d accomplished.

I’ve been working in detention facilities now for 18 years, the last four with teenage boys. It’s been some of the most rewarding work I’ve done. Working in schools is in many ways like working in a garden. When I water the earth, I don’t know what’s going to come up, but I’ve learned that everything that grows, like the mind of a child, is a miracle.

My mother is 91 now. Her days of preparing meals and washing clothes are over. My brother and I, our sisters, and people we’ve hired, now do the work my mother did her whole life, but she continues to give life to those around her. She’s always happy when someone walks through the door. The children that played in her backyard are all grown up now and have their own babies. Mom still goes up and down the street with her walker talking to her neighbors. She’s on her smart phone all day. She lights up when friends and family send her photos, and she listens as others share their worries and joys.

Her work as a mother continues, and my work as a gardener, of plants and children, goes on.