


Inspire



WINTER 2020



Don &
Mary Lou Hymel
Steve Feinstein
Jaime Ramirez
Dana Clark
Duo
Pena
Mistress
Ginger

Tavis
McGeachin
Monomials
aka Slowpoke
Alyson
Alonzo
Lucie Blue
Tremblay

75TH
ANNIVERSARY
mUUsic
Festival

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO

INSPIRE

newsletter@uusat.org

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Inspire is a publication of First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio. We welcome submissions of original articles, short stories, or poetry that encompass a UU theme. All submissions become the property of First UU. Publication of submissions is not guaranteed and is at the discretion of the editor.

Send submissions to newsletter@uusat.org.



Who Are We and What Do We Aspire To?

by Rev. Mark Skrabacz



George Washington Carver said “Where there is no vision, there is no hope.” With a vision we create concrete, compelling, shared images, and give ourselves and others something positive to look forward to. We motivate people to act in the present in order to realize that desirable future. When we give people the opportunity to create the future, we give them power over uncertainty, and in doing so give them hope. And in my experience, there is almost nothing more powerful than people who have reason to hope.

When we cast a vision, that vision becomes a statement that summarizes who we are and what we aspire to. With a powerful vision statement, we can point to its words and images and say, we are the people who will build that future!

At First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio, the following is our Vision.

- We stretch ourselves and encourage each other to new intellectual and spiritual heights. We care for each other in times of joy and sorrow.
- We love and accept children and youth for who they are. We nurture and stimulate them to grow into their fullest potential.
- We welcome visitors and seekers with radical hospitality. We connect with them to create relationships of caring, transformation and spiritual growth.
- We are a force for love and justice in the greater San Antonio community. We proactively engage others to work for the common good.
- We support and challenge fellow congregations in the UUA. We strive to live our UU principles and values with excellence.

Our Vision is firmly grounded in our Seven Principles, and when we tell stories of what the world will be like when we make it so, we create our identity. Creating our own community identity is among the most important work that we as Unitarian Universalists in San Antonio have before us. Because life is complicated and we are a reflection of life, we often have difficulty describing who and what we are. Our Congregation has many identity groups and this is good. We offer a safe place for individuals to explore and to apply our Vision and Principles in their personal search for truth and meaning. We offer a place to belong rather than bringing in more divisiveness and fragmentation. Yet at the same time, what we need more of is the sense of our collective identity and how we can become a force for positive change in our communities, city and world. We are stronger together when our identity groups function as a part of a congregational whole.

The goal of our 6th UU Principle is world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. That vision begins within each of us. We need to offer each individual ways of making peace, liberty and justice within themselves and their lives. If we are able to do that, while doing the other things we know we must – practicing welcoming radical hospitality, providing ethical and spiritual growth, doing justice and gathering in covenantal fellowship – we may find ourselves drawing to us new persons and retaining our current members. If we can do this successfully, we will serve those who need the liberating message of our religion. They will come not only to explore our Church, but stay and make it their Congregation. If we truly wish to be relevant and to show up authentically as who we are, we must know and embody our aspirations, and communicate them to others.

Do you understand better who we are and what we aspire to? Let’s come alive as this!

Approved by First UU Board May, 2016

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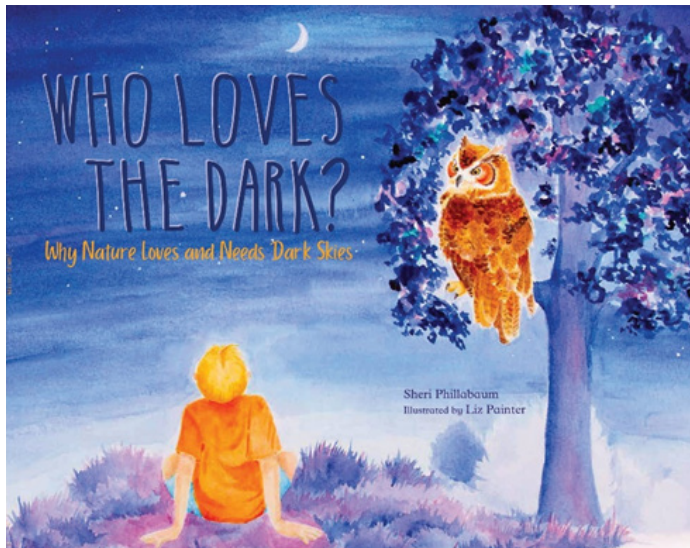
Who Loves the Dark

by Roy Ellzey

Our own First UU Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Dr. Sheri Phillabaum, has a new children's book entitled *Who Loves the Dark* that is being published by Shearer Publishing through the Texas A&M University Press that will be available on or about December 1st online from Amazon or Barnes & Noble and selected bookstores.

The book was inspired when Sheri attended a presentation by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) in 2014 at UBarU in preparation for UBarU becoming an IDA-certified Dark-Sky Park (received in 2015.)

In keeping with its mission, UBarU strives to be sustainable with respect to renewable energy, water conservation, and preserving the night skies. Thus, this little book teaches the value of natural dark skies through a story of how a little boy who finds himself lost in the woods at night comes to understand for himself.

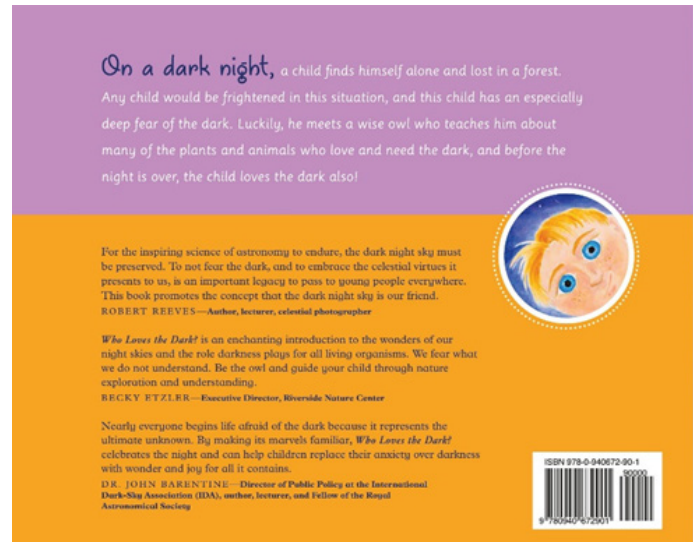


Preface to Parents and Educators

The term “dark skies”, particularly in the context of this book, refers to cloudless night skies in their natural state unencumbered by any Earth-generated light source that affects the view of one looking upward toward the sky.

Until about a century ago, for millennia humans have generally experienced the same view of the night sky

from their respective locations on the Earth. However, as industrial activity and populations increased the need for outside lighting also increased dramatically. This was often done with little forethought about directing the light only where it was needed/wanted without precautions to prevent it from also shining where it was not needed; namely, upward toward the sky. Thus, more and more people began to lose their views of dark skies and the magnificent sights that have inspired poets, artists, scientists and just about everyone else who has gazed into a star-filled night sky, accented by the milky-way, some of the brighter planets and more.



The wonders of dark skies still awe and inspire humankind when they are seen, but the opportunity to experience dark skies is shrinking. Furthermore, science has shown that dark skies are important for the well-being of many animals and plants that are in turn important for the ecology of the Earth; and, to a lesser degree, having access to dark skies can even affect the well-being of humans. Fortunately, there are cost-effective options for outside lighting that can control and even reverse the loss of dark skies, and organizations such as the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) work to educate and assist the public in taking the steps needed to preserve and reclaim dark skies wherever possible.

The intent of this little book is to introduce young people to the value of dark skies with the hope that as they progress into adulthood they will be more inclined to support actions that preserve dark skies for the next generation. Also, that Nature's gift of dark skies is a good thing that they should not be afraid of, and by having this explained by familiar animals such as an owl and a bat perhaps they will become better stewards of the Earth in general.

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Trust Fund for Endowments

by Arlis Olson

Thank you to the following people for contributing to the Trust Fund for Endowments:

August - Howard and Diane Berger, Bill Bush and Mary Wright, Christine Chesnut, Chuck and Jennifer Gibbons, Pam Kirk, Denise Searles Mazzacano, Arlis Olson

September - Tess Bobo, Charles Bonney, Charles and Virginia Bowden, Alan and April Chase, William Christ, Bill and Katy Evans, Martha Cooley and Dave Minnich, Tracy Knouse, Debra Loya, Jim and Polly Noel, Arlis Olson, Gary and Marianne Ross, David and Lana Sund

October - Dana Clark, Diane Dueterhoeft & Mike Phillips, Bill and Katy Evans, Kathy McFarlane, Janet Realini

We received a substantial increase of \$6,821 this quarter. In addition to birthday gifts, we received some creative contributions, some in honor of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and one by someone who thought my

work on this fund warranted a contribution. I felt truly honored. I'm sure there are people in this church you would like to honor for their contributions while they are still alive. We'd be glad to acknowledge them.

The most substantial contributions received this quarter were in memory of members who have recently departed this life (Dick Searles, Laura Richmond, Brian Lyttle.) Some of them designated the church as a charity on their Life Transitions Form. If you haven't filled out a Life Transitions Form or designated the church as a favorite charity upon your demise, please consider doing so. You can complete the form online at <https://uusat.org/our-programs/pastoral-care/>

Remember, contributions to this fund help ensure the long term viability of this church as well as funding for special church needs, maintenance, and improvements. Thanks to those who contributed.

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Protecting the Results

by Jan Realini

These uncertain times call for us to keep informed and to act to defend our democracy from autocratic coup attempts. It is unfortunate that the situation in our country warrants this attention and concern, but it is real. As of this writing (November 9) the Coup-o-meter at the website <https://isthisacoup.com/> points to “Preparing for a Coup,” which is down a couple of notches from where it pointed just after the election.



On November 4, the day after the presidential election, Dorothy Wallace, Board Chair of First UU SA, and I attended the Protect the Results rally at Main Plaza in downtown San Antonio. The nonpartisan message was #CountEveryVote. Groups supporting this event included the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC), Texas Organizing Project (TOP), MOVE Texas, the Carrizo Comecrudo tribe, Reliable Revolutionaries (a grass roots organization of young Black people in San Antonio), Texas Rising (a Texas Freedom Network project), MoveOn, RAICES, and FixSAPD.

There are many things we can do to be prepared to act if needed. History has shown that prompt action is key. Recommended reading includes items at <https://>



choosedemocracy.us/ and <https://holdthelineguide.com/> as well as <https://protecttheresults.com/>

People can help by attending events if they are held. However, people can also help in multiple ways without participating in person:

- Providing food or water for demonstrators
- Donating to Choose Democracy or Protect the Results
- Spreading these organizations' true and strategic messages by social media
- Calling or tweeting local political leaders to demand actions to support democracy
- Signing up for updates from ChooseDemocracy.us and ProtecttheResults.com

There a tremendous amount of work to do going forward, no matter what the election-season results are.

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People of the Land Series: Carrizo/ Comecrudo Tribe of Texas

by Linda Nash

One of the Green Team's goals for this year is to get to know the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas. We want to learn how we can help and how we can stand in solidarity with them. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to invite Juan, the tribal chair, to our campus. We are still unable to visit them. Gratefully, they have an online presence and those of us that are able are attending their People of the Land Series. These conversations air live the third Friday of each month at 6:00 pm through December. These meetings are a partnership between the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas, the Unitarian Universalist Association, UU Ministry for Earth, and UU Texas Justice Ministry.

In this webinar series Tribal members and accomplices share their history, some of their life ways, and their wisdom. You can hear conversations on environmental justice, sovereignty, resistance of colonialism, and self-determination. Rather than attempting to speak for the tribe, I have transcribed a few questions and answers here. The questions are asked by a moderator, and answered by a panel consisting of Tribal members, allies, and accomplices to the tribe.

Question 1

You speak of ceremony, lifeways, rituals and spirituality. How do you define these terms, and how do you express or experience them in your culture?

JM: We have no words for prayer, ritual, ceremony. These are just things we do. We do have a time to remember our ancestors - lives lost, the detention centers, the ongoing colonization, leaders not knowing what leaders should be. We remember our sacred sites - how far we travelled in migration,

and the Yalui Village, which reminds us that we are like butterflies, opening from a cocoon.

PM: Our teachings, our stories, rituals connect us to the land. All of our stories are grounded in the real world. We have a bear dance, stories of buffalo that were here long ago.

Question 2

What nation do you claim, where is your origin?

JM: Our nation is the Estok' Gna, which means human beings, and our origin is here. We've lived here since first contact. We were here when the Spaniards crossed the river in 1532. Cabeza de Vaca travelled with us. At one time our tribe reached from Aransas Pass to the Big Bend Area. Where 37 and 281 go South there is a burial ground [of our ancestors]. Our Bible is in rock paintings all over Texas. This land is our Church.

Question 3:

How do you change colonial thought? [This question refers to the Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe's determination to be true to their Native American ideas and avoid the Western ideas that are contrary to their beliefs.]

LS: I research, I read a lot, and ask JM what is true.

KPF: Remembering my humanity. Breaking the training habits. It's hard. We are so assimilated.

To find ourselves is an everyday process. It's a continuous process to endure. We attempt everyday by remembering our ancestors, by connecting to the land, by telling the stories. The earth does not belong to any of us. I belong to Her. Personally driven all my life - I think my ancestors keep me grounded to them.

Question 4

Could you explain what it means for a non-tribal member to be an ally or an accomplice for the tribe?

CM: So many people come, adults who have discovered their relation to the tribe, people from other indigenous tribes who want to help, and non-tribal people. Many of them come in wanting to lead, to solve problems their way. This creates problems. If you want to be an ally to the tribe, recognize the kind of space you're walking into. Be mindful that we have been surviving here for many years. An ally says "I'm here. I'm available. How can I help?"

DS: As allies, we don't determine needs, or how those needs are met. Don't assume you can come and start changing things with Western ideas. Also, don't assume that your teachings are the same as the Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe (even if you are from another tribe). Be respectful - come from humility. Ask for the correct protocol to go about helping. Respect the tribe's ways of meeting their needs.

LS: I don't think of myself as an accomplice, but on any day I could be a nanny for a child, take care of scheduling for tribe appointments or meetings, clean the grounds, research, or even run up and down a border wall screaming. I also use my privilege. They [the tribe] wanted to see what would happen if I went out on the levee. They [border patrol] did try to get me to leave, but I knew that the levee is State Property. A lot

of people go there to watch birds, butterflies, etc. It's a major migration route.

KPF: An ally has limited time to assist us, and has nothing to lose. An accomplice has extended, or unlimited time to help, and has something to lose just like we do.

Through these conversations we are learning to appreciate the life ways and the work of the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe. From setting up camp at the Eli Jackson cemetery to protect their ancestors' burial sites from being plowed over by the Wall, to speaking out and documenting ICE treatment of immigrants on the border, to resisting the polluting projects of LNG, this small tribe of about 2,500 members is doing the work to heal, moving from surviving to healing and thriving.

We are grateful to the congregation for the generous donation made in September to the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas through our Share the Plate program.

To watch recordings of the Tribe on Facebook, click here: [People of the Land Series](#)

Session 1 was based on the book *So Your Grandma's NDN and You Don't Like Controversy*, by Juan Mancias, available from <https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/onebigjuan>

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Election 2020: UU SA Gets Out the Vote

by Mary Barad and Diane Duesterhoeft

Our recent election was so important, one many of us had been anticipating since 2016. As Unitarian Universalists we are part of a church that states the "right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large," as the 5th of our Seven Principles. We know the importance of voting. The issues which are decided in our elections, and the values they represent, have the ability to impact the lives of many, especially our vulnerable and marginalized communities. In the months leading up to the November 2020 election, First UU San Antonio members joined UU the Vote efforts nationally, and on a local level, partnered with COPS (Communities

Organized for Public Service)/Metro, to help others raise their voices and vote. Together with other religious denominations of African American and Latino churches affiliated with COPS/Metro in our city, our congregation worked hard to increase political power and help build the movement for justice on multiple local issues. A focus on what we have in common with others moves our community forward and builds a better San Antonio.

This year, there was increased attention on mail in voting and early voting. Folks needed more information and emotional support. In addition to web page and Facebook posts, our

church used an integrated phone texting service that allowed us to reach out to members with messages aimed at spreading awareness. We were reminded of registration and vote by mail procedures, early voting deadlines, and polling locations. There were also verbal announcements at the beginning of our services. We heard Rev. Mark Skrabacz speak and publish messages on the importance of our UU principles, and how they guide us to participate in the democratic process and encourage us to vote. We reached out to members with calls, texts, and postcards.

The impact of COVID and social distancing requirements on our Get Out the Vote efforts was significant, and presented challenges. Though it may have hampered our ability to be together physically, COVID did not hinder our efforts or spirit. Just as our educators, business people, and healthcare practitioners have done; we turned to technology and teleconferencing. We met each other in the now familiar Zoom matrix, to continue our work.

Get Out the Vote efforts began in earnest about 2 months before the November 3 election, although planning for implementation started well before then. We held Listening Circles with congregants and friends in August and September. On September 24, 2020 First UU San Antonio held a Congregational Town Hall meeting via Zoom. Voting information and ballot propositions were discussed by our Get Out the Vote leaders, and the ballot structure was outlined in detail. Plans to sponsor a congregational phone-bank were announced and volunteers were recruited. San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg attended this event, stated his support of our local agenda items, and recognized our efforts in motivating people to vote. Very exciting!

Local efforts by members of First UU and COPS/Metro affiliates were instrumental in bringing Proposition B: "Ready to Work SA" to the San Antonio ballot this year. On September 27, 2020, our church participated in a Get Out the Vote Rally and Accountability Session with COPS/Metro via Zoom. Candidates in the election were present to introduce themselves and were asked to state their support of our agenda items. Although we fell slightly short of our goal to have 100 UU members

present at this session, we were the second largest group in attendance among all other city-wide COPS/Metro affiliate congregations.

Throughout the month of October, our volunteer phone bankers did a tremendous job! Many participated in Zoom phone bank sessions with COPS/Metro on October 3 and 13th. Most worked overtime, between and beyond these dates, to contact voters. Thousands of calls were made to the larger San Antonio community by our phone bank members, with over 800 calls made to UU members, guests, family, and friends. Phone-bankers

were prepared with a script and provided information about Proposition B, answered many questions, and supported voters throughout the San Antonio area.

In most elections in the U.S., only about half of the people who are eligible will actually vote. Our First UU Get Out the Vote team did everything we could to maximize voter turnout. Member volunteers, church leadership, and staff organized meetings and rallies, contacted local candidates and officials, made phone calls, and distributed important voting information to our members,

friends and associates. We did this because we care about others and their rights. We remember that as much as politics can divide people, it can also bring them together.

Proposition B passed with a 77% approval rate in a high turnout election! The proposition designates significant funds for workforce development through scholarships and job training, and with no new taxes. Our hope is that it will employ an estimated 40,000 people in good paying jobs to San Antonio. We are proud of our contribution, and thankful for all who joined in and invested untold hours and energy during the months and weeks before November 3rd, in support of the 2020 First UU Get out the Vote effort including: Mike Phillips, Diane Duesterhoeft, Bonnie Pope, Linda Nash, Akos Szabo, Luz Moreno, Cheryl Lardy, Darcy Walker, Betty Burgner, Dorothy Wallace, Mary Barad, Janice Penner, Leslie Reyes, Lydia Hamner, Joyce Hernandez-Kelley, Mary Wright, and Rev. Mark Skrabacz. . Great work team!



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Rainbow Inclusion Happenings

by Carol Collins

Rainbow Inclusion co-chairs Pam Illar and Carol Collins represented First UU at the first virtual LGBTQ+ Resource Fair sponsored by Texas A&M University-San Antonio on October 13. Of the nine event participants, First UU was the only church.

For the virtual event Pam prepared a PowerPoint presentation that introduced Unitarian Universalism and First UU as a Welcoming Congregation, a Reproductive Justice Congregation, a Compassionate Congregation, a Sanctuary Congregation and a Green Sanctuary Congregation.

The slide show featured TANG, the church's Trans and non-binary support group, Celestial Celebrations Circle, the church's earth-based religion group, our classes, choir and bookshop stickers including "Born Okay the First Time," "God is Too Big for One Religion" and "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

One very interested student had several thoughtful questions about our church. In previous years many others had visited the church's physical information table at the event.

On November 18 a few lucky people in masks enjoyed a beautiful day with two hours of friendly conversation for a Rainbow Inclusion outing at Denman Estate Park. Ideas for future travel were discussed. Several toddlers were excited to meet Zoe's cute service poodle. We were surprised and happy to cross paths with church members Eva Gonzalez and Rowena Rodgers.

Emerson Bookshop Plus has given away its fair trade goods that are due to expire before June 1: coffee to the San Antonio Food Bank and chocolate to two agencies that help the homeless.

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Elke Wilfong and Zoe & Dawn Blythe



Rowena Rodgers and Eva Gonzalez

Autumn Activities

by Sheri Phillabaum

Despite the terrible, no good, horrible pandemic, we injected some festivity into the life of our church with several fun events this fall. We had on-line gatherings including a virtual Halloween party with art, dancing, and costumes. We hosted a virtual zombie sock puppet class and online Lotería. We had an asynchronous (one family at a time) on-campus scavenger hunt and our wonderful Stephanie Hickman offering online tarot card readings.

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Owl: Fun with costumes and Zoom Backdrop



The Rios' at the scavenger hunt: Families enjoyed finding goodies hidden around campus.



Mascots in costume: All the plush mascots had fun dressing up!



Stephanie: Adults enjoyed enlightening tarot sessions with Ms. Stephanie

The Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act (EICDA, H.R. 763)

by Diane Duesterhoeft

Energy Innovation AND Carbon Dividend Act

AMERICA'S CLIMATE SOLUTION

On Sunday, December 13, our congregants will vote on whether to endorse the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

Q: What is the Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act (EICDA)?

A: It is a bill in the House of Representatives to reduce our emission of greenhouse gasses and thereby slow climate change.

Q: How will the EICDA work?

A: A carbon fee will be collected on all fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, natural gas). Each month, all of those fees will be returned to Americans in equal shares in the form of a dividend. People who continue to use fossil fuels will break even after getting their share. People who switch to renewable energy (e.g. solar or wind) will come out ahead.

Q: What will be the benefits of EICDA?

A: Less climate damage, leading to fewer hurricanes, droughts, floods and wildfires. It's good for people: improved health due to less pollution in the air we breathe; fewer diseases spreading around the world. It's good for the economy: many new jobs in renewal energy. It's bipartisan: It will be supported by conservatives as well as progressives. It's revenue neutral: no increased government bureaucracy. There's increased national security due to not depending on unfriendly foreign governments.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: A summary of EICDA (H.R. 763) is here: energyinnovationact.org

The full text of the bill is here: congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/763

Q: What can I do?

A: Vote to endorse our congregational resolution. Tell your Congressperson to cosponsor HR763 and other climate bills. Write letters to local newspapers. Get active in local groups, such as our Green Sanctuary Team and Citizens Climate Lobby (citizensclimatelobby.org) (second Saturday at 1pm).

Q: Who supports EICDA?

A: The Unitarian Universalist Association, 32 UU congregations, 2 UU State Advocacy Networks, more than a dozen UU ministers, along with other faith groups, businesses, local governments, nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, news media, and many prominent individuals have endorsed this legislation.

Q: Are churches allowed to take such a position?

A: Yes! Churches can lobby and endorse legislation without violating their non-profit status.

Q: What does the resolution state?

Resolution to Endorse the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act by First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio, Texas (December 13, 2020):

Whereas climate change is one of the most serious challenges facing the world today, posing serious risks to vulnerable human populations and the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part;

Whereas the solution to the climate crisis is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (often measured as a carbon footprint); and

Whereas we need deep emission cuts within the next decade if we are to avert irreversible, serious changes in the climate system;

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio (First UU Church – San Antonio) hereby resolves to minimize

or neutralize our carbon footprint in our own facilities, and to encourage our members and friends to minimize their footprint at home and in their transportation practices.

Furthermore, First UU Church – San Antonio calls upon the United States Congress to enact legislation in support of carbon pricing, which economists and policy analysts agree is the most cost-effective and durable approach to achieve deep, economy-wide cuts in emissions. In particular, First UU Church – San Antonio endorses the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763), or similar legislation, and we urge Congress to enact such legislation as soon as possible.

First UU Church – San Antonio also calls upon our local jurisdictions to take actions at the state and local level to reduce greenhouse gases and to increase resilience to climate change.

Q: What does minimize our carbon footprint mean?

A: Our Green Sanctuary Team has worked with our Facilities Team to work on energy efficiency, and we purchased solar panels in two community solar programs. We provide programs and ideas to encourage our congregants to take as many steps as they can to live

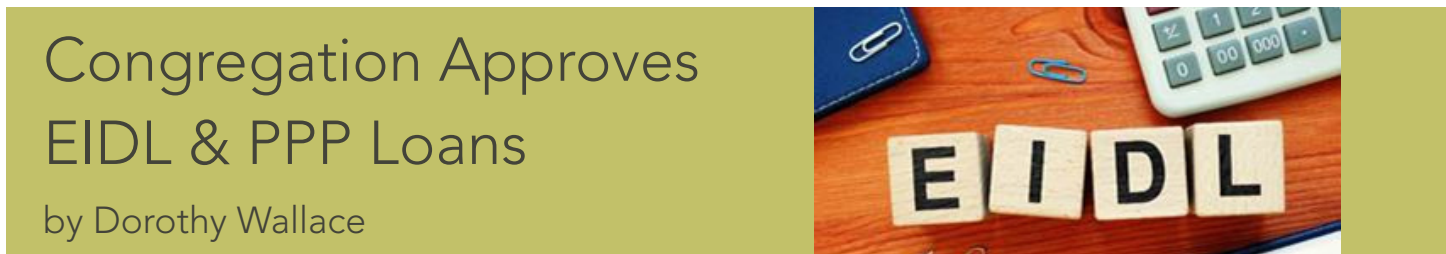
sustainably.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: More resources:

- November 5, 2020 Town Hall Recording <https://bit.ly/339mCWi>
- Slide Show <https://bit.ly/3pUsXhV>
- Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (EICDA) <https://energyinnovationact.org>
- Citizens Climate Education (CCE) <https://citizensclimateeducation.org>
- Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) <https://citizensclimatelobby.org>
- Pages 22-23 in the Fall 2020 Inspire newsletter
- Video about CCL, the EICDA, and UUs <https://bit.ly/36XN9XD>

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On September 6, 2020, the Board of Trustees offered a presentation to the Congregation regarding acceptance of an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) for \$150,000. Given the tenuous nature of COVID-19 on the economy, people’s jobs and livelihoods, the Board thought it prudent to accept the loan. The Congregation concurred!



First UU received the money and placed it in a separate account at Frost Bank, as to not commingle funds. Accepting the money was seen as an insurance policy of

sorts, in case of a worst case scenario situation with the virus. As of this writing, none of these funds have been utilized, and it remains the Board’s intent not to do so except under dire conditions. If, by the end of the church year, this money has not been used, the Board plans to pay back the Small Business Administration/Frost Bank in full, plus interest accrued at 2.5%. But, it is there if we need it. EIDL loans are not forgivable, but can be paid off up to a period of 30 years.

In April of this year, the church received a PPP loan in the amount of \$62,300, which would be 100% forgivable as long as the money was used for payroll and no employees were laid off or furloughed. In early November, we applied for forgiveness and on November 13, 2020 received confirmation that it was 100% forgiven!

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First UU Hosts Drive Through Petition

by Dorothy Wallace

On Saturday, September 19, 2020, in the First UU front parking lot, First UU's Black Lives Matter Work Group partnered with Black Lives and Allies in Community (BLAC) to host the organization Fix SAPD for a safe, socially distant, drive thru petition signing event. 115 signatures were collected!

The purpose of the petition is to repeal Chapter 143 and Chapter 174 of the state government code governing collective bargaining and due process systems related to police unions. Fix SAPD supports community efforts under way to define the vision of future policing and holding police accountable. Removing these chapters will create room for permanent change.

Collectively, 100,000 signatures will be required to put both initiatives on the ballot in the next City of San Antonio Municipal Election in May of 2021. Great headway to achieving this goal has been achieved, especially as signatures were also collected during the voting season. But, we still have a way to go! Learn more about the petitions, and even sign them yourself at <https://www.fixsapd.org/>. Petitions are official county documents that must be notarized. Office Manager, Mary Wright or First UU member Carol Bertsch's law practice will notarize FREE of charge. Thank you all for your continued support!

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Dorothy Wallace



John Faultersack, Linda Thomson, and Pam Illar



September 27, 2020

Dear People of our Church,

I'm asking all if not some of you guys to sign this petition. The reason I'm asking is because I don't know if you guys have noticed, but a lot of black people have died this year to white cops who just took things too far. I believe that we need to get rid of all these bad cops and keep the good cops. By signing this petition we are trying to stop giving these bad cops rights. Please help by signing this petition for FixSAPD.

Sincerely, Zane Santos

Letter written by one of our youths in support of FixSAPD's petition drive.

FIX SAPD.

75th Anniversary mUUSIC Festival

by Mary Wright

As most of you know, 2020 is the church's 75th anniversary and we started out the year with high hopes and lots of activities planned which included our Open House, a Banquet, a Music Festival, and a Symposium.

Joyfully, we were able to have our Open House in January which was a huge success. Many people attended including both current and former members. Displays featuring the history of the church were exhibited throughout the campus and copies of our updated church history book were distributed.

And then COVID-19 hit, putting a halt to all of our plans. The banquet, which was originally scheduled for April, was postponed and then ultimately cancelled. Not to worry, we will be holding a banquet at some point in the future when we reopen.

Our plans for a live music festival, of course, could not happen. However, music has been such an important and integral part of this congregation, that we couldn't let go of the idea. So we did, as so many are doing now, and decided to make it virtual. We recruited some of our best in house and guest artists to put together recordings for our online 75th Anniversary mUUSIC Festival, which premiered on our Youtube channel on October 17.

First UU member, the very talented David Caris, created a one of a kind music festival poster for the occasion. During the concert, we got the excitement up with trivia questions in the chat stream and gave out six signed copies of the poster as door prizes.

In addition to the wonderful music festival poster, David also created a postcard in honor of the church's 75th anniversary. Copies of both the postcard and poster were mailed out to each member prior to the concert.



To view the concert, visit our Youtube channel at <https://bit.ly/2US0MSI>

David still has copies of the postcards for sale, a pack of 12 for \$10. Please contact David Caris via TEXT at (210) 884-6007 to order.

Many thanks go out to all of the artists who performed, to David who created such lovely works of art, and all who helped organize and put together the concert.

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Black Healing Circle

by Dorothy Wallace

First UU Members Dr. Ruth Bujanda-Moore, Pam Illar and Dorothy Wallace teamed with Black Lives and Allies in Community (BLAC) and two additional local mental health professionals, Leslie Lanier Smith and Ashley Blackmore, to host two Black Healing Circles this fall.

These professionally facilitated Black only spaces help people suffering from the effects of racial trauma. They provide a safe place for Black, or Black identified people, to discuss their experiences with prejudice, discrimination and racism with others who have shared experiences.

The Healing Circles have the ultimate dual goals of making people feel connected and supported, as well as offering tools for future resilience in the face of continued oppression and prejudice.

Restarting in January, the Team will conduct these events monthly, plus add an additional group for



ongoing discussions for those who have attended the initial workshop. For non-Black Allies, please DO share these events with Black people in your life and community. Getting the word out is one area where we would appreciate your support!

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Celestial Celebrations Circle

by Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle hosted a Samhain (pronounced sow-win) ritual in October. This is usually our most elaborate and well attended ritual of the Wheel of the Year.

This year, we were only able to use a room in a house to stand in for ritual space around which we put candles on a table to represent our beloved dead. The accompanying picture shows this. This became our center piece around which we conducted our ritual. As Samhain is the time in which we connect with our Beloved Dead and say goodbye to those who have left our earthly plane since last year at this time, everyone who participated was encouraged to have their own candle in their own space to go along with the candle which was lit in the makeshift ritual space. In this manner, we came together to honor and visit with those who came to us. We had 15 participants on zoom, which is our largest gathering to date.

In November, Celestial Celebrations Circle hosted a labyrinth walk in Denman Estate Park. We have this walk in the months in which we do not have a ritual celebrating a point on the Wheel of the Year. We have really found this labyrinth to have special energy for our use as the surroundings are quite serene and the surrounding area provides adequate space for social distancing.

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Youth Religious Education

by Glenna Jones-Kachtik

Our Preschool and elementary class has been seeing some really entertaining videos since September. We watched “A Tale of Two Beasts” about point of view read by Sarah Silverman and “Carla’s Sandwich” read by Allison Janney which celebrated being unique & different.

In October, we watched “We Don’t Eat Our Classmates” - about a little T-Rex’s first day at school where she learns a valuable lesson about treating others as she would want to be treated. We also watched “Froggy’s Halloween” - a frog who can’t decide on a costume and “Room On The Broom” - about sharing our resources.

In November, we decided to try to match our videos to the sermon titles. Although attendance has been spotty, we chose some great videos. The November 8th service was about uniting the U.S. We chose “The Selfish Alligator” - about an alligator who learned to share his resources. The November 15th service was on Transgender Awareness. We picked “I Am Jazz” read by the author Jazz Jennings, a transgender woman and activist. For November 22 we chose “Clark the Shark” read by Chris Pine - about a shark who learns to think before he acts. Finally for the November 29th service on Thankfulness...the story chosen was “Turkey Trouble” read by Marc Maron, about a turkey who tries out different disguises to stop from being Thanksgiving Dinner.

All stories are shared on Google Classroom the week following the reading. First Sundays at 10:30am on Zoom are always Family Worship where both youth and their families are invited to participate. On December 6th we will celebrate Chalice.

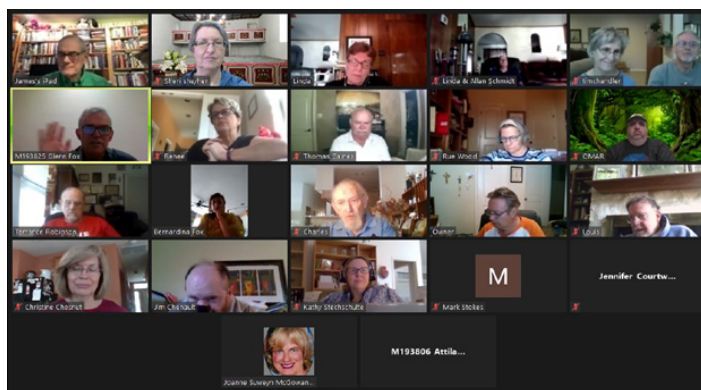
Middle School and High School classes also continue to meet on Sundays. Some of the highlights lately included classes on “The Last Airbender” (the tv show) in middle school. The high school has been learning about Judaism, visited with a Rabbi, and learned about prayer beads.

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Adult Religious Education

by Sheri Phillabaum

Adult religious education keeps going strong during pandemic times. This fall we held classes via Zoom on a range of topics including the life of abolitionist and suffragist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, introductions to Black UUs, the Language of Reverance, how to give a UU Elevator Speech and Critical Race Theory.



Classes also had lively book discussions on Ta Nehisi Coates’ “Between the World and Me,” Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’ “An Indigenous People’s History of the United States,” and Yuval Noah Harari’s “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind.” At the end of November, discussion began on John M. Barry’s “The Great Influenza” and will continue through December.

Keep an eye on your weekly “What’s Happening” e-mail for information on upcoming classes and book discussions.

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Community Responsibility Endowment Fund

by Diane Carl

The Community Responsibility Endowment Fund, CREF, Trustees met through the summer to review applicants for grant funding and select worthy recipients.

Five awards were given this year totaling \$12,000. All awards were granted with some regard to sustainability of the organizations' community programs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Awardees for 2020 and the programs we are supporting are:

- ***Awaaz-SA*** to expand domestic violence outreach to the South Asian community in San Antonio. \$3,000.
- ***THRU Project*** to extend their smartphone and service program to youth still in the foster care system. \$3,000.
- ***Roy Maas Youth Alternatives*** to provide basic clothing necessities for children and youth in the residential programs and drop-in centers. \$3,000.
- ***San Antonio Black International Film Festival*** to defray costs of taking a 4-day live event to a virtual format. \$2,000.
- ***Healthy Futures San Antonio*** to support staff and technology needs related to virtual training of the "Big Decisions" program delivered to school teachers. \$1,000.

All the award recipients created a "thank you" video which we linked together in a presentation given online on September 27th.

In October, for several weeks, Rev. Mark asked for the congregation to Share-the-Plate with CREF. We are so very thankful for the response and giving this year! These gifts will go toward next year's awards. Our Church has been amazing in its support of the CREF program and to the non-

profits that do great works in our community.

Please make your nominations in the Spring for non-profit organizations that may benefit from CREF funding for an upcoming project. Donations are accepted at any time on the website noting CREF as recipient.

To view our 2020 Award Presentation or to nominate an organization, visit the CREF page on our website at <https://uusat.org/how-we-serve/community-responsibility-endowment-fund/>

To make a donation to CREF, visit our online giving portal at www.uusat.org/give and click on the Online Giving button.

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Facilities Update

by Mary Wright

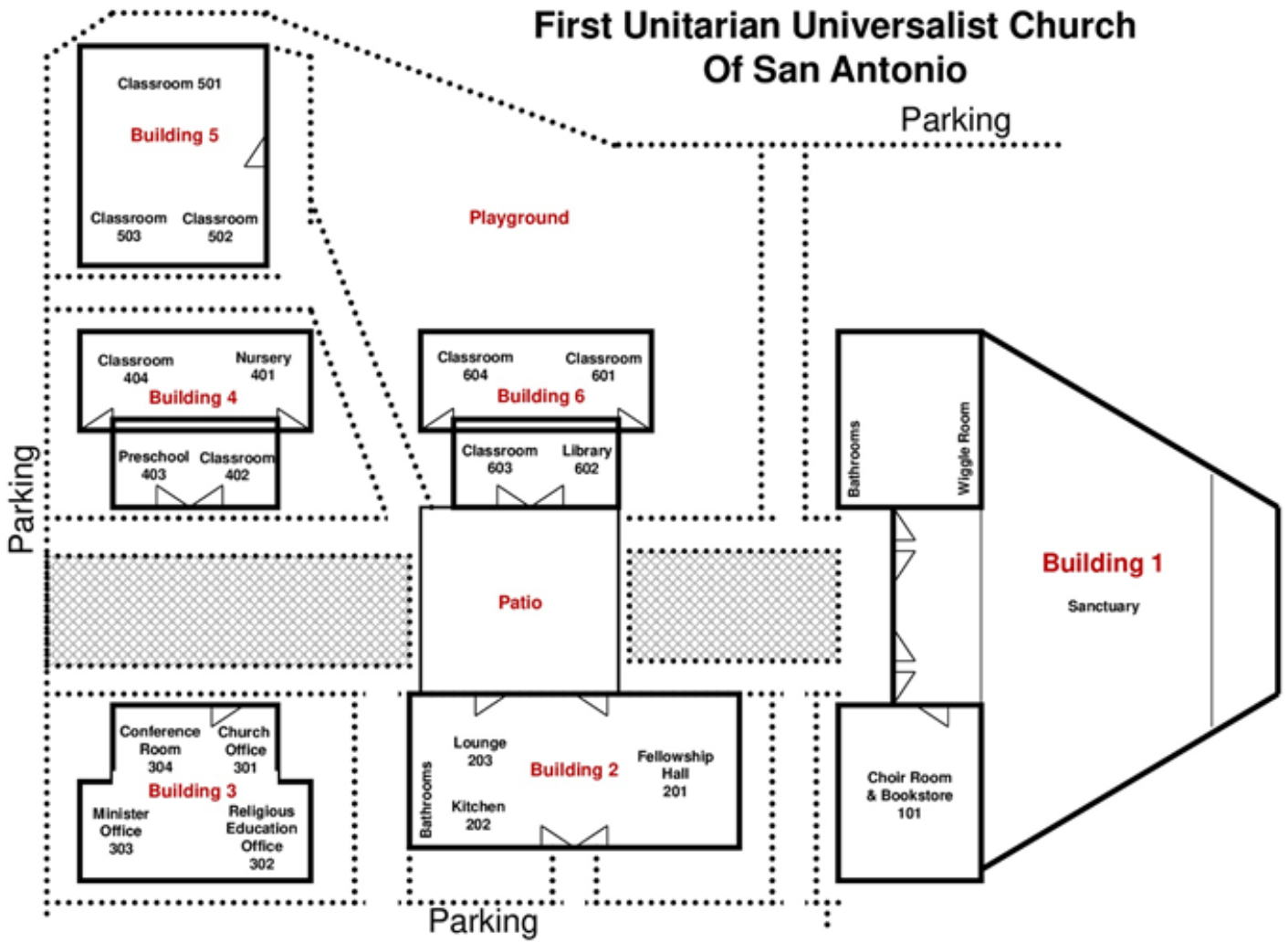
Despite being closed, our campus flora and fauna are still alive and well. Our groundskeeper, Jose Castillo, and our Grounds Team chairs, Akos Szabo and Chris Gillis have been diligently caring for the church grounds lo these many months.

To fulfill our aspirations to be a more welcoming community, it was decided to no longer name our buildings and rooms after people. We instead will be using a numbering system. The Facilities Team is currently in the process of designing, ordering and installing new building and room signs and new campus maps. We anticipate that these will be fully installed over the next month or so.

During our shut down we discovered damage to the roof of Building 5 (formerly the Jefferson Building.) Under the supervision of our Maintenance & Repair chair, Ron Pena, a new roof was installed.

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First Unitarian Universalist Church Of San Antonio



Believing in Nothing

by Amanda White

I haven't spent a lot of time over the past few years thinking about what I believe.

When I left Christianity for good, I stuck to the belief in Humanism - which, to me, meant that what you believe wasn't as important as what you were doing to affect the world around you, and that instead of worrying about dogma and whether or not God was real, we should be doing what we can to help people around us.

I suppose this was all fine and good. And truthfully, over the last four years while I was at college, I did a lot of changing. I ended up in places I never expected to be, with people I never would have imagined befriending. I let go of a lot of old things that no longer served me, and learned more things that tested me in new ways.

I recently learned about something called street epistemology, which is a conversational tool to question deeply-held beliefs and test the evidence for believing in those things. It fascinated me, because I loved listening to people speak candidly about their beliefs in a sincere, honest way. I liked examining the reasons people chose to believe the things they did. Despite my apprehension about religion, I still like having religious conversations, even with religious people who are willing enough to engage with me.

But then I started thinking, "What do I believe?" And it was strange to me that most of my beliefs were not very deep. I don't necessarily believe in a deity, but I believe in a possibility of something "more," which is awfully vague. I believe in a sense of universal connectedness, but I'd say most of my beliefs in the paranormal are not things I act on so much as contemplate every now and then with little conviction.

So then, how exactly do I go about my day? How do I operate with any sort of moral standing without believing something? Am I just wading through a nihilistic, pointless existence with no hope and nothing to look forward to? Well...no. Not at all. Quite the opposite, actually.

Belief is a tricky thing. I don't like relying on belief without logic. I believe in evolution, but I believe in evolution because I trust science. Is that a form of belief? To me, a humanist,

no, it isn't. All we know for sure is the world around us. We may not have a perfect understanding of it, but tools like science are how we understand how things work. Perhaps in 1,000 years we will learn that the Earth actually doesn't revolve around the sun. Or maybe we've got the water cycle all wrong. Maybe we will learn something about our history that throws everything we thought we knew off. And you know what? That's how science works. That's how our understanding of the world must work. Science is not a solid, unchanging set of rules - it is a state of constant questioning, testing, and theorizing. The scientific method is the best thing we have to understand just about anything.

So sure, I believe that scientists have it right (or perhaps I should say "the most right" out of the other options presented to us) about evolution. But if I was presented with evidence against our current understanding of evolution - using the scientific method in a reliable way - then of course I would potentially change my belief.

However, as I spent more time thinking about it, I realized that there are things I believe without really knowing why. For instance, I believe that all people have the potential for good within them. I don't believe in evil people. And because of this, I do tend to give people the benefit of the doubt more often than not. I try to figure out why people do bad things instead of assuming that they are fundamentally bad people - which is something religion unfortunately tried to hammer into my brain from a young age.

Why do I believe this? Well, I couldn't give you an elevator speech answer. I remember this question popping up when I was a teenager, and being told that because the Bible said so, people were fundamentally evil. It didn't...resonate with me. Something felt icky and off about it, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

Now, feelings generally aren't the best way to navigate logical decisions - however, I don't think they should be discounted altogether. Empathy is something explained by feelings just as much as, if not more than, logic. We do nice things because when people do nice things for us, it feels nice. If people do bad things to us, it feels bad.

I left Christianity because the arguments being presented to me felt wrong. Something didn't sit right with me, and for a long time I couldn't put my finger on what exactly it was. I wasn't given much room to question and wonder, but eventually I realized that I could choose what to believe. For the longest time, I thought that my atheist friends were going to hell. It was horrible. I spent so many nights crying and praying for them as I contemplated the inevitable day

that they would burn for eternity. Let's just say that that belief did not give me good feelings.

However, I eventually realized that I didn't have to believe that. I don't know how. I don't know what allowed me to come to this conclusion, because it wasn't a popular one among the Christians around me (most of them didn't talk candidly about the atheists burning in hellfire, but they definitely believed there would be punishment if you didn't believe in God). But I decided that maybe we had all been interpreting the Bible wrong, and if Jesus died for everyone and all sins, wouldn't everyone be saved? Yeah! That made more sense! That felt right..! Sort of.

Transitioning to the belief that everyone was "saved" was what allowed me to hang onto Christianity for a few more years. No one ever questioned my belief in God. I was never presented with an alternate choice. And because of the lack of questioning, my belief became stale and fruitless. It was like...background noise.

My morality hasn't changed very much from back then - I'm still essentially the same person I was in that sense. I believed in LGBT rights (another schism I had with many of the people surrounding me). I thought that you should be nice to everybody. You know, basic stuff like that. God was just...something that had always been present in my life, Sunday school to CCD to youth group in high school. My family believed in God; my friends and small community all believed in God. There wasn't a Muslim group in May, Texas, nor was there an LGBT group or a secular group or even a Unitarian group. The kids who didn't believe in God were the troublemakers, the outcasts, the ones who went to crazy parties or did drugs or failed in school. This wasn't really true - and to be honest, most kids who didn't go to church just didn't care either way - but there was definitely a stereotype that went unspoken. Heck, I got some of that for being liberal in a very conservative community (although I was the valedictorian and therefore got a little more respect).

I started going to youth group with the intention of questioning. My beliefs, once stagnant, were starting to become challenged. I got on the internet. I read people's stories and their takes on the Bible and Christianity. I got a boyfriend and ended up going through many things that would eventually shake my faith. I never got satisfying answers - always "I'll have to think more on that" (and then never getting back to it) or "Well, the Bible says..."

Once I actually tried to dedicate time to opening up my Bible to a random page each night and highlighting something I liked or agreed with (it didn't last long). Even though my

beliefs were being challenged, I was trying desperately to find something to cling onto.

I don't know what happened, but one day, I realized that I had a choice. Something wasn't sitting right with me about God, and the Bible, and religion. For so long, I thought I just had to live with that. But I realized - I could choose not to believe in God.

It sounds kind of trite. Or simple. But this was a big thing in my life. It went against everything I'd ever been taught. You're not taught that you have a choice to believe that God exists. It's more like...God exists, and you can either believe that or delude yourself.

I chose to believe in nothing. And, surprisingly, nothing changed.

Except now I was free. I didn't have to look to the Bible for logical answers (and be sad when I couldn't find any). I did what I figured the right thing to do was - judge my actions on how they affected other people and myself. God became a concept - something that connected humanity, something representative of ultimate love - not an old man in the sky who'd smite me if I didn't believe in him.

So it's not that I don't have belief anymore. Certainly, I do. I believe that most people are trying to be good. I believe that marijuana should be legalized. I believe that we should have comprehensive sexual education in schools and that people should be able to have sex outside of marriage without being shamed about it (and that the Christian abstinence culture is ultimately harming lots of impressionable teenagers and young adults). I believe people should be valued over profits. I believe in universal healthcare and that prisons should work on rehabilitation instead of profiting on prisoners being in there.

But I believe in all those things because at the end of the day, what's important is what's best for people. I still believe in the concept of love, community, and connectedness. I think that's what we should strive for. And if you can prove to me that any of the things above go against the welfare of people, you could convince me to change my belief. I am always seeking to grow, to understand, and to do things that are as beneficial to everyone around me as possible.

I never understood what my youth leaders meant when they said "strengthen your faith." Doubt was an enemy to be vanquished, and a faith that couldn't be rattled was the unspoken standard - the goal. Maybe I don't have unshakable belief anymore. But...maybe that's a good thing.

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Harvesting the Co-Op of Love

by Pam Illar

Reverend Martin Luther King once remarked, “Be concerned about your brother. Either we go up together or we go down together.”

The Rainbow Inclusion committee spearheaded the Solidarity Sunday service with a special emphasis on the rainbow flag. The intention was a purposeful message of uniting all of those who identify with the flag’s representation, but to include our fight alongside other marginalized groups.

The LGBTQ+ community has long struggled, often hidden in the shadows, for the right to be our authentic selves whenever, however and wherever we choose. We have not struggled apart but together as one community, seeking lives that others live without fear of reprisal.



Photo credit: Sharon McCutcheon on pexels.com

The color of our flag was a symbol to bind us all together as one voice. Since the introduction of the flag we have since branched our flag into others that more specifically align with a person’s identity. The branch was necessary as we grew in understanding of our individual identities not captured previously. We need these identities so that a person feels comfortable with who they are or are not.

I see myself as a lesbian but at different times in my life I identified as a bi-sexual included under the larger community captured in the flag’s colors. I was and still am a part of the greater whole. In recent years as others have more closely looked inward, I realize that it’s possible to flow in and out of self-identification and that is a right all human beings have within their spirit.

In this season of thanksgiving, I’m so very grateful that our church community openly supports all the identities that flow in and out of ourselves with a loving spirit. Our community has a long history of increasing inclusiveness. It’s my belief that we are a very fortunate community which honors and drives intentional diversity and inclusiveness. Why else would we have all sought this out as a form of spiritual connection?

While our community honors the LGBTQ+ identities, we who find themselves included under this umbrella reach out in embracing our other brothers and sisters in their fight for personal acceptance, tolerance, respect and justice by linking together our spirits with one another. My identification as a black woman, a lesbian living with a disability in this is where the Great Spirit resides and empowers us all with the flow of righteous love that binds us together. The time of fall and winter provides us all a time to reflect on our efforts seeing the fruits of our work, but also where our collective spirits can improve the soil of our work to realize a cooperative spiritual harvest.

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Photo credit: cottonbro on pexels.com

WE ARE A **COMPASSIONATE** CONGREGATION.

We encourage San Antonio to be a more compassionate city.

WE ARE A **GREEN SANCTUARY** CONGREGATION.

We develop our congregation's environmental ethic through worship, education, sustainability, and environmental justice.

WE ARE A **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE** CONGREGATION.

We stand for the right to make one's own reproductive decisions.

WE ARE A **SANCTUARY** CONGREGATION.

We protect and defend refugees, asylum seekers, and at-risk immigrants.

WE ARE A **WELCOMING** CONGREGATION.

Families and individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities contribute to the joyful life of this church.

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO

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