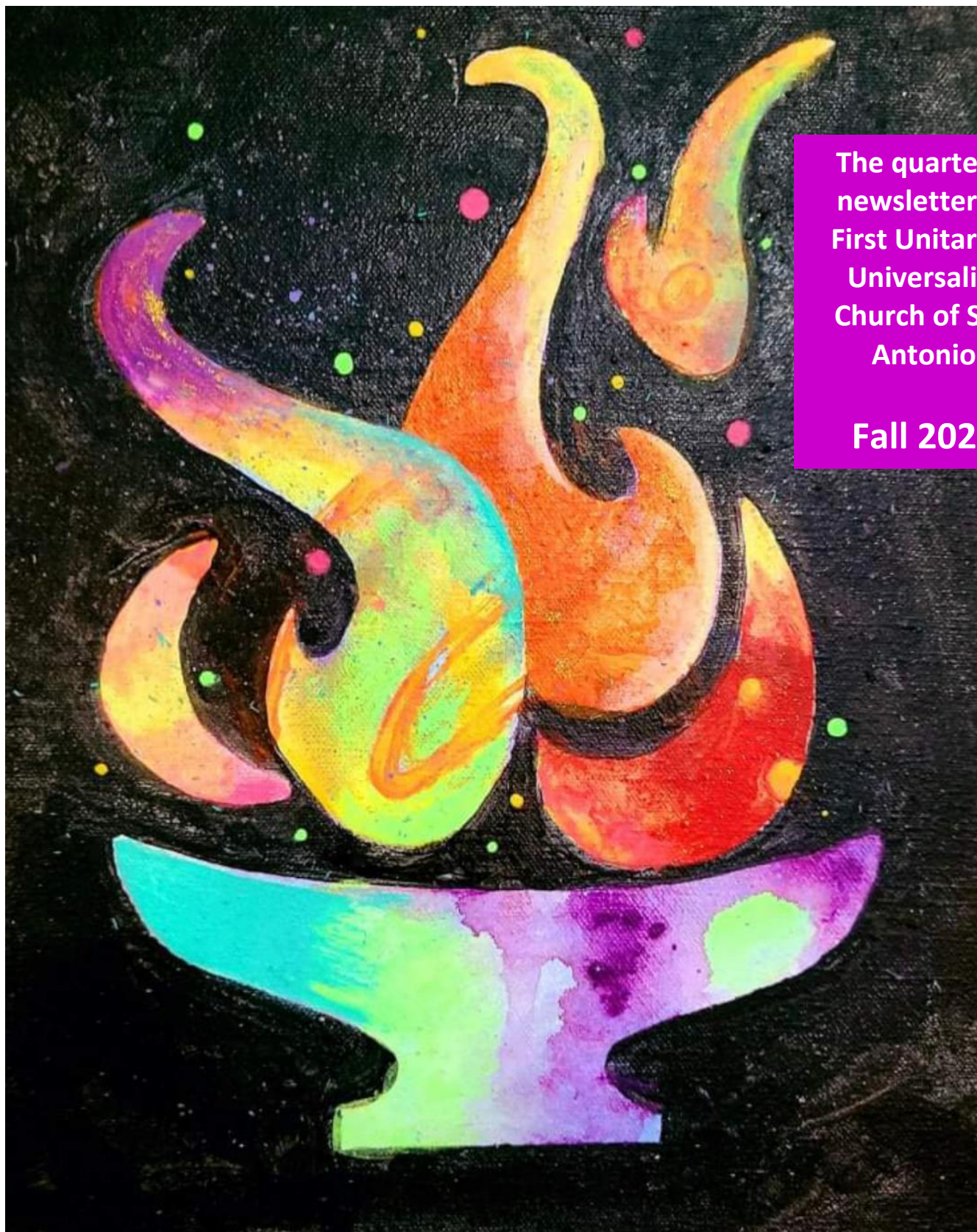


Inspire



The quarterly
newsletter of
First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of San
Antonio

Fall 2021

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.

Cover photo: Artist, First UU member, and overall great guy, David Caris, shared painting techniques with our youth during Religious Education class this summer. Here is his version of the flaming chalice, the most widely used symbol of Unitarian Universalism.

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Reopening Our Church

by Rev. Mark Skrabacz

As your Minister, I am so grateful for the innovative work our Church has been engaged in during these days of COVID-19. We have all been staying connected to each other and have been reaching out and connecting with new people as never before. Our Sunday morning YouTube gatherings have kept us going and assisted in advancing our mission of welcoming and justice-making during this uncertain time. Yet, since shutting down our in-person Sunday Services in March of 2020, I have felt strongly that many of us were yearning for a greater connection and for returning to our beautiful campus. Hence, we began gathering in-person on campus in early June 2021 from 9:30-12:30 for Religious Education and Fellowship, which accelerated into in-Sanctuary viewing of our recorded YouTube Services on July 4 from 11:00-12:00. As we continue to move carefully toward reopening our Sanctuary on September 12 for our 11:00-12:00 Sunday Service, I have been working with our Reopening Task Force, a team of qualified people, to prepare the following guidelines for a safe return to campus. These are consistent with those of the CDC and San Antonio Metro Health Services.

My wish is to communicate with you about the strategies that we will have in place for reopening when you arrive on the first Sunday for our in-person live-streamed Service. As you well know, our planet is undergoing a siege from the pandemic of the Delta Variant, which is proving to be highly contagious and transmissible. We have heard from most of you that you are fully vaccinated or have already caught COVID-19 and recovered, thus receiving some immunity. From the best minds of medical science, having had COVID does not provide the same level of immunity as being vaccinated. Hence, although we are not mandating vaccinations, we will observe the following guidelines:

- Please stay at home if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 and join with us on-line on our YouTube live-streamed Service;
- All members, guests, staff and volunteers will be required to wear masks when on campus both indoors and out and to regularly wash hands; A courtesy table will be provided in the Sanctuary Foyer and Fellowship Hall with masks and hand sanitizer;
- Signs will be posted reminding us to avoid contact greeting, such as handshakes and hugs; offering instead alternative non-contact gestures like hands of prayer to the heart, a smile or a bow of the head;
- Signage will be posted to remind us all of best hygiene practices;
- Beverages will be made available on the Patio outdoors from 9:30-12:30, and restrooms will be open in the Fellowship Hall; participants will be encouraged to share Coffee Hour Fellowship outdoors.

Our Sanctuary and restrooms have been deeply cleaned, including sanitizing high touch areas where we gather, and will be cleaned between on-campus events. During our live-streamed Sunday Services, greeters and ushers will be stationed at the Sanctuary doors for welcoming and to confirm that the Sanctuary and restroom doors are propped open to insure adequate social distancing and minimal touching of surfaces. We will turn off water fountains and post signs reminding us not to use them, so be sure to bring your own water bottles and refill them from the water cooler on the Patio.

In the Sanctuary we will observe social distancing of 6 feet between persons, except for family units, who may sit together. Our unvaccinated children will not be joining with us in the Sanctuary but will meet

together outdoors on Sunday mornings. Yet they will be invited to join us briefly for Story Wisdom and other relevant ceremonies in the Sanctuary Lobby, when we will include and address them through the double glass doors between the Sanctuary and Lobby. We are observing this separation for the sake of our unvaccinated children and for our most “at risk” members and friends.

In addition to welcoming all who will join with us, we will also begin our Fall office hours on September 12 with your Congregational Administrator, Kathy McFarlane, and me holding office hours from Sunday thru Thursday from 8:00-4:30.

I sincerely hope that you will adhere to these guidelines and understand their intent to maximize our community health and to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. If you cannot, we ask that you join us on YouTube instead of in-person. Please let me hear your thoughts and concerns. I look forward to seeing you on Sunday September 12 either in our Sanctuary for our In-Gathering Water Communion or on-line.

May peace and safety be with you!

Our Choir Rehearses In-person Again!

By Karen Davis

When First UU stopped holding in-person services in March 2020, our choir also stopped their rehearsals at the church. Soon after, Director of Music Susan Dill, church accompanist, Jaime Ramirez and choir member, Jim Noel worked together to set up rehearsals on the Zoom online platform. Singers recorded themselves singing and Jaime blended them to create all the parts of our pieces. Many of you have heard those pieces performed during our online services this past year and a half.



On August 14, the choir headed back to the Sanctuary to rehearse in person again. Members wear masks – there are special masks for singing, as well as plastic frames that hold the mask away from your face – and are socially distanced. So far, the choir has started work on three pieces to be performed once in-person services begin again. That is currently scheduled for September 12.

Choir members also voted to move rehearsals from Tuesday evenings to Saturdays mornings at 11:00 a.m. It's a more convenient time for many and avoids driving in rush hour traffic and at night. Not everyone feels comfortable in coming back just yet, but we are hoping that the Covid rate will peak soon and people will start feeling safer. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy our music! And Susan wants everyone to know that if you can match pitch, are fully vaccinated, and willing to wear a mask while singing we would love to have you join us.

Meet the Board

By Gale Morrow

You, the congregation, elected this year's Board of Trustees during our congregational meeting on May 16. We took office on June 1 and will serve through May 31, 2022. The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the Church. The Board works and speaks on behalf of the congregation between congregational meetings. The President, Vice President and Trustees at Large each serve one-year terms while the Secretary and Treasurer serve three-year terms.



President: Gale Morrow has been a member of First UU since 2010. She moved to San Antonio from El Paso where she was a member of the First UU Church of Las Cruces. In San Antonio she has served on the COVID Task Force, the Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREF) board, the membership committee and as chair of Social Justice. She is married to Dexter Katzman and they have two children: Sam and Rachel. This year she started playing the dulcimer with instructor (First UU member) Ron Tullius and resumed horseback riding, having last ridden in 1986.



Vice President: Ron Peña is a native San Antonian. He graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1976, received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Engineering from Texas A&M University, and a commission in the United States Army Reserve in 1980. He is a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Texas and has over 40 years of experience in various engineering, facilities management and project management careers. He retired from the military in 2008 and is currently employed as a General Engineer with the Defense Health Agency under the Department of Defense. He has a wife (Sharon), three daughters and seven grandchildren. He was raised Catholic, but never got many answers to his questions about life. Now that he has become a Unitarian Universalist (since April 2015), he still doesn't have many answers, but at least understands why.



Treasurer: Debra Loya has been a member of First UU since moving to San Antonio in 1998. Since joining she has been active with Youth Religious Education (RE) and has taught 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th, Art Sundays, Summer RE, Our Whole Lives (OWL), Coming of Age, and most recently during our on-line year Social Justice Sundays. She has also served on the Board as a Trustee At Large and Secretary. She has been a member of the Worship Committee, the Committee on Ministry, a ministerial Search Committee and two terms as the treasurer for the CREF. In 2018 she retired after 30 years in the federal government and now spends the school/church year in San Antonio and the summers in California where her adult daughter now lives.



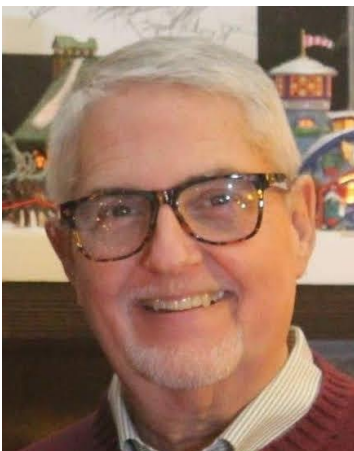
Secretary: Troy Peters and his family have been members of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio since 2011. An orchestra conductor, he serves as Music Director of Youth Orchestras of San Antonio (YOSA) and Conductor of the UTSA Orchestra. Troy was born in Scotland and grew up moving around with his U.S. Navy parents.



Trustee at Large: Vicki Tullius has been a member of our church for almost 30 years. She taught RE for a few years and then became active with the Social Justice Committee. She enjoys reading and swimming. Her husband, Ron, enjoys playing the dulcimer with other church members and both love spending time with their two granddaughters.



Trustee at Large: Danielle Bess is 59 years old and a native of San Antonio. She is a retired Information Technology (IT) person and member of First UU since 2018.



Trustee at Large: Terry Palin and his husband, Randy, have been members of First UU since 2011. This is his third year on the Board. He has also served on the Stewardship Committee and on the 75th Anniversary Committee. Their seventeen-year-old daughter, Claire, will be a high school senior this year. Terry was a high school librarian for 46 years in Michigan, the U.S. Virgin Islands and San Antonio. He retired in 2018 from Northside ISD. His hobbies include reading, traveling (pre-COVID), wine appreciation, and canning jelly.



Trustee at Large: Oscar Solis is a Mexican-American. He and his wife have attended First UU since 2016 and became members in 2018 because of similar beliefs and strong commitments to the earth, community and social justice. They have three daughters and six grandchildren. He is a certified nurse specialist in Continence, Wound and Ostomy nursing (CWON) and is also certified in Wound, Skin Care specifically. He has served mainly in hospitals. He is currently semi-retired and provides consultative services for a large physician practice in San Antonio. He has received a “Daisy” award for service excellence at Driscoll Children’s Hospital in Corpus Christi. He is a published author and/or co-author of several nursing and wound care journals, as well as lead investigator for several pediatric studies. He served as a City Commissioner for a special project for the City of Leon Valley and is currently working on the search committee for our assistant minister.

Celestial Celebration Happenings

By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle has run the Wheel of the Year two times since the last newsletter. We continue to have our rituals on the playground with participants bringing their own sitting arrangements, fully masked and mostly vaccinated. Our participation level has remained at 15-20 celebrants and they are thrilled to be able to continue to practice outside. Even though we are not doing potlucks, most people take the chance to chat with others afterwards.

In June, we celebrated Summer Solstice, which marks the longest day of the calendar year. In South Texas this year, we were experiencing unusually cool, wet weather for which we thanked the Universe. We sent cooling energy to our suffering friends in the northwest.

In July, we celebrated Lammas, which, in the tradition we follow, marks the first harvest from the fields. Once again, for South Texas, this seems really late, but we are following a tradition which bases itself in an agricultural tradition much further north. In past years, we have made the decision to have the ritual inside, as the summer heat has reached its height. This year, however, it was not the usual July heat and most people wanted to stay outside.

As there is no ritual in August, Celestial Celebrations Circle holds a labyrinth walk instead. This walk always has a theme for reflection with time afterward for conversation for those who will sit in the heat. We use the labyrinth which we laid out between the Sanctuary and the access road.

Celestial Celebrations Circle also participated in a Sunday morning service which celebrated a dual purpose of Summer Solstice and Father's Day. Our choice for Story Wisdom came from the Nahua tradition and was titled "The Nahua Creation of the Sun." Other members spoke about the scientific meaning of Summer Solstice and provided a lesson to carry on forward to Winter Solstice. We also provided some of the music. You can view the service on our Youtube channel at [June 20, 2021 - Summer Solstice/Father's Day with Robby Vance and Rev. Mark Skrabacz. - YouTube](#).

Guardians of the Galaxy Camp

By Sheri Phillabaum

In the first week of August, thirty children and youth spent their days on the First UU campus for summer day camp, whose theme was based on the film, *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Activities included arts and crafts, games, worship, and field trips to a local splash pad and trampoline park. There was even a talent show.

Many of the activities were designed around the theme of the Infinity stones, super-powered stones from the Marvel superhero universe. In the franchise movies, the magical powers of the stones are used for both good and evil. In our camp, children learned how the powers of the stones could be harnessed for good in real life:

To harness the power of the yellow **mind** stone, we study hard and learn. We also meditate.

To harness the power of the blue **space** stone, we learn about different places and peoples.

To harness the power of the red **reality** stone, we envision the world we want and make it a reality through service.

To harness the power of the green **time** stone, we learn about other times (history).

To harness the power of the orange **Soul** stone, we go to church and learn about our faith.

To harness the power of the purple **power** stone, we cultivate our talents.

Thank you to all the teens and adults who volunteered their time and talents to make this camp a success!





Member Discusses Racism in the Juvenile Justice System

By Terri Chadwick

Our own Bill Bush, Professor of History at Texas A&M University-San Antonio and author of a recent history book about our church, spoke about his research on juvenile justice and racism to the July 13th meeting of the Racial Justice-Black Lives Matter Working Group. Thirteen people attended the Zoom meeting.

We learned about the history of the United States Juvenile Justice system (different from adult systems) which began in Chicago in 1899. The Texas Juvenile Justice system began in 1907 as a racially segregated system. White children received better facilities, programs, and treatments, while Black and LatinX children were excluded and instead subjected to abuses and punishments. This began to change in the 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights Movement; courts, detention centers, and state facilities were racially integrated and new protections established for all children.

Bill's current project focuses on a murder case involving two Black teenage girls in East San Antonio in the 1930s, which illustrated an example of structural racism. A lively discussion followed Bill's power-point presentation and those present at the discussion found it amazing.

Patio Succulents

By Linda Nash

Green Team co-chairs, Linda Nash and Chery Lardy planted a variety of potted succulents on the patio this summer. They are located near the crepe myrtle on the east side of the patio, in front of the Sanctuary. The Green Team will monitor them to ensure they have enough water. Thanks to the Green Team for helping to make the campus even more beautiful.



Forums For the People

by Mary Barad

The Unitarian Universalist second principle states our covenant to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. As part of this commitment to social responsibility and education, local public forums for the discussion of social issues are often sponsored by UU churches and fellowships. In the aftermath of the May election and narrowly defeated San Antonio Proposition B (the Repeal Police Collective Bargaining Initiative), Black Lives and Allies in Community (BLAC), led by Ricardo Espinoza, TG Manuagu, and John Faultersack, organized and presented two separate “Forums for the People” on the future of police accountability in San Antonio. Both events were held in the First UU Sanctuary and were also made possible with the support of BLAC, who’s members represent different community organizations.

At the first forum, held June 18, 2021, about eight officers of different racial backgrounds answered questions and responded to comments from First UU and San Antonio community members for two hours or more. The group brought up and discussed topics such as fear of police, how you handle "bad apples", "suicide by cop", who should respond to mental health situations, gun violence and gun law, uneven law enforcement, responding to family grief after shootings, and more. Powerful personal testimony was given by Ms. Deborah Jones Bush, the aunt of Marquise Jones, a 23 year old black man shot in the back by an off-duty San Antonio police officer in 2014. She concluded by saying “I don’t hate police, I hate police brutality.”

A second Forum was held August 5, 2021. Police Chief William McManus, DA Joe Gonzales, San Antonio Police Officer Association President John ‘Danny’ Diaz, District 2 City Councilman Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, and City Manager Erik Walsh were guests on the panel and began by presenting their vision for the reconciliation of trust between the police and the public. Deputy City manager Maria VillaGomez was also in the audience. In addition to BLAC and First UU members, the audience was composed of leaders and members of community organizations including Texas Organizing Project (TOPS), FixSAPD, and the Reliable Revolutionaries.

Representatives offered prepared statements listing their concerns; and asked specific questions regarding bail reform, civilian oversight, rules of engagement, release of body cam footage, status of the city’s new Civil Rights Division, COVID vaccine incentives, and determination of budget allocations. When we minimize the needs of the community, as is evidenced by current budgetary allocations, matters of inequality will continue to be created and perpetuated. The community asked city leadership to consider that symptoms of a neglected community can never be fixed by law enforcement and that we must address root causes. Following a personal account from an audience member which illustrated how suffering with



a mental health issue is often criminalized, Chief McManus spoke of the past, present, and future training of police as it specifically relates to SAPD's response to mental health calls.

Members of the panel spoke appreciatively of the impact that community groups have made and encouraged all to continue to share experiences and concerns. Volunteer positions are available on the complaint review board. We were asked to remember that in addition to addressing matters of policy, patience and working together will be required to bridge the divide and mend fractures between police and community. There is no quick fix. Also, remember that our City Council directs the agenda. We can hold them accountable in the voter's booth, and by bringing new initiatives to the ballot. The final testimony of a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) Police officer called on everyone to consider the person behind the uniform, as we strive to understand the issues, present solutions, and improve police-community relations.

Before and after the event, attendees enjoyed food provided by Sauce's Southern Kitchen Cajun/Creole Cuisine Food Truck, and UU Alison Hom-Crosier. There was popcorn, cotton candy, and everyone had the opportunity to listen or participate in a drum circle. Donations collected at the event were designated to support the cost of sending members of families impacted by police violence to Washington DC for the 58th annual March on Washington in August 2021.

All in all, the tone of both Forums was respectful, the issues were raised without fear of repercussions, and the interactions were positive. More Forums are planned in the future.



I am a Pagan

By Joan Wells

I grew up in a Christian Church and sometimes I would hear the word Pagan. I knew it had a bad connotation, but actually pagan means “of the country.” When Christianity originally spread, it moved through the towns and cities. Country folk heard about it last, thus pagans were the ones that hadn't heard the “good news.” Paganism became demonized because often it is associated with Satan, but Satan is a Christian construct and pagans have nothing to do with it.

Many years ago, I attended a UU church in Riverside, California. They had a service with Gnostic priestesses. Before their service, one woman dressed in a nun type habit, came out and asked for questions. “What do you believe?” was the first question. She said, “We usually do not say what we believe because spirituality grows and is not static.” This was a concept that was very foreign to me. I thought about just saying “I believe this or that” and being finished with it.

When we moved to San Antonio, I began to hear about the goddess, first in a book, *When God was a Woman* by Merlin Stone. In those olden days women were revered for creating life. This is in stark contrast to the patriarchal god creating everything. Then I took a women's class “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” and later joined a group of women exploring spirituality. This was all very helpful and interesting, and I found that a deity in my own image was transforming for me. Just imagine, a diety that was female, like me. Years later, I saw that same transformation in a man when a group invoked a gay god.

In 1991, Maggi Joseph began to have rituals here at the church, first on the sun solstices and equinoxes and then every month. The first ritual I attended hooked me but good. My search was over, I had found my spiritual home.

Later that next year, my older brother died. He was quite young and a shock to us all. I realized that nature is in charge. If your heart arteries are blocked, you will die. A god or goddess cannot change that. If you step off a ledge, gravity says that you fall. I find it very comforting to know the laws of nature are the ones that prevail.

In celebrating the sabbats, I find that I connect deeply with the cycles of the earth driven by the sun. I can see how the growing seasons of the earth mirror my own growing season. Often now when someone asks what I believe and they don't seem to really want to know, I simply reply “rocks and trees.”



Remembrance Ceremony

By Rico Espinoza, John Faultersack, and Dorothy Wallace

Almost a year ago, in the wake of the George Floyd murder, we held a “Say Their Names” event to honor the lives taken by state violence and other racist acts. We continue this tradition to remember these lives, to remember their families and communities, and to remember others who continue to suffer what they suffered.

On July 5, 2021, the church, in coordination with Black Lives and Allies in Community (BLAC) and Radical Revolutionaries, hosted its second annual Remembrance Ceremony, to honor those whose lives were tragically affected – or cut short – by the actions of law enforcement or vigilantes. The community lit candles and honored numerous locally and nationally known victims by “saying their names,” thus keeping their memories alive.

This year’s ceremony featured music by Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson and the Foreign Arm, Puro Slam poets, who read several heartfelt poems, and the Reverend John D. Kyle Jr. of New Dimensions Ministries providing the keynote address. Reverend Kyle addressed the attendees, exhorting them not to let the light of these martyrs be extinguished. Rev Kyle and our own Rev Mark led the candle lighting ceremony where people in attendance read the name of a victim killed by police and lit a candle. Over 100 names were read, including the names of the following local victims: Marquise Jones, Cameron Redus, Charles Roundtree, Gilbert Flores, Antronie Scott, Norman Cooper, Damian Daniels, and Jesse Aguirre.

The most emotional part of the evening were the words of the families of the local victims, represented by Deborah Jones Bush of the Radical Revolutionaries.

“Please don’t forget us” she said. We will not forget! The BLAC organization and the UU Church intend to make it an annual affair and are already planning next year’s remembrance events and ceremony. We

continue this tradition to remember that violence against our human family is not only about the taking of precious life. It is about the taking of opportunity and more. On the 4th of July we celebrate freedom. On the 5th of July we remember there is work to do for that freedom. With this new tradition we will honor all of this by committing ourselves to the work of Freedom and Justice for ALL. Thank you to all who attended this important event and we will see you in 2022.



Leadership Bridging Event

By Karen Davis

After a hiatus last year due to the Covid virus, the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) held their annual bridging event for current and new church leadership on Sunday, August 15. Twenty-one people attended the event, which was held on the church patio as the safest option during the pandemic.

LDC co-chair Anona Sobczak led the meeting and provided a slide show about the bridging process and online resources for leaders to learn more about their committees and duties. Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Sheri Phillabaum, also gave a presentation about various online tools that co-chairs can use.

Leaders were each asked to express their hopes for the church in the coming year, which ranged from more church involvement by members to the chance to return to more pre-Covid meetings and Sunday services. After closing words by Rev. Mark, leaders were invited to a dessert buffet provided by LDC members and had the chance to talk with each other about leadership.

Fiesta Youth Back-to-School Bash

By Carol Collins

Fiesta Youth, a support group for South Texas LGBTQ+ and allies of ages 18-22, had its Back-to-School Bash Saturday, August 14, at Mission Marquee Plaza. Bee Lowry and family were there with Carol Collins to represent First UU Church.

On that warm day visitors to our table enjoyed getting paper fans with church information, rainbow heart stickers, assorted rainbow temporary tattoos, and rainbow fabric friendship bracelets. Many viewed samples of our bookshop stickers and buttons. We enjoyed DJ and live music, talented people on stilts, a flame eater, endless bubbles floating from the stage, and people having a good time.

One woman was especially happy to learn of our church. She told us she had not been to church in five years because the last time she went with her children, someone ridiculed a man wearing a skirt. She did not want her children around such talk. Another said she was gathering information for her sister.



Voting Rights Rally

By Dorothy Wallace

First UU of San Antonio joined UUs from around the state and other people of faith, all represented by Texas Impact, at the capital on July 19 to protest the passage of voter suppression legislation by the Texas Legislature. The rally coincided with the special session called by Governor Abbott and the departure of 50 legislators to prevent a quorum, so this harmful legislation could not be passed.



UUA General Assembly

By Terri Chadwick and Mary Ellen Kujawski

This summer, from June 23-27, thirteen of your fellow First UU congregants enjoyed and were educated at the UUA General Assembly (GA) online. Seven of the thirteen attended as delegates with voting privileges for General Assembly business, including Statements of Conscience and Acts of Immediate Witness.

There were 2,278 delegates at GA representing 656 congregations from the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Phillipines. In preparation for GA, our Denominational Connections committee held a “What is GA” open zoom information meeting on June 14th and Denominational Connections co-chair, Terri Chadwick, spoke to the church Board on July 16th. Attendees had pre-GA Zoom meetings, many emails and one dinner out on June 24th at Rosario’s on San Pedro. During GA, we used the What’s Up app and had one zoom meeting to communicate with each other. After GA, several of us participated in the July 18 Sunday morning worship at church. Still to come is the After Party Celebration at Terri’s home, currently postponed due to corona virus danger.

The next GA is in July 2022 in Portland, Oregon. Please consider attending in person or virtually. It’s worth it!



Most of the First UU-San Antonio 2021 virtual UUA-General Assembly group at Rosario's.

2021-2022 Share the Plate Ballot Results

By Maria Bush

Once each month, we share our collection plate with a member-nominated non-profit organization whose mission and values align with ours. The following organizations received the most votes and will be the recipients of a Share the Plate this year:

PFLAG - The parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Only with respect, dignity and equality for all will we reach our full potential as human beings, individually and collectively. PFLAG welcomes the participation and support of all who share in and hope to realize this vision.

Interfaith Welcome Coalition - IWC volunteers, including over two dozen First UU members, welcome immigrant families passing through San Antonio's airport and bus station on their way to join their families or sponsors in the US, orienting them, assisting with ticketing, and providing food, travel supplies, and, if needed, overnight shelter. NOTE: IWC has been active since 2014, but just became a 501c3 organization in 2020.

Healthy Futures of Texas - an organization dedicated to reducing teen and unplanned pregnancy. They provide and promote sex education for youth and have a big and expanding project for community colleges in San Antonio. In addition, Healthy Futures' statewide project, the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition, is an influential advocacy group for access to preventive care, including contraception.

THRIVE Youth Center - The center's mission is to provide a safe, effective, and supportive center for homeless LGBTQ youth, so they may become productive, skilled, educated, and successful adults with the ability, opportunity, and possibility of achieving their dreams.

The schedule for Share the Plate is:

August 22 - THRIVE

September 17 - Healthy Futures

October 17 – CREF

November 21 – Facilities

December 19 – Minister's Discretionary Fund

January 16 - Interfaith Welcome Coalition

February 20 – Facilities

March 20 - PFLAG

April 17 – Facilities

May 15 - Trust Fund for Endowments

June 19 - UBarU

July 17 – Facilities

Treating the Unvaccinated

by Betty Burgner

This morning I laid in bed wondering how I could face another day treating the unvaccinated, worried I would have trouble showing compassion for those who carelessly put my life, and those of my family, and my community, at risk. Those who would happily see our country fail rather than take a vaccine or wear a mask and won't acknowledge they are the ones prolonging this pandemic. Those who have fought and mocked us, and all we have worked towards, every step of the way this past year and a half. Those needlessly responsible for countless lives.

My first patient lay gasping for air, asking for the vaccine. It's too late I tell him and explain what we are doing for him and what specifically I'm there to do. I plan on seeing him for what I've been consulted on and moving along quickly, but I find him lying in his own stool. So, I clean him up. He needs it, and there is no sense in having another staff member exposed and wasting the PPE. Dramatic photos on TV often show dozens of providers hovered around a patient's bed, but more often than not COVID patients lie alone in a cold room that nobody wants to enter, at the mercy of those who do. As I head to the door the patient's daughter calls, but she can't understand him due to the oxygen mask he has on. She is not allowed to visit and both of them know they likely won't ever see each other again. So, I stay and translate from patient to daughter and back, until the patient begins to drift off and the daughter no longer can find her voice through her tears.

My next patient is younger. He has garden hoses full of blood sewn into him, circulating his blood through a machine 24/7. One of the few who are lucky enough to receive this treatment; dead if he doesn't have it, and less than a 50% chance he will leave the hospital because he does. With tubes protruding from every natural, and a few man-made, orifices of his body, he looks at his black toes and asked if he will keep them. It's doubtful, and what should be the least of his concerns, but this is what he looks at all day long. He awaits a lung transplant, but as he waits one organ or another fails, first his kidneys, now his heart, and then an infection, taking him off the transplant list. But he is not alone. His father sits at his bedside. If you live long enough, you no longer test positive and are permitted one visitor. It's good news, as he is now among the 'recovered' and therefore likely won't need to die alone. And if he doesn't die it will probably be his father caring for him the rest of his life, whatever that life may be.

The day continued with others, just as heartbreaking. I know I see the worst of the worst. While not the trajectory for most, it needlessly is for way too many. But I needn't have worried this morning in bed. I find it impossible not to show empathy and compassion to those so sick, lonely, scared, and desperate. I must remind myself of this in the morning as I struggle to face the new day.

Disclaimer: Details of these 2 patients have been altered a wee bit to protect their identity. But the stories, the virus, the heartbreak, and the futility of it all remain the same.

Betty Burgner is a Wound and Ostomy Specialist at Brooke Army Medical Center. She has been attending First UU since she moved to San Antonio in 2016.

Tree Dedication Ceremony

By Linda Nash

It's been a year since the Facilities/Grounds Team gave their approval for the Green Team to plant a tree in the courtyard where an older tree was dying. Once the tree was removed, we had to wait for the stump and the roots to decompose enough to be removed. Early this summer we were told that it would be good if we could get the tree we wanted soon, so it could be in the ground before our September Church opening.

The first few times I called around to locate a Texas persimmon tree, I was told: 1. We don't have any. 2. This isn't the time of year we have Persimmons. Come back in the fall. 3. Yes, we have one in a 50-gallon pot, for \$495.00. After a week of disappointment, my husband Ray and I decided to go to Rainbow Gardens, just to see if there were any other trees that the Green Team might agree to in a pinch. I can't remember what tree I was looking at when Ray said "Isn't this the one you're looking for?" I ran over, hoping, and checked the tag. *Diospyros texana*, Texas Persimmon. YES! We took it up to the church and left it near the spot where it would be planted.

A big thank you to Ron Pena and Kathy McFarlane, who worked to quickly hire a contractor to get the old tree roots out of the ground and get the new tree planted. Reverend Mark, the Green Team, the K-5 RE class and their teachers, and several other members gathered in the courtyard on the beautiful Sunday morning of July 18th. Rev. Mark welcomed the new young tree as a being in our interconnected web of life. He encouraged the children and all of us to remember this moment of celebration. After offering words of encouragement to the tree, making wishes for the tree, promising to care for the tree, the children took turns watering the tree, and then gathered to sing the UU Principles Song to the tune of Do-re-mi.



Thanks go to Glenna Jones-Kachtik and Alex Bush for bringing the K-5 class ready to perform this lovely version of our UU Principles. One, each person is important Two, be kind in all you do Three, we work to learn together Four, and search for what is true Five, all people need a voice Six, a fair and peaceful world Seven, we care for planet earth and that brings us back to me and UU. As I left, I remembered reading in *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, that the Anishinaabe people of the land, now known as the Northeastern United States, refer to trees as "standing people." We are happy to welcome a new standing person to our campus. I hope this young Persimmon tree will learn that she (or he) is not alone, but is here among many brothers and sisters.

Trust Fund for Endowments

By Arlis Olson

Thanks to the following people for contributions to the Trust Fund since the last newsletter article:

May: Kelly Timmons and Melissa Marsh, Randy Blood and Terry Palin, Alan and April Chase, Bill and Katy Evans, Rowena Rodgers, Arlis Olson, Alison and Russel Hom-Crosier, and Claudia Glass - undesignated. Maria Bush in memory of Lena Russo, Alan and April Chase and Hilda Scott in memory of Bill Stavinoha and Bettie Ward, Dorothy Wallace and Lee Hampton in memory of Bettie Ward, Martha Cooley and Dave Minnich, Catherine Cummins, Sue Hall, Arlis Olson, Stanna Welch, Clare Whalin, and Daniel Wigodsky in memory of Bill Stavinoha. Jennie Lee Dietz, Martha Cooley and Dave Minnich, Roy Ellzey and Sheri Phillabaum, and Arlis Olson – birthday matches.

June: Howard and Diane Berger in memory of Bill Stavinoha, First UU Church and Kelsey Menzel in memory of Trent Cheyney, Arlis Olson in memory of Alicia Carpenter. Bonnie Pope – birthday match.

July: Bill and Katy Evans, Tess Bobo, Randy Blood and Terry Palin, Claudia Glass, Don and Mary Lou Hymel, Ruth and Glenn Ledoux, Kelly Timmons and Melissa Marsh, David Rodriguez – undesignated. First UU Church and Arlis Olson in memory of Trent Cheyney, Arlis Olson in memory of sons of Nancy and Bill Pridgen, Stanna Welch in memory of Prince, Mary K. Kelsey in memory of Bill Stavinoha. Dorothy Wallace and Lee Hampton – birthday match. Jeanna Stephen for Dorothy Wallace's birthday fundraiser.

We received a total of \$3,850.00 this quarter. Thanks to those of you who contributed so generously.

Unlearning White Supremacy Circle

By Terri Chadwick

The Unlearning White Supremacy Circle has met by Zoom twice a month from January to the end of May 2021. The Unlearning Circle is sponsored by the Social Justice Committee and the Racial Justice and Black Lives Matter Working Group. In each session, 13 to 18 people (mostly white bodied) have met for presentations, videos and lively small and large group discussions and role play. Our goal has been to explore how white people in particular have been socialized into white supremacy culture. We've looked at how white supremacy is embedded in our culture and what actions we can take to dismantle racism.

Topics explored included Building Trust & Resilience; What's in a Name?; Confronting and Calling In; Screwing Up and Apologizing Effectively; Worship of the Written Word; Fear of Open Conflict; Liberal White Women and the Violence of White Supremacy; Antidotes to Racism: Recognizing Microaggressions and Assertively Calling People In; and Claiming Our Power to Create a Difference. Group Leaders are Maggi Joseph, Mary Barad and Terri Chadwick. Group leaders have decided to offer the Unlearning Circle again in the fall 2021.

LREDA Professional Days

By Dr. Sheri Phillabaum, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

In June I attended (virtually) the “professional days” of the Liberal Religious Educators Association, also known as LREDA.

The main topic of the conference was trauma-informed ministry. The keynote speaker, Rev. Julie Taylor, director of the UU Trauma Response Ministry, led us through two days of exploring this topic in all-conference presentations and small groups.

We talked about both individual and collective trauma. Only individuals can experience trauma, but organizations are affected when there is a community catastrophic event such as a pandemic. In congregations, we can expect that the extraordinary circumstances of the past year and a half will breed anxiety in the system of church life. We must hold each other in care and patience, remembering that everyone experiences things differently.

In the individual, trauma, grief, and loss will breed trauma, grief, and loss unless something is done to break up the cycle. Our bodies, muscles, tissues hold the trauma. Rev. Taylor shared several ways for breaking the cycle:

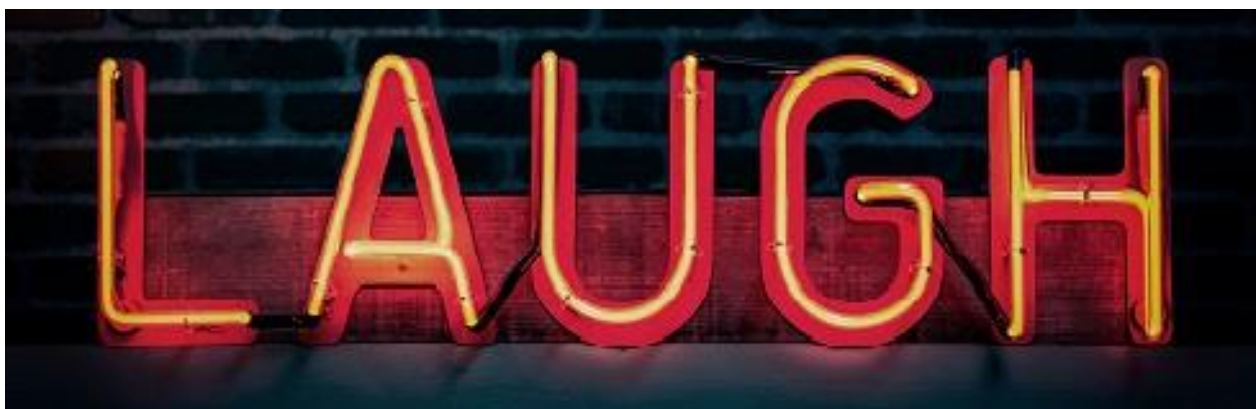
- Exercise - not necessarily strenuous or competitive; just enough to get the respiration elevated
- Deep breathing meditation
- Laughter*

The common element of these is to BREATHE. These activities shift brain chemistry and can regulate the breath.

Perhaps the most important idea I came away with from this conference was a phrase/concept that was new to me - *post-traumatic growth*. We’ve all heard of post-traumatic stress; it’s also true that trauma can lead to growth. We might ask ourselves how we have grown and may still grow personally and as a congregation as a result of the stressful days we continue to live through.

*The discussion of the power of laughter reminded me of the benefits of laughter yoga:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p4dZ0afivk> (For the duration of the pandemic, laughter yoga might best be practiced individually or within pod groups!)



Circle Dinners

By Heidi McPhillips

As many of you may know, Arlis Olson is a long-standing member of First UU and a huge supporter in many aspects of the church such as Covenant Groups, League of Women Voters, North West Neighbors Seniors, and the Trust Fund for Endowment Committee - just to name a few! For the past five years she has also been expertly organizing, communicating and supporting Circle Dinners for all First UU members and guest alike! This is no small task as participants come and go and have varying schedules. Somehow it all comes together, and everyone has a great time getting to know one another.

Arlis welcomed my husband Ty and me to this event a few years ago as she does all new members with enthusiasm and a great big smile. We have met so many wonderful people by hosting and attending these dinners, they are always a good time! Arlis has passed the baton on organizing Circle Dinners to me, Heidi McPhillips and I could not be more excited. On behalf of entire Circle Dinner family, I would like to thank Arlis for her tireless service to the Circle Dinner program and many other UU efforts. Arlis, you are an inspiration to us all! Thank you.

A little about Circle Dinners: Circle Dinners are scheduled October through May on the 2nd Friday and or Saturday evening of the month. You can sign up to be a host or a guest. You can host at your home or at the First UU Fellowship Hall. Hosts are responsible for hosting their event, deciding on the menu and letting guests know what they can bring as part of the meal. Guests are responsible for showing up with their contribution to the evening. After that it's all about getting to know one another!

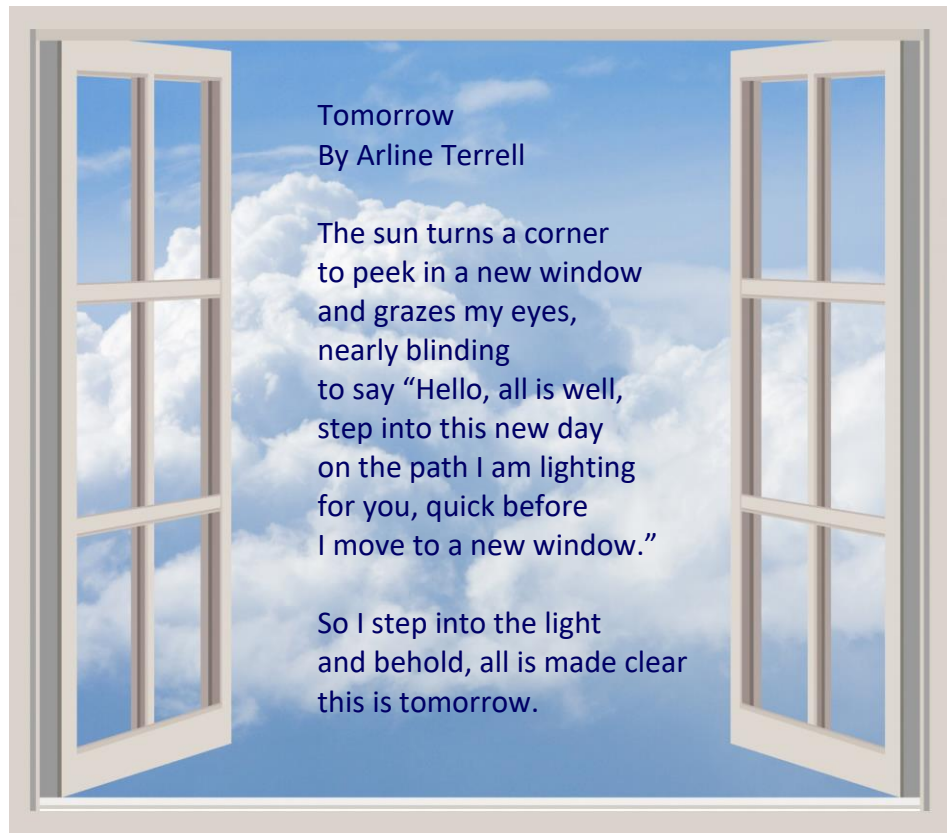
Sadly, the pandemic put a stop to this event for over a year. We were able to have a few dinners this summer with folks who have been vaccinated and felt comfortable socializing in this setting. The delta variant has understandably caused much concern; however, we are hoping to continue Circle Dinners beginning in October. Ty and I will be hosting a "Get to Know Circle Dinners" event on Thursday, September 23rd from 5 to 8pm at the First UU Fellowship Hall. Refreshments and light hors d'oeuvres will be served. Please RSVP if you plan to attend to mcphillipsheidi@gmail.com by September 16th. We hope you will come out and meet some of the wonderful folks in our group and maybe become one of them.

Retired Women Rise!

By Marilyn Stavinoha

The Retired UU Women of First UU have begun meeting informally to share what we need from the reopened church and what we might do for the church. We met in July but cancelled August due to the pandemic. Thirty women came to the first meeting and were enthusiastic to continue monthly meetings on the third Saturday of the month. We will meet at 1:00pm with a Bring Your Own Lunch and will have a speaker or discussion or project.

We will remain informal until we choose whether or not to organize for a purpose. We are not a social action group but intend to focus on the needs of older women members. There are more than 100 retired women members of our church. This is an opportunity to support each other, recognize that we need the church and it needs us. If you have questions, please call Marilyn Stavinoha, 344-6884.



Condolences

...to the family and friends of Alicia Carpenter who passed away on June 3, 2021. Alicia was a longtime First UU member and talented songwriter. Her beautiful hymn lyrics are featured in our *Singing the Living Tradition* Hymnal. They include #6 Just As Long As I Have Breath, #175 We Celebrate the Web of Life, #300 With Heart and Mind, #324 Where My Free Spirit Onward Leads, #360 Here We Have Gathered, and her adaptation of the lullaby #409 Sleep, My Child.

...to the family and friends of Trent Cheyney who passed away on June 19, 2021. Trent was a member of First UU-San Antonio for 74 years. Trent was very active in the church throughout the years including teaching Religious Education to the youth and serving as our Board President. Click on this link to read Trent's obituary: [TRENT CHEYNEY Obituary \(2021\) - Chicago, IL - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/jan-knost-obituary?pid=199905382)

...to the family and friends of former First UU-San Antonio minister Rev. Jan V. Knost who passed away on August 22, 2021. Jan served as our called minister from 1985 to 1990. Click on this link to read Jan's obituary: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/jan-knost-obituary?pid=199905382>

*If you have a milestone you would like to share in our next newsletter, contact
newsletter@uusat.org*

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 Racial Justice Congregation.

We are a congregation committed to racial equity and justice, within ourselves, our church and the wider community.

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.

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