

Inspire



FIRST UU
SAN ANTONIO

**The quarterly newsletter of
First Unitarian Universalist Church
of San Antonio
Fall 2022**



Inspire

newsletter@uusat.org

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Editor

Mary Wright

Contributors

Alesa Arnett
Jamal Brown
Terri Chadwick
Roy Ellzey
Glenna Kachtik
Mary Grace Ketner
Bridget Laflin, DLRE
Cathy Marston
Heidi McPhillips
Linda Nash
Rev. Nell Newton
Arlis Olson
Jan Realini
Rev. Art Severance
Rev. Mark Skrabacz
Tina Solis
Marilyn Stavinoha
Orwellia Vack
Dorothy Wallace
Sylvia Wheeler
Mary Wright

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: First UU Members Joan Wells and Dale Moore performing a rain spell at Celestial Celebrations Circle's Fall Equinox ritual.

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A Community of Journeying

By Rev. Mark Skrabacz

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" is a quote from Lao Tse's *Tao Te Ching*, the 6th Century BCE collection of wisdom sayings of the Taoist tradition. Our life journeys individually and collectively are comprised of many single steps.

In an interview with French wire walker Philippe Petit, Scott Simon of NPR's *Weekend Edition* inquired about the time Petit crossed a wire strung between the tops of New York's World Trade Towers, at the time the tallest buildings in the world. He asked: "Mr. Petit, what would've happened if you had fallen?" Petit resolutely replied: "That is the kind of thought or consideration that no wire walker can ever have." He was speaking of the journey of life that he was authoring, a powerful positive framework of life in which possibilities of failure are not merely unacceptable, but sometimes fatal. More than a hundred years ago, William James, pioneering philosopher and psychologist, and author of *Varieties of Religious Experience* wrote: "Each of us literally chooses, by his way of attending to things, what sort of universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit." With all the modern spiritual pundits emphasizing that we create our own reality, I wonder if it might be a good time for us to address these ideas of the kinds of thoughts and actions we create on our journeys of life.

The theories of Sigmund Freud have been questioned and revised, and rightly so, but one principle keeps coming back to me. He wrote that human beings need to fulfill themselves in two areas—love and work. And fulfillment in both of these is dependent on maturing our own inner authority. Most of us spend or have spent a great deal of our lives obliged to work for a living. And retirement even finds us continuing to work at our hobbies and avocations. Work is so ever present in our lives that you might say it's our National Pastime. And as for love—intimacy is possible only in the context of a differentiated self. We must know our own fears, needs, hopes—that is, we must know ourselves and manage who we are, and we must respect this self as worthy before we can truly offer ourselves to another. One of the biggest temptations of relationships is giving this self away, to win love, and then blaming your partner for your loss of self.

Individuals, who have not developed their inner authority, often feel a sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction, because they are constantly having to create and project a self to others, a self that may be far from their own true nature. Such a person may believe that the hole they feel in their existence comes from something they don't have but which they can get. They become future oriented: "I'll be happy when..." I win the lottery, or kick an addiction, or when I get a better this or that... or when socioeconomic or environmental problems are solved, etc. And happiness never comes because what they are looking for cannot come from an external source.

Here's today's question: How can my participation in our First UU Church of San Antonio help me author the journey of my own life? Process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote in *Religion in the Making* that "Religion is the art and theory of the internal life." Our UU church is here to instill in our participants the notion that religion must be primarily a first-hand direct experience, rather than some set of stories or doctrines adopted from someone else's experiences. The saying is "Don't come to a UU community to be given a religion, come to develop your own religion." A religion, indeed, most religions, are given to people by a book, a tradition, a lineage, a minister, a church, or school to be memorized and recited. When,

however, life meets us head-on and we are under fire to act directly from our own minds and hearts, these kinds of religions don't sustain us. We must actually choose our way of being religious and make it our own. We must create it and take it into our very being in order to share it with others as a fullness of love and life.

During this Fall Season let us explore the values and virtues of authoring our own journeys. And because our individuality only makes sense when joined interdependently with others, let's co-create a Community of Journeying. After all, life itself is all about interrelated systems and processes. We, as human beings, must collaborate with and connect to each other in order to live into our true home of belonging for each and all of us. Yet our purpose is not just for us. It's to co-create what ought to be—a democratic, inclusive, diverse, safe and just community. And to do this not just for ourselves but for others who also need this, for the oppressed and the marginalized as a true radically welcoming community. This is our vision of real transformation—to include those who were formerly excluded, so that we can truly say we are community where all means all. This is needed. May it be so.

Trust Fund for Endowments

By Arlis Olson

Our thanks to the following people who made donations since the last newsletter.

May: Bill and Katy Evans, Tess Bobo, Christine Chesnut, Martha Cooley, Paul Crisostomo, Myron & Marcia Hansen, Chris Lopez, Tina & Salvador Lopez, First UU Church (collection plate) – undesignated; Maria Bush, Emmanuel & Angel Garrido, James & Polly Noel, Arlis Olson – birthday; Diane Duesterhoeft & Mike Phillips, Claudia Glass, Arlis Olson, David & Lana Sund, Karen Waldron – In memoriam for Charles or Virginia Bowden.

June: James & Polly Noel- undesignated; Maggi Joseph & Lucy Norton, - birthday; Alan & April Chase, Janet Realini, - In memoriam for Charles or Virginia Bowden.

July: Christine Chesnut, Bonnie Pope, David Rodriguez – birthday; Marilyn Stavinoha – In memoriam for Charles or Virginia Bowden.

This fund was established in 1972 to provide for church needs, maintenance, and improvements. Sufficient funds in this account help support the long-term viability of the church. If giving at the church website (<https://uusat.org/>), please ensure when making a donation in memoriam that the name of the person is put in the for block. Put Btdy if that is applicable. Do the same in the "for" block of a check. We don't want to miss notifying a family of a gift in memoriam of a loved one if that was your intention. This quarter your contributions increased this fund by \$4,578.50. Our last balance was \$225,991.04 The balance in this fund in June of 2016 was \$98,000. Even subtracting the \$50,000 contribution made by Bettie Ward family, it has more than doubled. Some of the increase is due to market fluctuations but it is obvious your contributions do make a difference.

Say YES to the Future

By Tina Solis

The Capital Campaign “Public Phase” is finally here with several key events scheduled in the upcoming months:

On September 16, 2022, a Fellowship Banquet will be held at the San Antonio Food Bank! This event is free to those who RSVP and will include a “happy hour” starting at 6 pm (doors open by 5:30 pm) and a Parents Night Out free for adult attendees who need childcare (for middle school age or younger) in order to attend. This exciting evening will include renderings of upcoming facility changes for all to see. Our architectural firm (Derrick Architects) will be there to answer questions about the proposed facility changes.

On September 25, 2022, the Capital Campaign Committee will be leading a special service for the congregation – “Say YES to the Future.” Following the service will be an Ice Cream Social and fun activities for kids. Capital Campaign Stewards will be available on that Sunday and every Sunday for the remainder of the year to answer questions about generosity development and assist congregants to maximize their gifts.

On October 2, 2022, Derrick Architectural firm will give a presentation in the Fellowship Hall with any updated plans for our facility renovations.

Additional events are in the works for the fall, including FREE classes on such topics as Family Budgeting, Philanthropic Giving, Investments for Lifetime financial security, and other related topics! These classes will be led by experts in these areas who are a part of our beloved community. Watch your What’s Happening for dates and times!

It is and will be important for our congregation to understand the difference between your Stewardship pledge (completed annually) and your Capital Campaign gift. Your Capital Campaign commitment requires careful consideration of your gift to secure facility needs for now and decades to come. Unlike your Stewardship pledge, your Capital Campaign gift can be prorated over a 36-month period starting in January, 2023. It is also important not to change your Stewardship pledge to make a Capital Campaign commitment. We still have a church to support on an annual basis.

Our growing congregation has the capacity to raise BOTH our necessary annual OPERATING budget (i.e., Stewardship pledges) as well as the CAPITAL budget for facility improvements and needs. It is a very exciting time for our church!

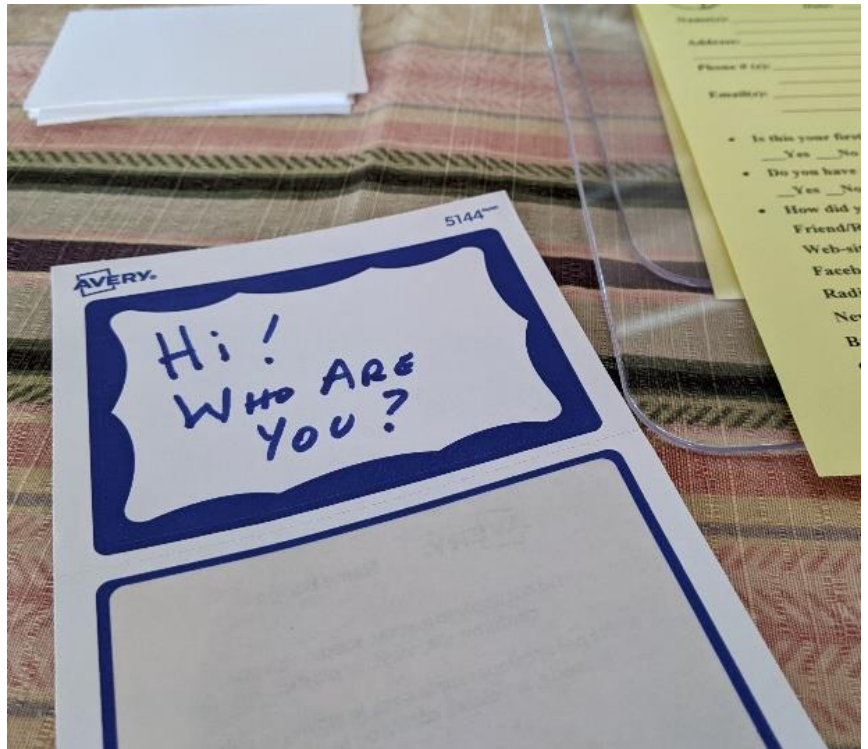
Please speak with a Capital Campaign Steward before making your final Capital Campaign commitment. Stewards include the following: April Chase, Alan Chase, Troy Peters, David Ringer, Carolyn Skrabacz, Tina Solis, and Dorothy Wallace.

Who Are You?

By Rev. Nell Newton

Coming to this congregation has been lovely. Everyone has been so very kind and welcoming! It is clear that you truly enjoy being in community with one another. But here is something that happens to me every single week: A friendly person happily greets me with sincere recognition, and I respond with a dim smile and a look of mild panic in my eyes. What is going on?

Simply put, I probably don't know their name yet. Even if we have sat together in worship or in a meeting, I haven't fully memorized all of your names yet, and I can't learn your name just from *hearing* it. My brain will process the information much better if I can *see* and *read* your name on a name tag.



However, many nice folks here don't wear a name tag so I can't start the process of learning their names by seeing/reading. This puts me, and any other newcomers, at a disadvantage.

Ugh... but nametags are a hassle! The storage racks are over in the Fellowship Hall, which makes it harder to pick up on your way into the sanctuary. Nametags that wind up in our cars or homes often don't make it back to church. And if you're rushing to get into the sanctuary for worship, it can seem like an unnecessary interruption to stop and put on a temporary nametag.

Here is another way to think of this: ultimately, nametags help us carry out the mission of the congregation! How can we *invite*, *inspire*, or *involve* a person if they can't easily address us by our names? How can we start the work of being in right relationship if we first place the other person at a disadvantage?

Our 2nd Principle affirms and promotes justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Which is so much easier if we can start with one another's names.

Every Sunday our Greeters put out temporary nametags for anyone to use, and a sign-up sheet for folks who need a new durable name tag. In the coming months, we will see some changes being made to our sanctuary foyer, including a new storage place for our nametags. In the meantime, feel free to use as many of the temporary name tags as you need. In doing so, you'll be helping to create the Beloved Community.

A Few Words About Membership

By Heidi McPhillips

Did you know you are a member of the membership committee? Nurturing our congregation is a job that falls on each of us. Gaining and maintaining membership is the responsibility of all First UU members and, as members, we are counting on you! Don't worry, you don't have to physically join the Membership Committee or attend meetings to do your part.

Here are a few examples of how you can be more involved:

Wear your name tag! This tells everyone who you are, that you are a First UU member, and that's awesome!! We are currently working to modernize the foyer area and hope to have name tag stations where you can pick up and drop off your name tag on Sunday morning.

Present the First UU 101 class once or twice per year! Make the connection to the newest of us. It's a good bet you know all the items in this presentation already. First UU 101 is presented every 2nd Sunday of the month.

Be a greeter once a month or just few times per year! This is a great way to meet new people and greet ones you already know.

Welcome folks during the service that you have never seen before or have only seen a few times! If you haven't seen someone on Sunday that you know normally attends, give them a call to let them know they were missed. One reason we come to church on Sunday is to escape the cold cruel world for a bit - let's truly create a beloved community where people will not only feel welcomed, but they will also look forward to returning!

If you'd like to help to grow any of these activities, please email the committee at membership@uusat.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

I wonder if any of you might remember the old Faberge Organic Shampoo commercial from the 1980's? Heather Locklear told one of her friends about it, and they told one of their friends, and so on and so on!! I found it on YouTube; it's a blast and a great reminder of how impactful word of mouth advertising really is. If each of us can tell someone how wonderful our community is then they will tell someone and so on, and so on. Our membership will grow and grow. More members mean more support for our Church and all it does for all of us as well as the San Antonio community!

I challenge everyone reading this to go out and find just one new member (or you can be an over achiever if you like!) Together, we can build our membership, expand our beloved community, and have a bigger impact on all the things we work so hard to support.

Pay Forward the Love

By Bridget Laflin, MDiv (she, her), Director
of Lifespan Religious Education

Hello Friends!

As I begin my new position with you as DLRE, I am in the midst of undergoing many changes. In addition to starting a new job, I have moved from Washington state to Texas. I also dropped my son off at college and am adjusting to his absence in our home. I am adjusting to living in a new place and learning all kinds of new things. And as I begin to acclimate to all of these changes, I started to think about all of the people who have made it possible for me to get to where I am today.

"...anyone who has ever been able to sustain a good work, has had at least one person and often many who have believed in him or her. We just don't get to be competent human beings without a lot of different investments from others."

*"In fact, from the time you were very little, you've had people who have smiled you into smiling, people who have talked you into talking, sung you into singing, loved you into loving."
- Reverend Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers)*

I find so much truth in the quotes from Mr. Rogers above. I could not have gotten to where I am without a lot of different investments from others. So many people who believed in me have helped me get here. My family of origin, my chosen family, many church communities, teachers, professors, colleagues, classmates, and friends just to name a few. And I have also benefited from millions of people I have never met. People who build the furniture I sit on, grow the food I consume, maintain the roads I drive on, provide energy I use, and so much more. All of these people have contributed to my current success. I am so grateful for this amazing network of human beings.

As I look forward to the upcoming church year, I hope to be able to continue to focus on the gratitude I have for all the people in my life who make it possible for me to do the work that I do. And I hope to meet many more people who love and support me. (I have met many already.) I also hope that I will have the opportunity to "pay it forward" and support the members of my new community. I hope to be a positive influence on people's lives by believing in them and investing my time, talent, and treasure in those around me.

I invite you to join me in this exercise. Each day, take some time to think about the people who have supported you and helped you become the person that you are. Lift them up in gratitude. And then think about who you are supporting. Who are you smiling into smiling, talking into talking, singing into singing, and loving into loving? How are you paying forward the love and support you have been shown by others?

I can't wait to get to know you all and grow together as a beloved community. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, concerns, or just to introduce yourself. I can't wait to see where our journey goes. Peace and Laughter!

The Science of Generosity!

By Dorothy Wallace

Unitarian Universalists pride themselves on being people of science. Would it surprise you to know that “generosity” has become a science?

That’s right, there’s such a thing as the Science of Generosity! Studies have been ongoing in the past decade which study the effects of generosity, or “the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly. ... What exactly generosity gives can be various things: money, possessions, time, attention, aid, encouragement, emotional availability, and more” (Science of Generosity Initiative, 2012).

In fact, more studies are showing that being generous can improve your well-being and actually make you happier. WOW!

Stewardship is defined as “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.” We are called to be good stewards in so many areas of our life: in our family, in our work, in our community, in the environment – and in our congregation. While the dictionary considers stewardship a noun, it is really a verb, in my opinion. Something we do.

How well we do as stewards depends on how generous we are, and not just with our money but with our time and talents as well.

Don’t we always talk about this, generosity, and stewardship? What is different this year?

First, we have taken some leaps of “faith” this year adding a full-time Second Minister and a parttime Communications Coordinator, along with hiring a new Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) after Sheri Phillabaum retired. We hope for great things from these new staff members in the coming church year. Our investment here will multiply in ways we don’t even understand yet.

Second, we have refocused how we maintain our campus facilities in the short-term by contracting for services, instead of hiring one person to try and accomplish all the necessary tasks for HVAC service, lawn care and janitorial services. And we are endeavoring in a Capital Campaign to improve our existing facilities for the future.

Lastly, we continue to try and expand programs from Religious Education to much needed Social Justice work and LGBT outreach, and everything in between.

To make all this reality, we rely on our members to cultivate that virtue of “giving good things freely and abundantly”!

Cultivating the spirit (and science) of generosity is a primary goal for the Stewardship Team this year. And we will ask everyone to consider their own personal generosity starting with supporting our church Capital Campaign events that begin in September. We will ask that you attend and participate in events that build up our congregation, and knit us together in community, which include our many RE, Social Justice and Green Team initiatives. Engage in your church community more than you ever have this year and our generosity will flow naturally, making our church home the place we mightily “steward.” Blessed Be!

Roe v. Wade Protest

By Jamal Brown

My Name is Jamal Brown. I was live at the San Antonio Protest over Roe v. Wade (Reproductive Rights) being overturned by Supreme Court on June 24, 2022.

It was passionate.

It was inspiring.

It was empowering.

It was organized.

Because I believe in the Power of being Organized.

It was a call to action for San Antonio.

San Antonians standing together supporting San Antonio Women.

Her Body Her Choice

Her Body Her Choice

Her Body Her Choice

Separation of Church and State

This is what democracy looks like.



Saving Our Democracy: Power through Relationships

By Jan Realini, Social Justice Co-Chair

The Fellowship Hall was full on Sunday afternoon, August 28, as we worked to build relational power to help counter the threats to our democracy. Sixty-nine First Unitarian Universalist (UU) members and friends gathered to share their concerns, learn about the concerns of others, and turn our understanding into action.



Sponsored by First UU's Social Justice Committee, its UU the Vote campaign, and COPS/Metro, this Congregational Assembly brought people together to learn, share, and respond.

Mary Barad, Co-Chair of the Social Justice Committee began with an eloquent Welcome, and Karen Emerson shared some of our country's long history of preventing black people, women, and others from voting. The struggle to vote and for our votes to be counted is not new. Jan Realini shared her personal story of being terrified of the rising hate and fascism—and her growing understanding that genocide *could* happen here.

Christina Leal is an Organizer with COPS/Metro,¹ a broad-based interfaith organization working in the interest of our community's families. First UU SA has been a longtime COPS/Metro member.

Drawing from the teachings of COPS/Metro Founder Ernesto Cortes, Jr.,² Christina explained how organizing for relational power can be an antidote to the crumbling of our democracy. Democracy is relational, with the ability to look outside oneself—to understand others and to commit to working on problems together. She told the organizing story of Project Quest, a highly successful workforce development project that is one of COPS/Metro's great successes for working people.

Our Assistant Minister, Rev. Nell Newton, brought home for us that our assumptions about others' concerns cannot replace hearing what our fellow members say to us in face-to-face conversation.

We broke into groups of 4 to 5 to give each person a chance to share what keeps them up at night. These small group discussions (or "house meetings") surfaced many concerns, including threats to our democracy and public education, voter suppression, gun violence, poverty, book bans, abortion rights, as well as the stoking of anti-immigrant, anti-Asian, and anti-LGBTQ hate.

There is still much to do to research all that can be done to push back on these problems, but there are some things we already know will help, and we asked people to sign up for at least one of the following:

- **Writing and sending Postcards to voters:** adding personal touches to these to send to voters less likely to turn out. Postcards and stamps provided. Youth can help with these.
- **Writing and sending *Vote Forward* Letters:** adding personal touches to send to voters less likely to turn out. We can print the letters for you, if needed.

¹ Note that "COPS" is not about police, but rather short for "Communities Organized for Public Service"

² Ernesto Cortes, Jr. [Toward a Democratic Culture](#).

- **Registering High School Seniors to Vote:** After a training on August 31st, Deputy Voter Registrars can talk to high school classes and register students who will be 18 by November 8.
- **Registering Alamo Colleges Students to Vote:** Deputy Voter Registrars
- **Holding additional small group (House) meetings:** We need more meetings to engage more people in our congregation and learn of their concerns.
- **Attending the [COPS/Metro Delegates Assembly](#)** on Sept 11 at 3:30 pm at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church
- **Attending the [Statewide Industrial Areas Foundation \(IAF\) Assembly](#)** in Austin on Sept. 24, 10 am–3 pm
- **Reaching out to other churches** in our area
- **Block walking together** to get out the vote (GOTV)

To ask about or sign up for one or more of these, please email janrealini55@gmail.com.

This is the process of *organizing*—an indispensable part of any campaign’s effectiveness. I am impressed and moved by COPS/Metro’s focus on first listening to each other. Listening to each other’s stories engages people, promotes empathy, and encourages us to commit to work together for the common good. This is development of relationships, which are powerful. Together we can be more successful in caring for each other and in working for change.

UU Retired Women’s Group

By Marilyn Stavinoaha

The UU Retired Women’s Group met in June with a marvelous program on Resilience by Patti Stout. We practiced thinking through what to do when stress is heavy, and we need relief.

We met again in August for a program on Enjoyment as an age-appropriate part of our stage of life. A little Stoicism for the last stage of life can be expected.

We meet the third Saturday of each month at 12:00 p.m. with a potluck lunch, visiting, friendship making, and a presentation. We are not a social action group; just social.

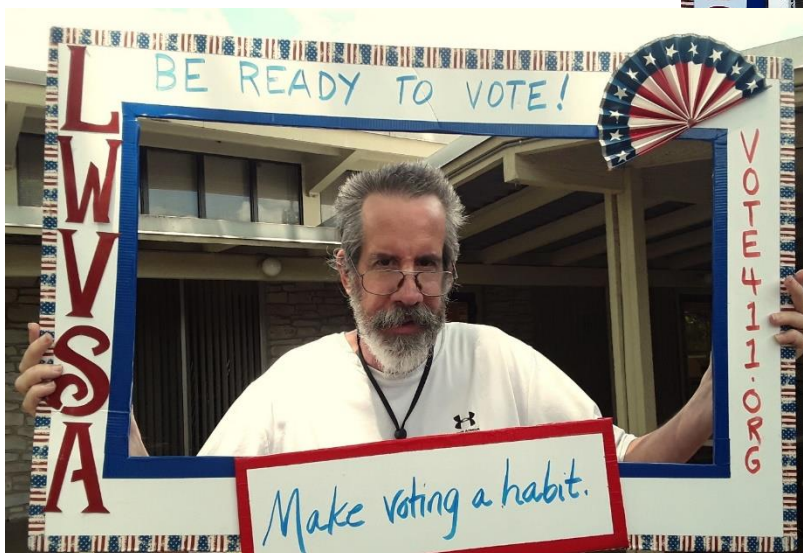
All women who consider themselves beyond the professional part of life are welcome.

We are especially interested in the aesthetics of the church; its appearance and impression on first timers, inside as well as outside.

UU the Vote SA

By Arlis Olson

On Sunday, August 28th, in conjunction with the “Saving Our Democracy” Assembly, the UU the Vote-SA group teamed up with the League of Women Voters (LWV) of the San Antonio Area to provide voting information. Alene Lindley of the LWV and UU the Vote-SA volunteer Desiree Kannel shared information on how to vote, how to access “Vote 411” for candidate information, what to be careful of on early voter applications, and everything you need to know about voting. They handed out brochures describing their youth initiative project and the corresponding essay contest which is a part of it. Another UU the Vote-SA volunteer, Renee Wood, provided additional information on how to volunteer to be an Election Judge or Clerk. There was a minimum amount of voter registration, but a lot of visitation and inquiries at the table. Many found it fun to have their picture taken with the photo frames provided. The UU the Vote-SA team will be very busy with a variety of activities leading up to the November midterm elections and can always use additional volunteers. If you would like to get involved contact Arlis Olson at arlisolson@att.net.



Free Battered Texas Women: Summer 2022 Update

By Cathy Marston, PhD

In Spring 2022, we had the pleasure of having Destiny Terrell, a University of the Incarnate Word student, do her service hours with us. She updated our databases for donors and survivor-sisters and took our board minutes. She also helped me create the program for our April 25 rally to celebrate the stay of execution given to Melissa Lucio at UIW. Patricia Castillo of the PEACE Initiative, Dr. Doshie Piper of UIW's Criminal Justice department, and I gave opening speeches to the crowd of about 50. Other university professors – including the Rev. Dr. Trevor Alexander – and Sister Corinne of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word joined us in denouncing the death penalty and prison industrial complex.



UIW student Destiny Terrell with FBTW founder Cathy Marston

On June 18, Altair and I tabled at the UIW's Juneteenth Celebration and enjoyed great barbeque, along with moving music and historical presentations by university staff, community members, and the student group spearheading the event, As One We Will. The new Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Javier Clavere, came to our table with Doshie and donated \$50 towards our work. We are looking forward to being a regular at this event!

On July 24, Cheryl, Altair, and I tabled at the Red Feather Healing holistic fair in Universal City. I performed chair reiki and we made more than \$100 in donations.



Cathy had the pleasure of meeting the leaders of As One We Will at UIW's Juneteenth celebration. From left: Annabelle Aguirre, Gerald Bowie, and TJ Wright.

On August 26, B.L.A.C. (Bold Love in Action for Community) hosted our musical fundraiser, Sound for the People, featuring TBOW Gonzales. Our own Dana Clark, a sustaining donor, backed him up. A crowd of 45 showed up – despite Beto being in town – to enjoy the peace-and-justice-loving vibe. Gricelda Pozada brought her homemade Watermelon Agua Fresca and Pineapple Upside Down Cake. Altair brought their homemade No Bake Brownie Bottom Cheesecake and Earl Grey Cake with Blackberry Frosting, as well as talked about what FBTW means to her (keeping the file cabinet organized and more!). Rico Espinoza donated Potbelly Sandwich Shop sandwiches, cookies, chips, and lemonade – as well as all of the time and heart he put in to catalyzing the event for us. I'd like to thank TBOW, Dana, Rico and our attendees for making it a successful fundraiser. We hauled in about \$500 towards our operating expenses and IRS incorporation fee.

We also bid farewell this summer to Doshie as a board member, with whom we will keep collaborating. At the same time, we welcome Alison Hom-Crosier to our board with her decade of victim advocacy, education, and grant managing experience.



TBOW leads audience members at our August 26 fundraiser in playing gourd shakers, or shekere. Our own Cheryl Craig, FBTW's secretary-treasurer, is in the plaid shorts.

Summer Celebration

By Heidi McPhillips

For those of you who were unable to attend the Summer Celebration Potluck at the end of July, you missed a good time. The Fellowship Hall was alive with music, dancing, and laughter! The potluck was hosted by Circle Dinners, a First UU monthly social dinner club that gives folks an opportunity to host or be a guest at dinner for an evening of getting to know each other or catching up with friends. We hoped the potluck would emphasize the benefit of getting together with folks over a good meal and I think we achieved that goal. The event coincidentally was on the same day at the Lammas Ritual celebrated by the Pagan group, Celestial Celebrations Circle (CCC.) There was some concern about the overlap initially, but it turned out the two paired very well together. Many folks who attended the potluck left to attend the Lammas Ritual after dinner which was just around the corner.

Joan Wells of CCC writes “It was an almost seamless transition. We sat near the playground in the shade of the building and with the breeze that came through, all seemed comfortable.

We went through the songs and the order of the ritual so all could understand the process. Lammas is the first harvest of the year. It is a time when some crops have been harvested but others are still in the fields. We continued our ritual to the much-appreciated fruit popsicles and various muffins for food sharing time.” Many who came to the ritual had never been to one before. One gentleman said that he really had no expectations but whatever the non-expectations were, they were exceeded. The next CCC ritual is the Fall Equinox Celebration on September 17th at 7pm. If you would like more information on the Pagan Group, feel free to contact Joan Wells at morejoanie@gmail.com.

Circle Dinners is a monthly UU dinner club that hosts dinners the second Friday or Saturday of the month September through May. We take a break during the summer months. You can be a host or you can be a guest! If you would like to join Circle Dinners let me know at mcphillipsheidi@gmail.com. We would love to have you!

Down on the Farm

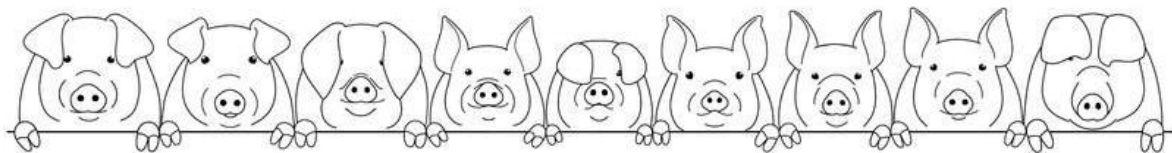
By Glenna Kachtick

First UU member and mother, Kathy Beggs, helped put together a day camp for our youth this summer. Kathy coined the term Vacation Bonding School, an alternative to the traditional VBS – Vacation Bible School. The theme of the camp was related to our 7th Principle: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. The kids learned about farming, growing things, and other earth related topics. Due to a shortage of volunteers, the camp had to be reduced from one week to one day, but the volunteers fit so much into one day! It began with worship including a welcome by Kathy, a chalice lighting by Glenna, and a story about being inside the tree or outside the tree. There was rock painting, pot painting, and bag painting. They learned about seeds with Rev. Nell, growing mung beans and planting kitchen scraps (onions & mint.) They learned how to make butter and enjoyed tasting dandelion jelly! And the highlight of the camp for many kids was interacting with the animals at a traveling petting zoo. The camp was so much fun, and we look forward to making it even better next summer.



Curly

By Roy Ellzey



During most of World War II, between years 1942-1946, there was extensive rationing on a host of goods and services, including domestic meat, throughout the country. Near the end of that period (i.e., somewhere between the years 1945-46) my uncle, who had a large working farm, gave my family a tiny, young piglet, which he assumed we could raise for food if the rationing turned out to be long term. Being only eight or nine years old at the time I really did not have a very good idea of my uncle's intent, so when I was told that caring for the pig would be my regular chore, I accepted the assignment and named the pig "Curly" because of his curly little tail.

Our home site in Magnolia, Mississippi was composed of some 24-acres of land with ample room for a proper pig pen to be built sufficiently far from the back of our house and just rear of the chicken house that supplied us with fresh eggs and an occasional main course for dinner. My job was to see that Curly had fresh food and water, and to maintain his pen in reasonable living condition for him. Since pigs are quite intelligent beings on the scale of animals, it did not take long for Curly to recognize my voice and his name, so began a relationship where I viewed him as essentially a pet. I had a brush to clean his coat and often found myself talking to and petting him as I would the family dog.

The months passed and the war ended along with rationing and any thought I might have had that Curly might be considered a food source was long forgotten. Curly grew from a tiny piglet to a 300-pound hog but was so gentle that I could climb up on his back and ride him around his pen (much to the concern of my mother.) When school was in session my daily routine on coming home was to grab a snack at our house, then go down to care for Curly usually accompanied by my dog Skippy.

Sometime in the fall of 1947 or spring of 1948, I was 10 years old and had just returned from school and to my absolute horror found Curly's carcass (having been executed, cleaned, and dressed) hanging from a two-by-four secured between two trees near his pen. I let out shriek and was inconsolable for the rest of the day. I basically cried myself to sleep that night over the loss of my friend and pet. Fortunately, Curly's remains were removed by the butchers who had slain him before nightfall so was saved the trauma of being exposed to the continuing sight of what had happened.

Apparently, the local meat market in which my family rented a meat locker had prepared and stored an assortment of pork cuts from Curly's remains that they created for my family to "enjoy" over the coming months. Some weeks passed before I came home and discovered my mother cooking pork chops for dinner in a large, over-sized skillet. When I asked if what she was cooking was Curly and she said "yes", I grabbed the skillet, raced into the backyard with my mother in hot pursuit, and threw the contents on the ground. Of course, this did not sit well with my parents, and I received what they considered appropriate punishment. Afterwards I reached a truce with my parents such that I would not be served or expected to consume any of Curly's meat and was joined in the boycott by my twin sisters, who were now almost four years old and had come to share much of my affection for Curly as well. Needless to say, my parents derived very little enjoyment from that meat source either. I think they gave most of it away to avoid the conflict.

Despite my refusal to participate in or even condone the eating of Curly, like most people, I was able to separate my feelings about turning a cherished pet into table food from the eating of meat in general so did not abstain from eating meat from other sources. Still, I realize that the seed had been planted to consider that the breakfast bacon, which had come from a farm pig, could have been a pig very much like Curly under different circumstances.

However, other than for a few brief meatless intervals, it wasn't until the age of 57 in 1994 that, other than the less-evolved forms of seafood, I would resolve to abstain from eating meat and follow a primarily vegetarian diet. That was the point when I read an account of Albert Schweitzer saying that he was a vegetarian because "if he did not need to eat animals he would not do so." Of course, my remembrance of Curly and the appreciation of a number of non-human pets, friends and acquaintances were clearly a factor also. I have continued that resolve ever since.

It Rained!

By Sylvia Wheeler

Toward the end of the Lammas ritual for Celestial Celebrations Circle (CCC) we did our usual Rain Spell. We thanked the Universe for the rain it has sent our way and then, respectfully asked for more. As the Pagan year draws to a close with the Fall Equinox ritual which we will have on Saturday, September 17th, we will once again ask for more beneficial rain to come our way along with profusely thanking the Universe for the rain it has provided in the past month. Now, to backtrack ...

CCC held their Summer Solstice ritual on Saturday, June 18, in the shade of trees and buildings on the children's playground. This made the temperature at the circle quite comfortable. We had about 25 attendees. The Summer Solstice marks the longest day of the year on our planet, but also starts the decline of the sunlight toward Winter Solstice and the shortest day of the year. This year we reprised the battle of the Holly King and the Oak King as symbols for the declining light mentioned above. At Winter Solstice, we may do the same battle for the increasing light which will appear.

Our next ritual was Lammas on Saturday, July 30. In the tradition which we follow in CCC this is called first harvest. This seems strange in South Texas, but we follow a Celtic tradition from England. As we began to plan this ritual, foremost on our minds was the upheaval many people were/are experiencing in many parts of our world. We decided to address areas of abundance in our lives and visualize our fears as the chaff of the harvest. We are constantly bombarded with what we should fear, but our abundances are often overlooked. Planning member, Darcy Walker, wrote a part for this ritual which was called 'Sharing Our Hopes' and which read, in part, "We are used to some degree of freedom and democracy to achieve our hopes. Now we are seeing how fragile our freedoms and ability to vote can be. We still need to listen to others who may express the same values differently. Together, we can share our hopes and be strong and free." This ritual followed after the Summer Celebration Potluck on upper campus. Many people from that function chose to attend our ritual which was, once again, held in the shade of trees and buildings of the children's playground. We were pleased that these people chose to experience our way of expressing our UU faith. We had about 30 attendees.

In August, CCC held a labyrinth walk with drumming and tarot reading. Even in the heat, there were 12 attendees. Many of these people caravanned to have Mexican ice cream together - also outside.

UU Values in the Americas

Submitted by Rev. Art Severance

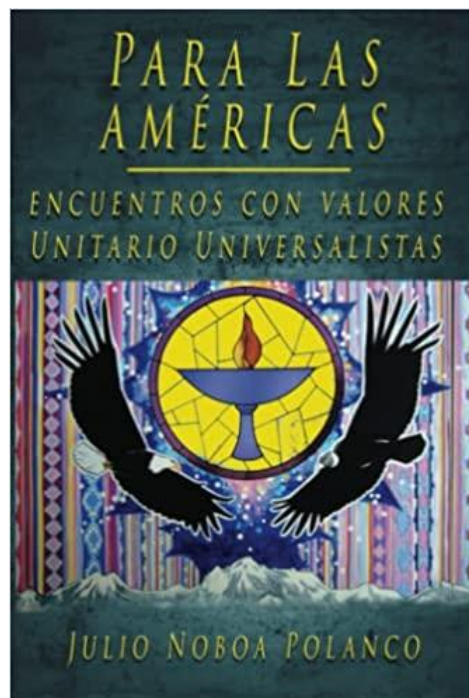
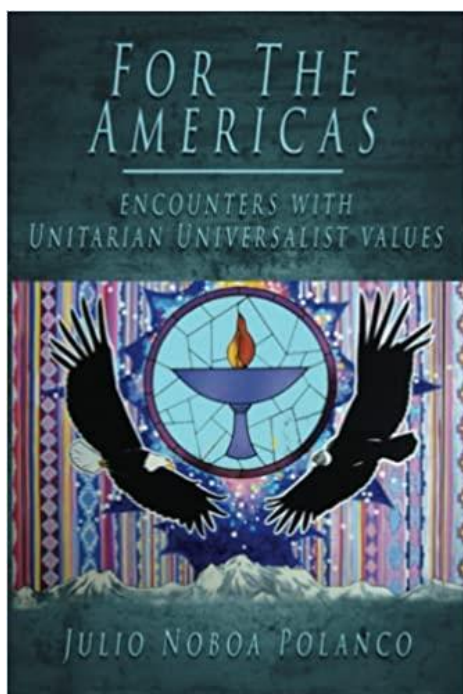
The Unitarian Universalists of Costa Rica are happy to announce the bilingual publication of *For the Americas: Encounters with Unitarian Universalist Values* and *Para Las Américas: Encuentros con Valores Unitario Universalistas*.

For the Americas is a collection of essays by Julio Noboa Polanco (a former member of First UU) covering a wide variety of topics from a progressive Latinx perspective inspired by the principles of the liberal Unitarian Universalist faith. Embracing subjects and issues related to history, politics, religion, peace and justice, this compilation provides readers with information and opinions which challenge traditional modes of spiritual thinking perpetrated by the dominant conservative and patriarchal religions in this hemisphere. Both paperbacks are available on Amazon, and later via other sources, for \$15 each.

Beginning with a brief introduction to the history and theology of the faith, including a listing of outstanding Unitarians and Universalists, these selected essays highlight the harmony between UU principles and sources with some of the most progressive movements and ethical ideas from all the Americas.

This Hemispheric collection gathers together in one volume critical issues and notable individuals from North, South and Central America and does so in both English and Spanish with the intent of bridging the cultural linguistic gap that artificially separates people, communities, and nations of the Americas.

One of the ultimate objectives of this book is to contribute to the fulfillment of the Prophecy of the Condor and the Eagle that will unite dedicated and engaged citizens of the Americas of all races, nations, and creeds in a common cause to overcome the poverty, ignorance, injustice and ecological destruction that has devastated our entire Hemisphere for much too long.



Members Share Their EV Experiences

By Mary Wright

The Green Team hosted an Electric Vehicle (EV) forum on June 1st. They invited church members who currently own electric vehicles to discuss their experiences. About 14 people attended the forum via Zoom (click this link to watch the recording <https://bit.ly/3N6YOat>). Members discussed how electric vehicles operate, pros and cons of owning an electric automobile, and shared their reasons for going electric.

Terry Palin and Randy Blood own a 2020 fully electric Chevy Bolt. This is their second electric vehicle, previously owning a Nissan Leaf. They upgraded to the Bolt because they wanted greater mileage per charge. Their Bolt can go approximately 259 miles for a full charge. They have traveled with it both in town, around the Hill Country, and even took it on a road trip to western New York state. They had to make about 13 stops along the way to recharge which worked out to roughly every couple of hours. Terry explained that there are three types of chargers for electric vehicles: Level 1, 2, and 3. Level 1 chargers are the slowest and typically run on a regular 110-volt outlet found in a residential home. Level 2 chargers are faster and Level 3 chargers are the fastest. On a Level 3 charger, Terry and Randy's car takes around 20-50 minutes to charge. That's about the time to go to the bathroom and grab a bite to eat. At home they installed a Level 2 charger which required hiring an electrician to install a higher voltage outlet and to buy the upgraded charger. Terry heard that prices on the Bolt are expected to run between 26,000-28,000 for the 2023 models.



Chevy Bolt owned by Randy Blood and Terry Palin

Dana Clark owns a 2015 Nissan Leaf. She reports that her car gets about 84 miles per charge. As she only drives around town, this is perfect for her. She uses a regular 110-volt outlet with a 20-foot extension cord and reported that if the church had an EV charging station on campus, she would definitely use it. She noted that most of these cars don't come with spare tires, which she found a bit worrisome at first, but it did come with a tire pump. She found that the frequency and cost of service for her Leaf has been much less than gas powered vehicles. Dana pointed out that while owning and operating an EV significantly decreases her use of carbon-based fuel, that using electricity from the electric grid still contributes to the petroleum industry. She took advantage of CPS' Big Solar program and purchased off site solar panels to help reduce her carbon footprint even more.

Russel and Alison Hom-Crosier own a 2017 hybrid Chevy Volt. It runs off the electric batteries but has a gas engine that will kick in if the batteries run out. They can go about 35 miles per battery charge. The use a regular 110-volt outlet with a 100-foot extension cord to charge the car and it will take about 10 hours to achieve a full charge.

Rob Mahon and Rena D'Souza own a Tesla Model Y. Their version has been upgraded to include the self-driving feature. The car is operated through a computer touch screen mounted on the dash rather than with buttons and knobs you would find in a typical automobile. Rob is a beta tester for Tesla, so he receives regular software updates delivered directly to the car. There are many options included in the vehicle and you can configure the car to match your personal driving preferences. With the self-driving feature, you can program routes into the vehicle, and it will drive you where you want it to go. You must keep your hands touching the steering wheel at all times, as a safety precaution, but the car operates the pedals and steering. There are 8 cameras and lasers mounted on the outside of the car to direct



Tesla Model Y owned by Rena D'Souza and Rob Mahon

it where to go. It can recognize other vehicles on all sides and also sees vehicles two or three lanes away. It also recognizes obstacles in the road, pedestrians, and animals. Many of the functions of the car can be controlled through an app on your phone such as unlocking the doors and starting the engine. It even has a summons feature, which will start the car and drive it to you, for instance if you are at a movie theater or shopping mall. It's kind of like a personal valet. Rob and Rena also installed a Level 2 charger in their garage which they use to charge the battery. Rob ran the math and found that it costs about \$3 to drive 100 miles in the Tesla versus \$16 to go 100 miles in a gas-powered auto. Like Dana's Leaf, the EV doesn't come with a spare tire, but Tesla offers a roadside service to help. Rob noted that because there is no engine (the batteries are located on the bottom of the vehicle) that the car has a frunk (front trunk) instead of a trunk. The Tesla Model Y cost about \$60,000, although around \$10,000 of that was for the self-driving feature, which is optional. Rob noted one of the best parts of driving the car is the acceleration, going from 0-60 in 3 seconds.

Jeff Addington owns a 2015 Nissan Leaf. Jeff has been a strong advocate for Electric Vehicles for many years. In fact, he previously owned a Prius hybrid which he modified with extra batteries. He uses a regular 110-volt outlet to charge his car and uses it primarily for city driving. He signed up for a charging program with CPS where he pays a yearly fee and is able to use any of the city's EV chargers around town for no additional cost. Jeff feels strongly that owning an electric vehicle, instead of a gas powered one, is one of the most impactful things an individual can do for the environment

On the Sunday following the Electric Vehicle (EV) Forum, the EV drivers provided an informal show and tell in the church parking lot after service. There was much multigenerational interest. Thank you to our EV drivers for sharing! Click here to view a recording of the Forum: <https://youtu.be/1G2yx2esfh0>

Act4SA Works for Police Accountability

By Mary Wright

On June 5th First UU's Racial Justice-Black Lives Matter (RJ-BLM) working group hosted Ananda Tomas, founder and director of Act4SA. Born in El Paso, Ananda has a long history of grassroots activism. After receiving her degree in Sociology in New Mexico, Ananda worked through Americorps helping migrant children in New Hampshire. She soon became frustrated in this position as funding and legislative limitations prevented them from fully meeting the needs of the children. She returned to San Antonio in 2015 to be closer to her family. She worked on the Bernie Sanders campaign and with the Texas Organizing Project (TOP), a Texas organization that works to increase people of color's power and representation in the community. She received her Master's in Political Science in 2020 from UTSA.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Later in 2020, Ananda began work with FixSAPD, a police reform organization here in San Antonio that came together following the murder of George Floyd and other prominent deaths of black people at the hands of police. FixSAPD's mission was to repeal two chapters of the Texas Government Code, Chapters 143 and 174. These sections of the code override laws designed to hold police officers accountable, makes police department contract negotiations and reforms unwieldy and subject to corruption, overrules the decisions of the police chief, and limits police transparency. The only way to repeal these chapters is for city residents to vote for their repeal. FixSAPD, with Ananda at the helm, worked tirelessly in 2020 and 2021, during the height of the pandemic, to gather enough signatures to get the Propositions to repeal the chapters on the ballot. First UU helped in this effort by hosting drive through petition drives at the church and several church members volunteered gathering petitions and notarizing petition sheets.

The group gathered over 25,000 signatures, enough to get Prop B on the ballot -- the proposed repeal of [Texas Local Government Code Chapter 174](#), the section of the code that addresses collective bargaining. They were not able to gather enough signatures to put Chapter 143 on the ballot. The election in May 2021 was close, but the group was not successful in passing Prop B. That didn't stop Ananda's passion for police reform. Following the May election in 2021 she founded ACT4SA, the only organization in San Antonio focused solely on policing. Composed of former organizers and volunteers of the Prop B initiative, ACT4SA's primary goal is police accountability and transparency. The group has continued to work on getting the Chapter 143 on the ballot but have taken on several other initiatives as well.



COMPASSION

They are currently pushing for more accountability within the VIA transit police. Some of you might be surprised that VIA actually has its own police force. In fact, within Bexar County there are 64 different law enforcement agencies. These include municipal departments like SAPD, Balcones Heights PD, and Leon Valley PD. This also includes the Bexar County Sheriff's department and multiple school district police departments, such as UTSA and Northside ISD. When Ananda and ACT4SA volunteers started looking at the VIA transit police's records they found multiple instances of over policing (an

excessive police presence or aggressive response to minor offenses.) VIA was not just giving out tickets on or in the vicinity of buses, but throughout the city and over 90% of those tickets went to people of color. In reviewing the VIA PD's policy manual, they found that VIA has not yet banned chokeholds, has no policy regarding release of bodycam footage, and are not participating in the cite & release program (a program where people accused of low-level offenses are issued tickets, rather than arrested). They are also in need of additional training in racial bias, mental health, and sex trafficking issues. ACT4SA has been lobbying VIA to begin addressing these issues.



TRANSPARENCY

Another project the organization is working on is increasing voting access in the Bexar County Jail. Although felons are not allowed to vote in Texas, individuals convicted of misdemeanors or those awaiting trial are eligible to vote. ACT4SA has been lobbying for a polling location at the jail so that the prisoners who are eligible to vote may do so.

Warrant clinics are another important project ACT4SA has spearheaded. Held at a neutral community site with no police presence, warrant clinics allow individuals with outstanding warrants to meet with a judge to negotiate their charges and have their warrants rescinded. They are oftentimes able to reduce their charges and/or work out payment plans. Sometimes the charges are able to be dropped altogether. The first warrant clinic was held on June 25th, and they hope to hold more in the future.

ACT4SA turned one year old in July and although they have already accomplished a lot in that first year, there is still so much more to do. Currently Ananda is the only paid staff within the organization, but she hopes to hire two more staff soon. The group is currently funded primarily from grants and individual donations. They are always in need of additional funding and assistance. To donate or volunteer, visit their website at www.act4sa.org

ACT4SA

ACCOUNTABILITY | COMPASSION | TRANSPARENCY

My Search for Religion – Over and Out!

By Alesa Arnett

Many children are not raised to believe in or have faith in any one religion or attend any place of worship. I am one of those children. My mother's Hebrew grandparents came to the US as young children from the Russian Empire in 1910. Adulthood brought them to their final home in Oak Park, Michigan; near the border of Eight Mile Rd outside Detroit, where I spent much of my life until I graduated from high school. I was aware my grandparents were Jewish, but they were far from orthodox, so I did not practice much of this religion's customs outside of enjoying my grandmother's homemade foods and the Hebrew/Yiddish slang words. I recall sitting with my Bubby in the kitchen while she hand-chopped liver mixed with schmaltz or rolled out and cut egg noodles for her chicken soup. I became familiar with delicatessen fare such as smoked fish; bagels and lox; corned beef sandwiches; kishka...And my favorite treats, kugel, and halvah! My father's parents came to the US from Belgium and Croatia and for my lifetime, church or religion was not a focus for them, either.

So, I raised myself to live life by The Golden Rule which, in my opinion (and we all know what opinions are like), it is a beautiful way to approach life. I eventually began my 'search' for a religion in which I could believe; one that aligned with the values I lived by. I have always felt an attachment to the Jewish part of my heritage, so prior to joining the Air Force in 1988, I had at least been to a Jewish community center and a synagogue. Oak Park also had a large population of Chaldean citizens, and I also met a good friend from India, whose parents and grandparents practiced their customs and traditions religiously. I lightly explored Judaism, then I married my first husband in a Roman Catholic Church after becoming baptized. I was even a member of their Choir. I did ALL this primarily for his family and because I didn't really care, though this caused quite the ordeal for my mother, even though she was simply 'Jewish' by blood. While in USAF Basic Training I (we all) enjoyed Sundays at Church; it was the only way to 'relax' at least once a week, as we were 'at ease' in the Chapel. I learned a bit about Chaplains and how they serve all Airmen, regardless the faith or religion. I found that to be remarkably interesting; very 'open-minded' of them. Further into my AF career, I married my current husband, also a 'Golden Rule-er' and continued to raise three beautiful Golden Rule children; without going to a building to worship. When my oldest daughter was in grade school, she chose to explore religion and we found a young Jewish man to mentor her and teach her a bit of the Hebrew alphabet. This didn't last long as her interest soon fizzled out. We then involved ourselves happily in a Church of the Nazarene – until one woman told me if we didn't believe Christ was our savior, we would go to...Well, you know where. So that was the end of the search for a while.

While in GA, my mother had wonderful next-door neighbors who were Baptist. They invited her to their church a few times and she LOVED it...they were so kind to her and to this day they would keep in touch if they could. I never went to their church, but their kindness to my mother made a positive impression on me. And, as these days somehow it seems to matter; they were black...Beautiful people. We were certainly the minority in Valdosta, GA; not only race-wise, but in religion as well, as most residents were church goers; so much so that when you met someone, one of the first questions you might have been asked was 'which church do you attend?'.

Eventually it was time to move on, and my military journey ended here in San Antonio, 2008. By this time, I'd ditched the search for religion and church. Even during my two deployments to Iraq, I didn't need it. I

offered my help where I could, respected those that found comfort in their time spent with the Chaplain, and focused on making it back home. I retired in 2010.

I had found First UU shortly after my retirement but get this: I didn't want to make the drive to it! That was the single reason I didn't connect with First UU sooner! But then, the universe aligned when I reconnected with a good friend after our paths parted ways. You know, work and family become a priority, time flies, and before you know it life just passes by while we are simply living it. But thanks to the little time I spent looking at pictures and staying connected from afar through Facebook, I saw my good friend Rita Hannah. She looked very thin, not like her normal self; she looked as if she were ill. And I was correct.

After reaching out to her, I discovered she had stage 4 cancer. To make a long story a bit shorter, I agreeing to a weekly visit in hopes of lifting her spirits and helping her wife as best I could to care for her. Early on she mentioned First UU and that she was a prior member. We talked deeply about our beliefs, and that was where our journey with First UU began. The Pandemic was in full swing, and we chose to have a standing Sunday visit to 'go' to church from her home. We really had similar ideas and thoughts about the world, the universe, the creator, the afterlife. We so enjoyed the Sunday service with Mark and joined coffee hour chats. Then we both joined a Covenant group. We attended faithfully until Rita passed away in August 2021, and I've continued with that group since. Every experience gave Rita the connection she needed to endure her remaining months, as she was unable to travel comfortably. We looked forward to conversations and became remarkably close to such beautiful people. During Rita's last year and all that we immersed ourselves in together, our families grew closer. I spent more time with her; my son and husband prepared a home cooked Italian meal and brought it to her home, where we sat and had a beautiful dinner together. My daughter began to visit and help her on days I did not. Such deep relationships formed among us.

I recently told the wonderful Covenant group friends I have made from afar ('Zoom' afar) that I will be moving out of the area and that I had decided that my time with them must end soon. There are so many tasks coming that will need my attention. Our new home is under construction and my commitment can no longer be solid. It is time to give someone else the chance for a beautiful experience with these women. I was so surprised when they invited me to participate when I could; How's THAT for AMAZING!?

So, I write all of this to say that I have become a better person because of my time spent with those connected to First UU. I am more peaceful, more in control, and more content. I have settled into my own chosen thoughts and my own reality about what is and what may come; or not. I can now tuck all my memories of this phase of my life safely away in my mind and heart and draw on it whenever I want to.

I wanted to write this article as a Thank You to all the beautiful UU's that I have met. I especially thank those who have taken the time out to meet with me and share thoughts about their own religious views. You have no idea of the positive impact you have made to me, and in the life of my dear friend Rita. I welcome all days our path's cross. Keep doing good things that help others to live a more peaceful and content life filled with love.

Peacefully, Alesa

A New Initiative for the City of San Antonio: Sharing our Stories

By Mary Grace Ketner

Through the office of our city's Faith-Based Liaison, Rev. Ann Helmke, San Antonians will come to know one another in a new way: by sharing our stories. It's been said that you cannot hate someone if you know their story, and the goal of this story-sharing initiative is to open hearts all over town to the understanding that this 500-square-miles we share is one grand community. We need each other. We are a part of each other. ¡Puro San Antonio!



The first two projects of the organizing group, or "SA Story Collaborative," were (1) to bring ready access to San Antonio-specific stories that will open up spaces and places of community healing during these post-pandemic times via the creation of an online Story Portal (<https://storyportalsatx.org>) and (2) to provide a community healing model at a free public gathering, "The Healing Power of Stories" (<http://sacompassion.net/event/the-healing-power-of-stories/storytellers>) using storytelling and community conversation, a model that can be replicated in schools, community centers, congregations, homes, and other places.

"The Healing Power of Stories" is set for Sunday afternoon, September 11, 2:00-4:30 at Oblate School of Theology's Whitley Center. Four San Antonio authors - **Fr. David Garcia**, **Naomi Shihab Nye**, **Simran Jeet Singh**, and **Mario Salas** - will share their wisdom about the healing that comes through story (and introduce us to their latest books). Following each speaker, participants will have a chance to reflect on their own stories and experiences in conversation with neighbors. Details about the event can be found at <http://sacompassion.net/event/the-healing-power-of-stories/>.

"The Healing Power of Stories" will also officially launch the Website, but you can view it now at <https://storyportalsatx.org> as it evolves. Already it has links to an array of stories collected by organizations such as the San Antonio Food Bank, the HEB Foundation, San Antonio Report ("Where I Live" and "Where I Work" series), Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Living in my Skin, Ransomed Life, and others.

It is my pleasure to be a part of the Story Collaborative that is organizing these projects. To me, this initiative is a step along the path of justice, equity, and compassion as well as a stride toward world community as we affirm in our principles. If you have ties with an organization which has already been collecting people's stories online, please let me know. And if your organization would like to collect its

own stories but isn't sure how to begin, we can help with that, too. That is our third project! I welcome questions or ideas for moving any of these projects forward! Email me at marygraceketner@gmail.com.

The office of the Faith-Based Liaison is part of San Antonio's Human Services Department. You may know of its other initiatives such as the Action Alert, which texts a basic need inviting your help on behalf of some group in our city approximately once a month, or SACRD.org where anyone can find services offered by faith communities such as food pantries, clothing closets, addiction treatment, GED or ESL classes, and others. Get more information at <https://www.sanantonio.gov/humanservices/FaithBased>.

Watering Connections

By Linda Nash

For the last year or so, I've had some reason to spend time hand watering on our UU campus. I try to find a time when there are no meetings, no activities, when dragging hoses around won't bother anyone. The interesting thing about watering alone is that I often don't remain alone. Some people are drawn to our campus during the quiet times. I would like to share with you a couple of my favorite visits.

K - This sweet lady from the neighborhood came and sat with me on the edge of one of the raised beds. She helped me with the weeding and offered to come water when I couldn't make the drive. K sees our church campus as her temple. She says she usually arrives at night when she can't sleep, and walks around looking at the trees, the plants, and the sky. She likes to pick up trash, looks for other ways to help, and then rings the chimes just before going home.

K told me that one night she saw parts of a trampoline on the ground. She says she worked for a couple of hours that night putting the trampoline back together. At first, I thought this was crazy, but then I remembered that a few weeks before Von had worked very hard putting a trampoline together, and that he had taken it down when it was decided that it was not safe for the kids. I remembered that I had seen the same trampoline reassembled a week or so later, and then it disappeared again. I decided, hmm, maybe K's story was true.

J - This interesting man approached me during a hot sunny day while I was watering trees on the playground. He had on a backpack and wanted me to know that he was not homeless. He just lives outside. He mentioned that walking through the campus one day he noticed our banners of inclusiveness, our open minds, he said, and that he was attracted to the campus. He also mentioned that the chimes and the greenery give him a peaceful feeling. When I invited him to visit us on Sunday at 11, he backed off, retreating in a way. He told me about his travels, and about his ability to live outside without the US dollar. He continued to talk about his activism for the homeless and asked me to please support them as well.

It saddened me to think that in the near future, these visitors would be locked out by the new fences that will be going up. I know it's necessary for us to create a safe space for our congregation, but I hope that we can also find ways to be accessible to a wider circle of folks.

Pridefest Returns

By Mary Wright

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, Pridefest returned to San Antonio and First UU was there! The Rainbow Inclusion Committee manned an information booth with bumper stickers, flags, tee shirts, and all kinds of information about our church. They talked to loads of people and, despite the heat, had a lot of fun. The evening culminated with a Pride parade. The beautiful parade pictures are courtesy of Lito Bujanda-Moore.





Ode to the Past

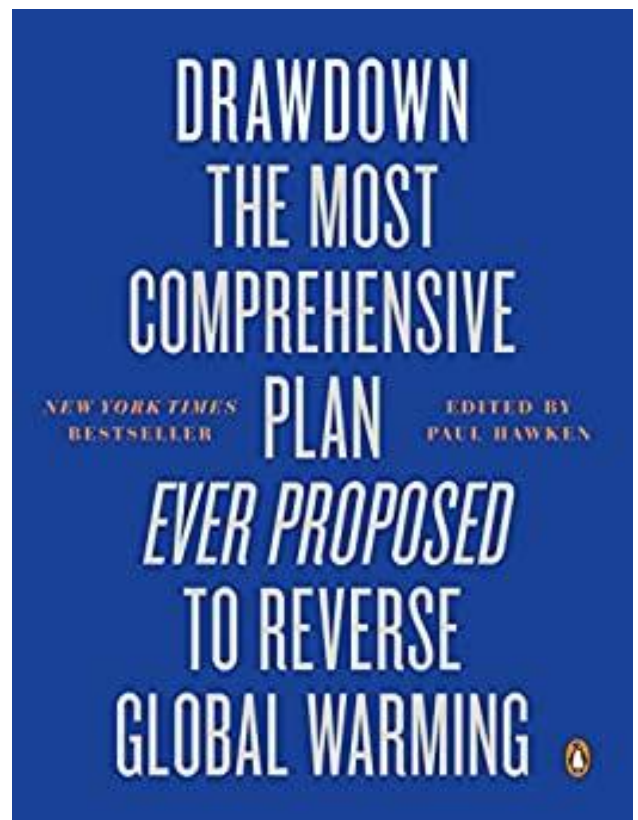
by Orwellia Vack

It occurred to me last week, during a conversation with my dearest friend, that talking about the past these days, as the best place to rest our minds, is not only a form of futile escapism but also a betrayal of the future. National politics have become, we argued, a debate about whether that time was truly ever better. She and I agreed that one might say yes (if afflicted with total amnesia) or say no (if a concerted naysayer).

We went through events in American history, not in order of course but as a stream of consciousness, recalling fundamental events that still tear us apart: Civil War and Jim Crow; the Mexican-American War, and the “build the wall” rhetoric; the Great Depression, and the recession we seem to be in; WWI and its horrid sequel; McCarthyism; the banning of books about LGBTQ and people of color; MLK’s slaying, and protests to retain Confederate monuments on site, etc., etc. We had been on the phone for about an hour, when we added, “Ah yes: Vietnam; Afghanistan; Aids, H1N1, Pandemic I, Pandemic II, a third booster’; ” etc., etc... throwing in “global warming” for good measure. We giggled and sighed.

Many of us, and hopefully most UUs, have a hard time when hearing comments on how things were better in that mythical black hole carelessly referred to as “back then.” We roll our eyes and take a deep breath and think of ourselves as a bit more educated beings than the present vociferous majority. We are sure we are a bit more caring and patient, and we try different attitudes to illustrate just how tolerant we can be towards such historical distortions.

There is a book at our UU bookstore, a large, used volume, that is on sale for under ten dollars. Titled *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, it lies all alone on a table amongst children’s books. Should I rescue it from oblivion? A used book? A book with a bent cover and markings? A markdown? No! The free chocolates went out the door faster.



When I first read this book, I did so as part of an effort to join a book club. After leaving my research positions, I have desperately tried to engage in rational discussions with people who share my passions. I have joined reading groups all over the U.S. only to be sadly disappointed for one reason or another. This time, I thought, Wow! What a choice, what a topic! Surely, we would devour *Drawdown's* content and participate in a fascinating debate. I read the whole thing, marked it, underlined it; was fascinated with all the information it contains. I arrived quite enthusiastic to the meeting to find that not even the moderators had read it. What I encountered was a yawn scene: too much science, too much engineering, a whole bunch of essays on stuff like wind turbines, concentrated solar power, and energy storage; some tiresome studies on transportation issues, and a small section dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls.

“Too dense,” “did not have time,” “was too tired.” The group went through a bit more scoffing here and there and then, someone suddenly tore through the slumber, spoke up, and said: What are we reading next week?

The information in *Drawdown* is all from the past. A useful past, a realistic past, not a *dreamy past*, or a glossed over one (mostly lies containing some version about nuclear families, white fences, and green grass), but rather . . . a past full of scientific research and applied technologies based on concerted human endeavor; a time full of effective solutions and wholesome collective efforts to preserve our planet’s unique resources that already exist and that we CAN use today. It is a book that, at five years of age, and considered old and tattered, contains SOLUTIONS about things we, as a society, can embrace to preserve an opportunity for the future based on solutions that are already tried and true. In my humble opinion, that is what the past should always be about.



Condolences

...to the family and friends of Joycelyn Rudeloff, who passed away on June 20, 2022. Click this link to read Joycelyn’s obituary: [Joycelyn Rudeloff Obituary \(1925 - 2022\) - New Braunfels, TX - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sanantonio/obituary.aspx?n=joycelyn-rudeloff&pid=obit&cat=obit)

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First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio

7150 W. Interstate 10, San Antonio, TX 78213-3465

(210) 344-4695

www.uusat.org