

# *Inspire*



**FIRST UU**  
SAN ANTONIO

The quarterly newsletter of  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio  
Spring 2022



## Inspire

newsletter@uusat.org

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**Cover photo:** Members of First UU San Antonio rallying at the capitol in Austin in support of Trans children and their families.

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# *Our Assistant Minister Search: An Update*

by Rev. Mark Skrabacz

Research shows that successful organizations focus first on building a strong and broad base of leadership. This is the rationale for us to hire an Assistant Minister who will contribute supplemental leadership skills, so that our Church will have enduring success. In our past 10 years we have grown to the size where our church has become too big for a solo minister.

Lack of a broad, effective base of leaders is a critical factor in the stagnation of Church growth. For our church to further grow, our professional leadership base must expand. Thus, we have been engaged for the better part of a year, since our Congregational meeting in May 2021 to approve the Budget, in a search for an Assistant Minister to work in concert with the Lead Minister. Together two ministers working with staff and volunteer leadership will accelerate our growth and necessary changes exponentially.

Here are some areas of responsibility and support to be provided by an Assistant Minister:

Enhancing Communications with the Congregation: Staying in touch with lay leadership and congregants, and participating in the areas of service with Membership, Social Justice, Pastoral and Member Care, and Religious Education.

Amplifying Vision and Mission: Educating and encouraging our community on ways to clarify and reinforce our key values.

Increasing Leadership: Identifying, recruiting and mentoring wider lay leadership.

Staff Enhancement: Having the flexibility, skillfulness and professional preparation to serve or fill in necessary critical roles.

In my study of the marketing and recruitment of Assistant Ministers in UU Congregations the size of ours, I discovered that it sometimes took 2-3 years to identify and hire a qualified and available candidate. This slow pace and limited number of candidates was due in part to the relatively few UU Churches of our size seeking Assistant Ministry. COVID has only made hiring harder. During 2020-21, the year-long Settled Ministerial hiring cycle had fewer than 30 Churches with about as many ministers in search. That we were able to identify and interview 3 candidates for Assistant Minister within the past 6 months is encouraging. I appreciate that our Board made one of its Goals for 2021-22 to support this process with an Ad Hoc Search Team to assist me in one of my key roles as Chief of Staff, which is to recruit, hire and train all of our Staff.

I'm pleased to report to you that we are in the final phase of background and reference checks for our top choice. She, too, has done her research on us and has spoken with our last 3 ministers going back to Rev. Art Severance. She continues to express a keen interest in serving as our Assistant Minister. I should be able to announce her hiring in the next few weeks, before the end of March, after final details and the signing of a Contract are worked out. We are looking at a start date in May. I am excited about this progress and look forward to introducing to you our new Assistant Minister.

# *Searching for a Settled Minister*

By Gale Morrow

After the departure of Rev. Josh Snyder in May 2019, the First UU Board of Trustees contracted with Rev. Mark Skrabacz to serve as our minister until July of 2022. Because Rev. Snyder's departure was out of sync with the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA's) search schedule and for other reasons, this decision has served us well.

During our last two ministerial searches, First UU participated in the UUA's Search to Call process. This process lasts two years: a year of congregation-wide evaluation and a year of search. During the Search to Call process, a church contracts with an interim minister who guides the congregation during its search. Rev. Mark is currently serving in this capacity. The First UU Leadership Development Committee (LDC) is charged in our bylaws with identifying a slate of candidates to serve on a ministerial search committee. The committee is then voted on by the congregation.

Members of the most recent ministerial search committee expressed concern about First UU's experience with the Search to Call process. As a result, Board President Gale Morrow asked the LDC to conduct a focus group with members of the last two ministerial search committees to learn what they thought of the process and how it might be improved. On January 30, the LDC hosted this focus group during which former search committee members were asked a series of questions about their experience in the search.

The focus group members agreed that the process of the search created comradery and cohesiveness that allowed them to work together successfully. A diversity of abilities and backgrounds created a representative cross section of the membership so all felt heard.

Due to the length and expense of the search process, committee members did not feel they could have ended the search without choosing a final candidate. The time commitment of the committee members also posed a challenge for members.

When asked what First UU needs in a minister, several focus group members mentioned caring, loving kindness and compassion: someone who cares about being a minister and wants to be 100% involved with the church. Pastoral care and social justice should be on the short list of important priorities. But First UU has many priorities, so our minister must be multi-talented.

The focus group discussed an alternate to the Search to Call process. This alternative is called the Contract to Call process. Under Contract to Call, First UU would contract with a minister for a defined period of time during which the congregation would assess the ministerial fit and the minister would decide if they felt First UU was right for them. The responses were unanimously in favor of this option, especially if we had a particular minister in mind who knew Texas and Texas churches. Many felt that at the end of one year we would have a good idea if the contracted minister would be the right person to serve as a called minister.

First UU is now considering options for finding and calling a settled minister. The focus group advocated for the Contract to Call process. If this is our way forward, it lies in the Board's hands to identify and contract with a minister. This must happen with consultation of the congregation. Our next steps will be to hold congregational meetings to discuss our options. In the meantime, once the Committee on Shared Ministry completes Rev. Mark's evaluation and presents it to the Board, the Board will consider the

extension of his contract through July 2023 and possibly longer. This extension will allow the congregation time for careful consideration of the next steps in finding the best settled minister for First UU.

If you have ideas about calling or contracting our next minister, please reach out to a Board member to discuss your thoughts. We welcome your ideas.

**The Social Justice Committee  
requests nominations for  
Share the Plate  
for August 2022- July 2023**

**To be nominated for Share the Plate, an organization must meet the following qualifications:**

1. It must be a 501(c)(3) non-profit with a mission of service, advocacy, or direct action.
2. It must be either a local organization or a UU affiliated organization that is not already receiving budgeted support from FUUCSA.

*Note: Nominators of selected Share the Plate recipients will serve as the liaison to connect the organization, the Share-the-Plate coordinator and the congregation.*

**To nominate an organization, email the following information by March 15, 2022 to**  
[sharetheplate@uusat.org](mailto:sharetheplate@uusat.org)

1. The name of the organization.
2. A one-sentence description of the organization for the ballot.
3. The organization's Web site.

A list of the qualified nominations with links to their websites will be published for the May Congregational meeting on a ballot. The four (4) organizations with the highest votes will be assigned a month, and as the date approaches, the coordinator and the nominator will promote Share the Plate.

# *In Support of Trans Texans and Their Families*

by Rev. Erin Walter, Minister & Executive Director of Texas UU Justice Ministry

Trans people embody the inherent worth and dignity that is a pillar of our Unitarian Universalist faith. At the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry, our hearts are with trans kids, their families and caregivers, and all trans and nonbinary people. We love you fiercely, and will forever fight for your rights and honor the beautiful ways you are *you*.

As has been reported, Attorney General Ken Paxton and Governor Greg Abbott are *threatening* to remove trans-children from their homes if parents seek gender-affirming care, prosecute their parents for child abuse, and prosecute mandatory reporters — including clergy — for failing to report this “child abuse.”

These threats are abhorrent, unconscionable, and immoral, and Paxton and Abbott's fear-mongering poses real danger to the health and safety of trans Texans. However, we also want to send legal and spiritual reassurance from TXUUJM partners, ministers, and friends.

**To trans UUs and parents, caregivers, and families of trans kids:** You are deeply loved. Paxton and Abbott do NOT speak for your communities of faith. Your clergy are NOT required to report gender-affirming care, nor would we. We pray you are tending to your needs and doing what gives you joy right now. Please reach out to your local clergy or church care teams for support, or contact [TXUUJM@gmail.com](mailto:TXUUJM@gmail.com) and let us know how your state justice ministry can support you. We pledge to do everything we can.

## *We Are Not Leaving*

By Annaliese Cothron

I joined the board of Equality Texas just a few weeks ago. Man, what a time to step into this role. I fought alongside advocates like [Equality Texas](#) and [Transgender Education Network of Texas](#) in a truly traumatizing year filled with hateful attacks on my child's very existence. And now, in the cruelest turn of events, my Governor has unleashed a direct call to report the care I give to my child as abuse. It's dangerous, it's unnecessary, is political theater, and it's scary. They want to silence us, they want us to leave, they want to control us by weaponizing our community against us.



I want to be clear: we are not leaving. We deserve to live in Texas without fear. We deserve to thrive, we deserve respect, and trans people deserve equal access to every civil benefit without fear of discrimination. My trans kid deserves to grow into a trans adult.



If you are looking for a way to be actionable, here it is:

1. **Give.** Here is a link to donate to Equality Texas: <https://www.amplifyatx.org/.../annaliese-cothron-63aa8e5d...>. I also strongly suggest donating to TENT, ACLU, and Lambda Legal. Everyone needs resources to support parents and children.
2. **Stay mad.** Stay talking about this next week and the week after. We cannot afford to let this pass with the news cycle. Stay engaged and stay vocal.
3. **VOTE.** If you are in Texas VOTE ABBOTT AND PAXTON OUT OF OFFICE. Don't forget about this in November. Fuel your outrage toward a definitive action that removes evil leaders from office.

## *Trust Fund for Endowments*

By Arlis Olson

**November Donations - Birthdays:** Pat & Bruce Beck, Martha Cooley **Undesignated:** Brian Evans, Gale Morrow & Dexter Katzman, Janet Realini, Heather Hedquist, John Hurst **In memoriam:** Pat & Bruce Beck for Dave Minnich, Claudia Glass for Bill Stavinoha, Maggi Joseph & Lucy Norton for Jerome Zimmerman and Dave Minnich, Arlis Olson for Dave Minnich and Jean Graham

**December Donations - Birthdays:** Pat Ellis, Kathy McFarlane, Mary Potter, Marilyn Stavinoha **Undesignated:** Brian Asher & Carlos Gonzales, Elke Walten, Karen Waldron **In memoriam:** Brian Asher & Carlos Gonzales, April & Alan Chase, Diane Duesterhoeft & Mike Phillips for Dave Minnich; Dave & Lana Sund for Dave Minnich and Bill Stavinoha, Rachel Cheyney for Rowena Rodgers and Joan Bradshaw, Marilyn Stavinoha for Rowena Rodgers

**January Donations - Birthdays:** Carol Bertsch, James & Polly Noel, Michelle Willhelm **Undesignated:** Brian Evans, Elena J Manzano-Lusk **In memoriam:** Patsy Cheyney for Rowena Rodgers, Diane Duesterhoeft & Mike Phillips for Vilmos Agoston and Rowena Rodgers, Arlis Olson for Ed Garrison, Joan Bradshaw and Vilmos Agoston, Gary & Marianne Ross for Rowena Rodgers, Marilyn Stavinoha for Vilmos Agoston

### **SPECIAL MENTION**

\$50,000 from the Bettie Ward estate in December

The last three months netted a \$54,095 increase in this fund. We are especially grateful for the \$50,000 donation from the Bettie Ward estate and urge all of you to consider the church in your estate planning. There are several ways of doing this. Some of the most common are specific dollar amounts or percentages of your estate designated in your will. You can also designate a specific item, such as real estate. You can designate the church as a beneficiary on your mutual funds or other investments. There are also life income gifts and charitable trusts and annuities. See your estate planning attorney or financial adviser to determine what is right for you. You may ask the church for a list of those professionals who are members. We realize not everyone can afford to give large amounts and are equally grateful for all contributions. The last three months \$4,095 increase was significant but much of it was due to donations in memoriam for valued church members. The church appreciates this way of honoring our departed but we mourn their loss. All donations help.



Dear Members and Friends,

Today I'm writing with the purpose to inform and hopefully inspire us to pledge during our annual Stewardship Campaign. As a student of life, I've learned that human nature is always in flux and that a stabilizing antidote is required. That remedy can be provided by the element of intention, of purposeful direction to a goal, one that transcends the self in order for the self to grow and thrive. The spirituality that we teach at First UU is about this very purposeful intention of building Beloved Community, and thereby transcending our individuality for the sake of a larger group with a greater purpose.

Our First UU Church is our spiritual home, precisely because it offers us a stable and larger place to express our own individual brands of spirituality, which consists of coming alive, of making loving connections and achieving purposeful intention. Here we each can and must find and develop our own authentic path. Here we can realize that truths are found in doing and supporting the things that we love.

*These principles of life apply directly to our annual Pledge Drive, which can serve to remind and encourage us to grow into our purposes as a Community.*

As your Minister a major part of my job has to do with setting our direction and reinforcing our vision. These have to do with growth. How many wise persons have noted that life is either about growing or dying? Hence, I have set a vision for comprehensive growth, not just growth numerically or financially — growth in breadth and depth, too.

That's where we are heading. During our Pledge Drive in this month of March, won't you do your part to further our vision and look at what this community means to you personally? And going beyond your own needs and desires, consider what our Church and its involvements mean to our larger San Antonio community, and beyond that to the needs of our State, Nation and World. That's a purposeful direction that greatly transcends the self for the sake of life itself! Let's do this together with a 100% participation — each of us giving as we can, giving until it feels good! Thank you!

**With care and hope,**  
**Rev. Mark Skrabacz**

**Click on the link below to submit your pledge**  
**[Pledge Form – First Unitarian Universalist Church San Antonio \(uusat.org\)](https://uusat.org/PledgeForm)**



# *Ukraine and Our Commitment to Peace*

**Russia's invasion of Ukraine reminds us that peace, justice, and human rights are linked and interdependent.**

By Bruce Knotts

Reprinted from the UU World Magazine, published by the Unitarian Universalist Association, 2/23/2022

The [Kellogg-Briand Pact](#) of 1928 outlawed annexing territory by conquest. This pact provided a basis for the World War II war crimes trials. Reinforcing the [Kellogg-Briand Pact](#), [Unitarian Universalists](#) John Washburn from the United States and Elaine Harvey from Canada led the faith caucus for the establishment of the International Criminal Court with the [Rome Statute](#), which upholds the principles ending war and violent aggression.



Since 1945 no nation had gained territory through conquest until 2014, when Russia took Crimea from Ukraine and attacked the [Donbas region of Ukraine](#). Over 15,000 Ukrainians have been killed.

Unitarian Universalists banded together with the Union for Reform Judaism and Rissho Kosei-kai (Japanese Buddhist organization) to form Religions for Peace (RFP), which was founded in Kyoto, Japan, in October 1970. RFP consists of the world's most prominent faith leaders from over 100 countries. It has mediated conflicts and worked for peace for more than five decades. The UUA is a crucial supporter and leader in RFP International and [RFP USA](#), which I serve as a co-moderator.

Also, in 1970, Unitarian Universalist Rev. Homer Jack founded the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security at the United Nations and started publishing *Disarmament Times*. I am currently chair of this committee, and we continue to publish [Disarmament Times](#).

Throughout our sixty-year history at the United Nations, the [UU@UN](#) has pointed out that peace, justice, and human rights are linked and interdependent.

## **How did the current situation in Ukraine happen?**

In the 1994 [Budapest Memorandum](#), the United States, Russia, and Britain committed "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" and "to refrain from the threat or use of force" against Ukraine. With those assurances, Ukraine gave up its 1,900 strategic nuclear warheads.

The [UU@UN](#) continues to work for disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

[Viktor Yanukovych](#) was the Ukrainian president from 2010 to 2014. He kept Ukraine close to Russia, amassed stunning wealth, lived opulently, and was corrupt. He wanted Russian to be the language of Ukraine. The [Euromaidan](#) protests started in November 2013 against Yanukovych. On February 22, 2014, Yanukovych was impeached, and he fled the country. Ukraine has leaned towards the west and away from Russia ever since.

[Victoria Nuland](#) joined the U.S. Foreign Service with me in 1984. Of our entire 1984 class, she has been the most successful. She was the point person during the Ukraine crisis. In a 2016 U.S. Senate Foreign Relations testimony, she said Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine "shattered any remaining illusions about this Kremlin's willingness to abide by international law or live by the rules of the institutions that Russia joined at the end of the Cold War."

Victoria left the Department of State along with many others when Trump became president in 2017. She rejoined as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in April 2021.

[Donald Trump has had close relations with Russia](#) for thirty years. In 2016, it was clear that Russia worked to get Trump elected and block Hillary Clinton. Trump was attracted by the power and wealth that Vladimir Putin can amass for himself.

[Paul Manafort](#), Trump's campaign manager previously worked to get [Viktor Yanukovych](#) elected as President of Ukraine and align it with Russia.

The soaring words in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sound like they were drafted by a Unitarian. They were. [John Peters Humphrey](#) completed the first draft at the request of Eleanor Roosevelt and shepherded the document to its conclusion in 1948. When I spoke to the UU Congregation in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, I discovered that John Peters Humphrey was a Unitarian and member of the Winnipeg congregation. The preamble reads:

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations."

*Bruce Knotts worked for Raytheon in Saudi Arabia and on a World Bank contract in Somalia before joining the Department of State as a U.S. diplomat in 1984. Bruce retired from the Foreign Service in 2007 and joined the Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations as its executive director in 2008.*

# *UBarU Receives 2022 Grant from H-E-B*

By Roy Ellzey

In late January UBarU was notified by the H-E-B Environmental Affairs Team that we would be receiving \$20,000 to implement a Cedar Mitigation and Land Restoration project at the facility. This will be the fifth grant received from H-E-B since 2017 to help UBarU become more environmentally sustainable with respect to water conservation and renewable energy. This is also in keeping with one part of our mission statement which is to create a place that is in harmony with the Land.

Grants received from H-E-B include:

- 2017 - \$4,000 to start cedar mitigation;
- 2018 - \$12,500 for solar panels on Hermitage & Sojourner Cottages;
- 2019 - \$12,500 for continue cedar mitigation for fire protection around the campus;
- 2021 - \$15,000 for winter storm clean-up and to save damaged oak trees;
- 2022 - \$20,000 for cedar mitigation beyond the campus and land restoration.

Some may not be aware that dense growths of cedar (junipers) present a problem other than agony for many who are allergic to their pollen. They also prevent anything else from growing beneath them and are detrimental to the water supply if too abundant. In addition, they present a greater danger for spreading wildfires.

Cedars are actually native to the Hill Country however, they have no natural predators (animals don't eat their foliage and insects do them no harm), and they spread over an area relatively quickly. Left unchecked cedar will create dense thickets which choke out other more desirable native plants, trees, grasses and wildflowers. They adversely affect the water supply because research, such as was performed at the Bamberger Ranch Preserve, has determined that they prevent most rainwater from being able to seep down to the aquifers.

Cedars were historically kept in check in the Hill Country by wildfires when the land was sparsely populated. But natural wildfires are less common and, for developed areas, would present an even greater problem. So, planned mitigation is the best solution. This grant will enable UBarU to hire a professional land management company to mechanically remove the bulk of the cedar for this project. We will use volunteers to assist the professional team, where appropriate, and to handle the spreading of native grass and wildflower seeds in the grounds where the cedar was removed. We can use some of the land-restoration portion of the grant to purchase new trees which we can supplement with a fund that was created with donations to purchase trees after the winter storm. This will further enhance the diversity of plant life at UBarU. Overall, this project will benefit UBarU in multiple ways beyond just water conservation. It will contribute to the beauty of the property, provide better wildfire protection, and contribute to the health of the wildlife.

Once again H-E-B has shown that beside offering Texans excellent grocery stores it is a valued partner of the community it serves, and deserves a big thank you for helping make UBarU a better place for all of us.



# Valentine Senior Lunch

By Polly Noel

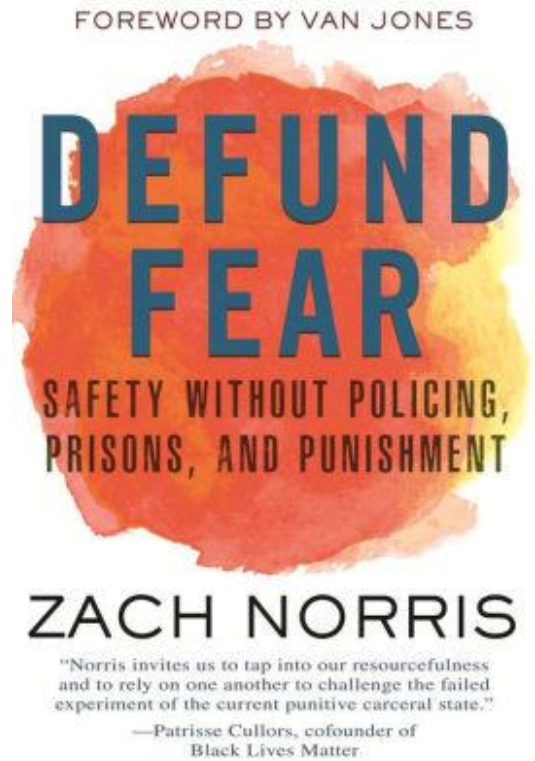
About 50 UUs gathered for the annual Valentine Senior Lunch after the service on Sunday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. The event, which was sponsored by the Stewardship, Membership, Member Care, and Capital Campaign Committees and the Trust Fund of the Endowments, was held at the Pig Pen. Most attendees sat outdoors, enjoying beautiful weather and catching up with old friends. Rev. Mark and Carolyn Skrabacz joined in the festivities. Special music was provided by the Bring a Song of Love Dulcimer Players, led by Ron Tullius. Ty and Heidi McPhillips and Carol Bertsch greeted and assisted guests and Terry Palin brought special treats. Betty Burgner took photos and created a special slide show for all to enjoy: [FUU Valentine's Senior Lunch 2022](#).



# 2022 Common Read: Defund Fear

By Terri Chadwick, co-chair of the Denominational Connections Committee

On MLK's birthday at 7:00pm, eleven congregants joined for a Zoom discussion of the UUA's 2022 Common Read book *Defund Fear: Safety Without Policing, Prisons, and Punishment* by Zach Norris. Many had read the whole book, some had read half and one hadn't read it but planned to do so. After a Chalice Lighting and encouragement to speak with respect, love and patience, we dived into the many questions prepared by the facilitator, Terri Chadwick. Many thought it a good and well written book with historical and research facts that we didn't know. The last half of the session until 8:15pm, we discussed the author's methods for achieving a caring community including using relationships, connection and restorative justice. We agreed it was a daunting task, but most of us were hopeful. Closing words summed up the author's hope: "If we are able to transform our old system and create a culture of caring and healing in its place, we may have an actual shot at creating a real democracy for the first time."



## *The Legend of the Fire Stag*

by Sheri Phillabaum & Roy Ellzey

Many *Inspire* readers may already be aware of the children's book *Who Loves the Dark?* written by our own DLRE, Dr. Sheri Phillabaum, that was published by Shearer Publishing and the Texas A&M University Press. That book was inspired by an event at UBarU ([www.ubaru.org](http://www.ubaru.org)) and is intended to teach children to appreciate natural dark skies and why we need them.

Now Sheri and her husband, Dr. Roy Ellzey, have created a second children's book, *The Legend of the Fire Stag*, which will also be published by Shearer Publishing and the Texas A&M Press this coming fall. Just as with the first book, this book was also inspired by an event at UBarU, a remarkable photograph taken by their son Clifton when he was attending high-school summer youth camp at UBarU some years ago. That photograph became the seed for a mythical legend related to a tract of land, much like that at UBarU, which became the host for summer youth camps. And the story explains how one special boy journeyed through a full spectrum of camps to fulfill the legend.

The result is a compelling and somewhat magical tale that is infused with elements of the interdependent web of existence, and is receiving excellent early reviews of the manuscript. Hopefully it will promote greater interest in camps such as UBarU that are in harmony with the Land and UU principles. The completed manuscript is in final development by the publisher's design team and, like *Who Loves the Dark*, will be available on Amazon, the InSpirit bookstore of the UUA, UBarU, the church's Emerson Bookstore, and a variety of other book sellers.



# Owning Who We Are Religiously

John Gibbs

In June 2020, the UUA published *Widening the Circle of Concern*, which is essentially an attempt to address an obvious question: Why are UU congregations not attracting more persons of color? After all, one would think Unitarian Universalism should be attractive to those who are most affected by oppression and injustice, given our strong explicit affirmations of freedom and social justice as imperatives.

The diagnosis is hardly comforting. The book, whose subtitle is “Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change”, argues that extricating ourselves from the “structural and systemic racism and white supremacy culture within Unitarian Universalism” needs to be seen as a theological imperative.

The root of the word religion comes from a Latin verb, *ligare*, which means “to bind”. The word ligament has the same etymological ancestry. Thus religion is a means by which we are connected to each other, by which communities are held together, by which we are inescapably linked to what the Seventh Principle of Unitarian Universalism calls “the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part”, but also by which our social bonds are insidiously complicated by “the ways in which systemic white supremacy is woven into our group cultures, interpersonal relationships, and individual ingrained biases” (a quote from the UU 2021 Social Justice Statement, “Undoing Systemic White Supremacy: A Call to Prophetic Action”).

First UU’s new class, “Owning your Religious Past: Exploring who, as Unitarian Universalists, we are religiously: from our past experiences to who we hope to become”, is an opportunity to transform the way we relate to each other and to outsiders (some of whom might be sources of discomfort). The class starts on March 6. For more information email Sheri at [dlre@uusat.org](mailto:dlre@uusat.org)

## Basura Bash 2022

By Diane Duesterhoeft

On Saturday morning, February 19th, members of the First UU Green Sanctuary Team cleaned a section of Zarzamora Creek located in Leon Valley next to HEB Marketplace during the 2022 [Basura Bash](#). Lots of volunteers from other organizations helped pick up trash in this section, so the creek bed and its banks were cleaned in less than two hours!



First UU members Cheryl Lardy, Ray Nash, Linda Nash, Diane Duesterhoeft, and Mike Phillips cleaned along Zarzamora Creek on Saturday, February 19, 2022 during the Basura Bash.



# Free Battered Texas Women

## Winter 2021-22 Updates

by Cathy Marston, PhD, FBTW Executive Director & First UU Member

- FBTW's busy winter began with our December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, holiday card party. A dozen church members turned out to help us send greetings to our 70 incarcerated and released sister-survivors! We are grateful for the community support, food, and monetary donations. We heard back from several of the ladies on the inside and out with their gratitude for these cards.
- On January 21, 2022, we held a virtual panel for Dream Week on *Women Fighting the Injustice System*. Thank you to the Social Justice Committee at First UU, which funded honoraria for our formerly incarcerated panelists. Our panelists included: **Cynthia Simons**, the Grant Me the Wisdom Foundation Women's Fellow and Coordinator, Texas Women's Justice Coalition, of the Texas Center for Equity and Justice; **Laquita Garcia**, Statewide Criminal Justice Policy Coordinator, Texas Organizing Project; **Allison Franklin**, Adjunct Instructor, National Criminal Justice Training Center, Fox Valley Technical College; **Doshie Piper, PhD**, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, University of the Incarnate Word, and Elder, True Vine Church; **Shannon FitzPatrick, JD**, lawyer and member, San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; and myself.

Topics discussed by the panel included how we can prevent intimate partner violence and support survivors – especially in the effort to stop arrests of and grant clemency to survivors and support them in their reentry; how to create a race and gender sensitive reform agenda for the criminal legal system and our society; how our spiritual traditions help/hurt our justice agendas; and how to fight back against the new bail law that restricts how 501©(3)'s like TOP and Mano Amiga run community bail funds to fight wealth-based detention that negatively impacts women and people of color.

- On February 17, 2022, we partnered with a handful of San Marcos organizations to prescreen the PBS documentary *APART* on incarcerated and reentering moms – and followed with of post-film panel of formerly incarcerated moms that I moderated. Thanks to the panelists: **Cynthia Simons**, Coordinator, Texas Women's Justice Coalition at Texas Center for Justice and Equity; **Lauren Johnson**, policy & advocacy strategist at the ACLU of Texas, where she focuses on criminal legal reform as part of the Smart Justice team; and **U.S. Army (Ret.) SFC Cheryl Craig, MA**, a veteran who served in Rwanda, Iraq, and Afghanistan and the Secretary-Treasurer of Free Battered Texas Women.

We are also grateful to our film cosponsors: Mano Amiga; San Marcos Cinema Club; and the *Caldwell-Hays Examiner*. We received financial support through a PBS Indie Pop up Grant to pay event costs and panelist honoraria.

The group of us formerly incarcerated sisters is shown here (from left): myself, Lauren Johnson, Cheryl Craig, and Cynthia Simons.



- Also, this month: we have officially received our certificate of formation with the Texas' Secretary of State's Office! I am coordinating with two student volunteers from the University of the Incarnate Word, who are taking Dr. Piper's Probation, Parole and Community Corrections class and will help us out for some community service hours they need for the class and graduation. This is the fourth year UIW students have served us!

We are an all-volunteer organization still and need your financial support! Keep your eyes open for PayPal links and please feel free to send a check to us at: PO Box 47, Schertz, TX 78154. Or you can call me at 210/776-7585 (voice only).

## *Children and Youth: Winter 2022*

By Sheri Phillabaum

The scope of religious education for children and youth at First UU San Antonio is wide and deep! Dedicated adult volunteers lead young ones on their path of spiritual growth and in their search for truth and meaning through multiple modes of engagement and expression. Sunday programming invites children and youth to respond to ideas and explore feelings through art, to nurture a relationship with the earth through gardening, to engage their brains by hearing stories and discussing important topics, and to live their faith by engaging in social service projects.

Unitarian Universalism is not so much a topic as a lens, a lens through which all topics may be viewed, so subject matter in RE is as expansive as the human experience. Here's a small sample of topics touched on in the first few weeks of 2022: the nature of virtue and sin, the life of Martin Luther King Jr., expressing love and appreciation, understanding and coping with feelings, the global food supply, the Lunar New year, confronting racism, and American Indian issues.

Sexuality is another topic that may be viewed through the lens of Unitarian Universalism, and this year children and youth in kindergarten and first grade and in 8th and 9th grade will explore this topic in developmentally appropriate ways. Topics for OWL (*Our Whole Lives*) sexuality education classes for children in kindergarten and first grade include how families are created, the specialness of their bodies, and some basics of consent. Topics in the 8th & 9th grade class include lovemaking and contraception and sexuality- and gender-related justice issues.

Every Sunday is a special Sunday in First UU Religious Education!

## *Youth RE in Pictures*





# *The First UU Dulcimer Group is Strumming Again!*

By Karen Davis

After going on hiatus during the pandemic, the dulcimer group at First Unitarian Universalist Church is getting back together under a new name: The Bring-a-Song-of-Love Dulcimer Players. Players are members and friends of our church.

The group currently numbers six active players who practice weekly and offer public performances. They performed recently at the Senior Valentine's Luncheon.

Starting February 24, the group has started meeting each Thursday evening from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the church, in the Fellowship Hall or, if it is reserved for another event, in Building 5, formerly known as the Jefferson Building. Practices are open to anyone who is interested in playing the mountain dulcimer. Ron has a limited number of loaner dulcimers that players can try out.

Group members take their dulcimers and old-time music to individuals and groups in their homes, at care facilities and elsewhere to share the joy of acoustic music in the Scots-Irish tradition.

Inactive members are encouraged to rejoin the group. Leader Ron Tullius can restring dulcimers if needed and review the basic elements of playing the mountain dulcimer. Players of various skill levels are welcome. Anyone who is interested can call Ron at 210-739-2566.



# *The Hem of Morning*

By Arline Terrell

Lingering in dawn's tremulous sky,  
the rising sun its neighbor,  
a sliver of moon hangs  
like an errant petticoat  
just below the hem of morning.

Cloud puffs rushing to cover  
the embarrassment, remind us  
to tidy up and be wary  
of both the unseen  
and the unforeseen.



## *Condolences*

...to the family and friends of Joan Bradshaw who passed away on October 25, 2021. Follow this link to read her obituary: [FLORENCE BRADSHAW Obituary \(1932 - 2021\) - San Antonio, TX - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](#)

...to the family and friends of Dr. Ed Garrison who passed away on November 27, 2021. Follow this link to read his obituary: [COL. JAMES GARRISON III Obituary \(1946 - 2021\) - San Antonio, TX - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](#)

...to the family and friends of Rowena Rodgers who passed away on December 4, 2021. Follow this link to read her obituary: [ROWENA RODGERS Obituary \(2021\) - San Antonio, TX - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](#)

...to the family and friends of Vilmos Agoston who passed away on January 2, 2022. Follow this link to read his obituary: [Vilmos Agoston Obituary \(1947 - 2022\) - San Antonio, TX - Legacy Remembers](#)

...to the family and friends of Rosanna Ledbetter who passed away on January 24, 2022. Follow this link to read her obituary: [ROSANNA LEDBETTER Obituary \(2022\) - Murphysboro, IL - San Antonio Express-News \(legacy.com\)](#)

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

**First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio**

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