

Spring 2023

INSPIRE

The official magazine of
First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio



FIRST UU
SAN ANTONIO

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Inspire

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[Instagram](#), & [Twitter](#).

Editor

Mary Wright

Contributors

Mary Barad
Bruce Beck
Carol Collins
Martha Cooley
Roy Ellzey
Ricardo Espinoza
Heather Hedquist
Alison Hom-Crosier
Mary Grace Ketner
Cheryl Lardy
Cathy Marston
Arlis Olson
Terry Palin
Jan Realini
Tina Solis
Rev. Mark Skrabacz
Marilyn Stavinoha
Dorothy Wallace
Stanna Welch
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:

Our lead minister, Rev. Mark Skraback, preaching about generosity during our March 5th Stewardship Sunday Worship Service.

The Loving Story

A racially charged criminal trial & a heart-rending love story

By Tina Solis

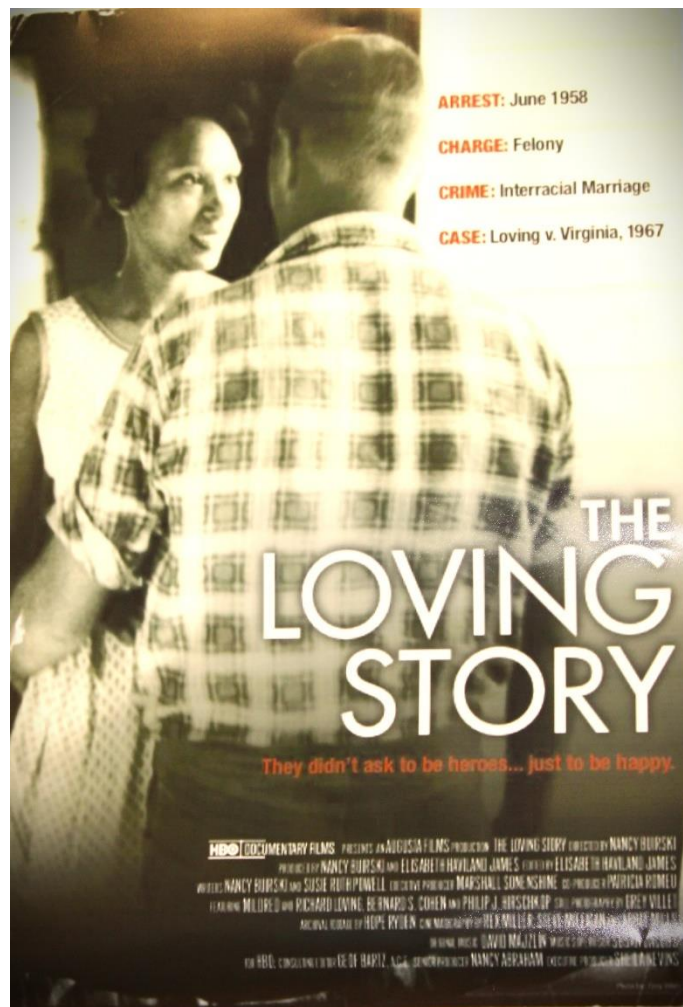
In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., First UU's Racial Justice-Black Lives Matter (RJ-BLM) group hosted an official DreamWeek event - a film screening and discussion of the documentary *The Loving Story*. This documentary film tells the dramatic story of Richard and Mildred Loving, an interracial couple living in Virginia in the 1950s, and their landmark Supreme Court Case, *Loving v. Virginia*, that changed history by legalizing interracial marriage.

There were about 20-25 participants not counting our RJ-BLM folks. Rev Nell and Rev Mark were also there, of course.

I thought some really meaningful discussion was generated and several people commented on having LEARNED from both the documentary and the discussion. I personally enjoyed the younger people who spoke/shared their reflections on this history. Also, those of us who are older and were young folks in the 1960's shared recollections of the decision and what we thought about it then, and even how our thoughts/attitudes have and continue to evolve with more life experiences, being in relationships, and continuous learning. Many shared about their past as it relates to racial justice issues and how it was impacted by where one grew up, i.e., north vs. south or rural vs urban, etc.



Social Justice co-chair Mary Barad introducing the film



The 2022 Marriage Equality Act was discussed and there was sharing about the commonalities regarding miscegenation and LGBTQ legal marriage struggles over the years. Good points were made about how different the case may have turned out had the wife been white and the husband been black - as well as the “niceness and likability” factor of the couple and how the ACLU capitalized on that to win the HEARTS of the court.

The session ended following a comment by a young man who shared (my paraphrasing here....) that love has evolved in humans, and it was/has been LOVE which pushed this and other landmark cases over the finish line. I really loved his observation.

Coahuiltecan

Who were they? Who are they?

By Mary Grace Ketner

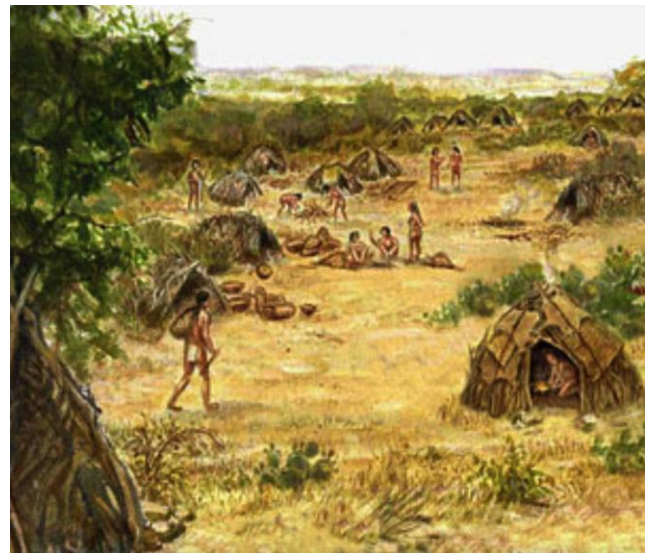
Every Sunday morning we begin our service by acknowledging the original stewards of this land, the indigenous Coahuiltecan. In addition, our own Unitarian Universalist Service Committee has partnered with one Coahuiltecan tribe, the Carrizo Comecrudo, in their efforts to prevent the Border Wall from crossing and desecrating their cemeteries in Cameron County and to rid their sacred sites of ports for Liquefied Natural Gas. Perhaps those of us nearby should get to know these indigenous people better and understand their issues. History is written by the conquerors, so much of it is lost, but we have some bits of information with which to draw a picture—at least a sketch—of these neighbors who had roamed our lands since the last warming centuries of the Ice age.



Carrizo Comecrudo today

The name doesn't actually describe a unified group but rather the region which many tribes shared. Early Coahuiltecan tribal groups numbered in the hundreds; they are linguistically and culturally diverse. Some of their lost languages are part of larger language groups such as Athapaskan; others are isolates, unique in the whole world. Customs concerning dress and ornamentation, ceremonies, shelter, weapons, and migration patterns are known only in part, but they varied widely from tribe to tribe. The word Coahuiltecan derives from an ancient language

as altered by the colonial Spanish to describe the nomadic hunter-gatherers who lived in southern Texas, northeastern Coahuila, and much of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, with the Rio Grande flowing right through the region's center. The name lingers in the name of the Mexican border state of Coahuila.



Artist Frank Weir's painting of a Coahuiltecan rancheria

Observations of Texas Coahuiltecan were first recorded by Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca in his journal from the 1520s who visited a couple of their rancherías. In 1691, Franciscan Padre Damian Massanet observed the Coahuiltecan band in what is now our city, some 60 families living at today's San Pedro Springs, calling themselves and their settlement Payaya. Their migratory hunting and gathering followed San Pedro Creek to the San Antonio River, which they called Yanaguana, then south to the Medina River and westward to the edge of the Edwards Plateau.

In 1716, Franciscan Padre Antonio de Olivares and his company squatted across the springs from Payaya with plans to build the mission San Antonio de Valero there. The neighbors welcomed him and began working on his

envisioned structures, but two years later, the project was moved to its present location, and the Payaya followed the work. The compound would not take on the name “Alamo” (Spanish for cottonwood tree) until the early 1800s when a Spanish light cavalry company moved there from their home base, San Carlos de Álamo de Parras.

The Coahuiltecan built hogans (dwellings) out of saplings covered with mats or hides. They could break them down quickly and carry the parts needed to their next destination. Their migrations were seasonal as they followed the blooming of prickly pear cactus (they ate both the pads and the tunas), acorns, and mesquite beans, which they ground into flour. Year round they hunted peccaries, birds, lizards, rats, frogs, fish, rabbits, snakes, and land snails and gathered roots and other tubers. They also ate dirt and deer droppings and used ashes like we use salt. They ate their food raw (*Carrizo Comecrudo* is Spanish for “eaters of raw reeds”) or cooked it in small pits or on open hearths. They made stone and flint tools. They celebrated with dancing, drumming, and feasting. They were monogamous, though they practiced female infanticide and women were often stolen from other tribes. They squabbled among themselves but did not take on the more warlike Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and, later, the Comanche.

The Payaya became absorbed among Mexican communities, including those around the San Antonio Missions. Their language is no longer spoken, but some of their words are



American Indians of Texas at the San Antonio Missions rally at the Alamo

embedded in rural Spanish, and certain characteristics of their culture survive.

Another active group is the Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation. They are a resurgent group. the primary leaders of the American Indians of Texas at the San Antonio Missions, and the activists working to restore sacred honor to the indigenous families buried at the Alamo.

The migratory route of their ancestors extended to the Frio River which flows past the H. E. Butt Foundation's retreat, the Laity Lodge, near Leakey, Texas. Recently the foundation invited several archaeologists, anthropologists, and Tap Pilam elders to explore the retreat to determine whether some sites at the retreat were middens (the archaeological term for trash or garbage heap). Turns out, they were! That encounter brought about an inspiring confession, acknowledgment, and commitment stated clearly in the current issue of the foundation's magazine *Echoes*:

If you have seen older trail maps for H. E. Butt Foundation Camps, you may have read a misleading version of our history. We accurately described the shallow sea of antiquity that would have included giant Cretaceous turtles, but we listed Lipan Apache and Comanche as the primary active American Groups who would have migrated through the Canyon rather than Coahuiltecan.

On these misleading maps, we included a beautiful and haunting photograph of Apache riding away from the camera. But there are a few problems with that picture. First, the Apache in the picture are not Lipan Apache. Second, they are riding in Arizona, nowhere near the Texas Hill Country. And finally, the picture communicates metaphorically that our country's indigenous people have disappeared. But that's not true. Rudy De La Cruz (Director of the Texas Heritage Project for the American Indians of Texas) reminds people often, "We're still here."

Revised maps will include artist renderings of the Coahuiltecan plus photos of their descendants who still live around the San Antonio Missions their ancestors built.



Emma Ortega, “Grandma Coyote”~ photo credit Reynaldo Leaños Jr., Texas Public Radio

If you have been—or will be—a lay reader some Sunday morning, you may have approached our own brief acknowledgement statement cautiously, unsure of how to pronounce the name. Kwa-wheel-TEY-can? Co-a-WILL-te-CAN? Co-WHILL-tu-can? The truth is that there is no standard pronunciation even among the Coahuiltecan themselves, but you may be cheered by the explanation given by storyteller Emma Ortega, “Grandma Coyote,” a Coahuiltecan/Lipan Apache/Chicana San Antonian. “You can say it however you want

to,” she says, then adds, “...but it’s really Kwa-wheel-TEY-can.”

Want to know more?

Early Coahuiltecan:

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/st-plains/peoples/coahuiltecan.html>

Handbook of Texas:

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/coahuiltecan-indians>

Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation issues:

<https://sanantonioreport.org/native-american-group-tap-pilam-renews-legal-fight-over-human-remains-at-alamo/>

Tap Pilam at H.E. Butt Foundation:

<https://hebfdn.org/echoes/people-before-camp/>

Coahuiltecan singing, drumming at Mission San Jose:

<https://nowcastsa.com/blogs/coahuiltecan-song>

UUSC partnership with the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas:

<https://www.uusc.org/initiatives/carrizo-comecrudo-tribe-of-south-texas/>

<https://www.firstnations.org/stories/finding-a-voice-and-making-it-heard-defending-native-rights-on-the-border/>

A New Title, A New Look

By Mary Wright

Our newsletters have gone through many changes over the years - from the way they looked, the name, and how they were distributed. The main thing the newsletters had in common is they relayed news about upcoming events. However, back in 2014 we made the digital leap and began announcing our upcoming events via email with the weekly What’s Happening. This opened up space in our newsletter for different kinds of stories: articles that reported on the activities and work that our church members were doing, poetry, and even some fictional short stories. In essence, our “newsletter” was functioning more like a magazine, so we felt it was about time we started calling it by the correct name. The quarterly Inspire publication is now the official “magazine” of First UU. I hope you enjoy the new look of the magazine and continue enjoying the informative content. Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles to Inspire over the years.

Free Battered Texas Women

Spring 2023 Updates

by Cathy Marston, PhD

Free Battered Texas Women (FBTW) held its fifth holiday card party since 2017 on Sunday, December 4 in the Fellowship Hall. We are grateful to everyone who attended to sign, address, and stamp cards to our incarcerated and released sisters. We enjoyed music and snacks as I shared my tales of what the prison system is like at the holidays.



On December 4, 2022, FBTW celebrated another holiday at First UU. Front row Laquita Garcia, Cathy Marston, and Cheryl Craig. Back row: Altair and Alison Hom.

January 2023 was a busy month for us! First, I had the honor of presenting my board member, Laquita Garcia of Texas Organizing Project, with a Courageous Love Award. Laquita made a very moving acceptance speech, including exhorting how she sure could have used “love, instead of a cage.”

On January 20, our Sanctuary was the site for our first hybrid DreamWeek panel on *Alternatives To Arresting Mothers*. Superstar criminal legal system reformers and moms comprised our panel to share their vision of restorative justice for women who violate the law: Cynthia Simons, our statewide women’s justice coalition coordinator at the Texas

Center for Justice and Equity; Lauren Johnson, the criminal outreach coordinator of the ACLU of Texas; and FBTW board members U.S. Army (Ret.) SFC Cheryl Craig, MA, and Shannon FitzPatrick. Thank you to the Social Justice Committee (SJC) for giving us \$200 for directly impacted stipends for our formerly incarcerated panelists and for me to moderate. Thank you to SJC also for paying Ron Meneses’s fee to online produce the event—which Ron graciously donated to us! Lastly, Ron and Nicole Meneses and Gary Evans, who audio produced, were crucial to the success of this event. Thank you to everyone so much!

January ended for us with a Moves for the People fundraiser: the organization Bold Love in Action for Community (BLAC) raised \$306 for us! We all learned to dance the bachata and feasted on goodies from Rico Espinoza. Thank you to Rico and BLAC for this fun and much-needed fundraiser!

In other news:

- [Susan Harris](#) has been released, which I believe brings our total of sisters released since 2014 to 17!
- [Melissa Lucio's](#) case is headed back to the courts! You will recall she was granted a stay of execution last April in the accidental death of her daughter. We will keep you posted on this development.
- The Board of Pardons and Paroles has granted [Tyra Whitney](#) parole. We are looking forward to seeing her home this summer! Tyra defended herself and her daughter against her daughter’s boyfriend and her case was featured by *Facing Evil* and *Snapped*.

Trust Fund for Endowments

Funding for Church Needs Since 1972

By Arlis Olson

The Trust Fund for Endowments was established in 1972 to provide financial stability and funding for special church needs, maintenance, and improvements. Gifts accepted for the Trust Fund include cash, real property, memorials, securities, gifts in trust, gifts of life insurance, and property of any kind. Our thanks to the following people who made donations in the last quarter.

- November Birthdays: Martha Cooley, Pat Ellis, Rev. Mark Skrabacz and Carolyn Wright
- December Birthdays: Bill Bush and Mary Wright, Mary M. Potter, Marilyn Stavinoia
- Memoriam for Virginia Bowden: A.M. and M.R. Miller
- January Birthdays: Carol Bertsch

Total collected for the quarter: \$761.00

Most of what was collected this quarter was for birthdays. We encourage donating a dollar for each year from the date of your birth. The other thing we ask is that you consider the church in your estate planning.



Article II and Us

By Marilyn Stavinoia

I just finished reading the Summer 2011 article in the UU World magazine about the last time Article II was up for changes. It was basically all about ethical eating being added. It failed.

We have carried on with the former Article II, the Principles and Sources, unscathed for another 12 years. Meanwhile we have begun to think of them as semi-dogma and coming from Emerson or Parker of Dietrich or Guinrich or Church. Not so. Just the work of committees in the last century, with the merging of Unitarians and Universalists. Something for both without making anyone uncomfortable.

Now, there is another effort to change words with attention to values which we can all accept. The principles and sources will be gone, as such, and restated in modern lexicon so that people without theological, philosophical, or biblical knowledge can quickly get the gist of what we are about. Right on! I am willing to do this because change is not scary to educated people, which we are. I am not willing to give up our connection to the Enlightenment, Reason, Individual Conscience, or Diversity. Just tell me we can carry on with these. It would be good if we could insert something about evil behavior as untrue to the worth of the human spirit. But I can certainly do without it.

Stewardship Kicked Off Smokin'

Tomorrow Begins Today! ¡Mañana comienza hoy!

By Dorothy Wallace

The 2023-24 Stewardship Campaign kicked off with a **GREAT** Stewardship Sunday! Our service was lively, with Don Hymel and Steve Feinstein playing some great tunes and our men's choir taking us to Jubilee! Terry Palin told us what the "aspirational" budget was and Jim Noel confirmed quoting the architect Daniel Burnham, that our church makes "no small plans!" Pam Illar gave her testimony about what the church means to her and Revs. Mark and Nell kept us spiritually grounded by reminding us that we are building the Beloved Community with our Stewardship gifts! After the service, Bill Miller did a great job of feeding the multitudes (omnivores, carnivores, and vegetarians alike), Transylvania Treats fed our sweet tooth, and mariachis provided excellent real San Antonio entertainment. The Astonishing Mr. Pitts *thrilled* the children after lunch with his magic tricks.

But the best *thrill* was by Monday morning after Stewardship Sunday, we were up and over the \$300,000 mark! Keep those pledges coming. If you haven't yet made a pledge, do so today at [Pledge Form – First Unitarian Universalist Church San Antonio \(uusat.org\)](https://uusat.org) And thank you to all our members and friends for their awesome generosity! We couldn't do it without you. *And remember, no matter the size of the gift, they are all accepted with the grace and love in which they are given.*

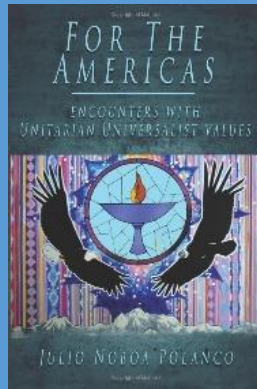


Emerson Bookshop Plus

The official bookstore of First UU! We carry a wide variety of fair-trade coffee, tea, and chocolate; stickers, buttons, shirts, books and more! A great source for yourself or to pick up a gift for that special UU in your life. We are open most Sundays after service and are located in the small classroom just off the Sanctuary foyer.

Cash, check and charge/debit cards are accepted.

Except for
hymnals, all
books are now
\$10 or less.

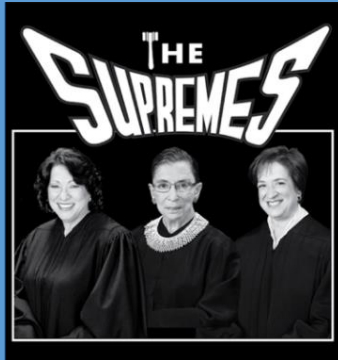


FEATURED BOOK

For The Americas: Encounters with Unitarian Universalist Values and the Spanish edition, *Para Las Américas: Unitario Universalismo En La Nueva Era*

Written by Julio Noboa Polanco, former First UU member, founder of the Emerson Bookshop, and current resident of Costa Rica.

Supremes
tee shirts
are now on
sale for
only \$5



Free music for beginner pianists available. Look for the bins inside the bookshop. Help yourself until April 2! Then the leftovers will be recycled.

Click on link below for a list of currently available titles

<https://uusat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/emerson-books.pdf>

We also carry books and music from our own members: Dana Clark, Karen Emerson, Don Hymel, Jaime Ramirez, Rev. Art Severance, and The Tim and Bob Show featuring Steve Feinstein & Don Hymel.

Courageous Love Awards

Honoring our Local Heroes

by Jan Realini, Ricardo Espinoza, Cathy Marston, and Mary Barad

Each year, during our service on the Sunday before Martin Luther King Day, the Social Justice Committee of presents the *Courageous Love Awards* to several individuals or organizations from our larger San Antonio area who have shown courage and touched our hearts by making a positive difference in our community. This year's awards were presented on January 15th.

Our first awardee was Jacquelyn Callanen, Bexar County Elections Administrator. In recent times, democracy itself has come under attack and election workers have needed to be democracy defenders. Callanen's leadership of the Bexar County Elections Department means that it is well organized and committed to excellence. She, along with her staff, displayed grace and courage in the face of "lawsuits, insults, and anger" that are unfortunately part of the political climate today. Her work is truly inspiring.

Deborah Jones Bush of the Marquis Jones Foundation was our second awardee. Ms. Jones Bush is the aunt of Marquis Jones, who was taken from his family by a police shooting in 2014. Since then she has worked tirelessly for families who have lost loved ones to police violence. It takes immense Courage to continue to fight for justice in the face of personal tragedy, but it takes an immense Love to reach out to other families also facing such heartache. Ms. Jones Bush demonstrates both. Under her leadership, the Marquis Jones Foundation was established in 2022 to support all individuals who have endured any type of pain due to police brutality and/or gun violence in San Antonio and to create a space to comfort grieving families, share their stories, and support one another.

Our third awardee was Laquita Garcia of the Texas Organizing Project. Formerly incarcerated, Laquita began as a canvasser and now works to create restorative justice serving as the Statewide Right-To-Justice Policy Coordinator of Texas Organizing Project. She oversees the statewide community bail fund and interacts at the local, state, and national levels on best practices for policies for racial and economic justice. She also serves on the board for Free Battered Texas Women and has shared in the fight to eliminate the court-appointed attorney system and transform it into a restorative justice effort. In addition, she is the Bexar County Steward for the National Organization of Legal Service Workers.

With their actions, these local heroes fight unwaveringly for justice and demonstrate powerful respect and love for others. These are actions that reflect values that we, as Unitarian Universalists, hold dear.



Deborah Bush



Jacquelyn Callanen



Laquita Garcia

Share the Plate Leadership Handoff

Rev. Mark Skrabacz

Multiple times throughout the year, we share our entire Sunday Offertory collection with a member-nominated non-profit organization

whose mission and values align with ours. Our Unitarian Universalist core values call for us to work for justice and humanity. By reaching out to the community, we are showing San Antonio who we are and for what we stand. Prior to the Offertory collection, we provide our congregation information about the recipient organization. In addition to raising awareness and donating financially, Share the Plate (STP) offers opportunities for our members to develop and deepen connections with these non-profit organizations. Our vision is that we will not only give money but stay in contact and get involved.

Share the Plate is an outreach effort of our Social Justice Committee. I would like to acknowledge Maria Bush, who recently retired from her more than 5 years of leadership of this successful annual effort. Her successor will be John Dagger, a relatively new member of the Social Justice Committee, co-chaired by Jan Realini and Mary Barad. Both Maria and her predecessor STP Coordinator Mary Grace Ketner suggest that coordinating STP is an excellent job for a new member of our Congregation, because it provides a good way to get to know the wider San Antonio community, as well as some important programs and members of our Congregation. We wish John well in his coordination of this program.

I urge us to get to know John and his spouse Marcella Santos and encourage their involvement with us in ways that will bring



their considerable talents in international and educational matters to bear. I would also like to thank Maria for her outstanding service in leadership of our STP efforts and relate this story

about how she took a personal interest in a nominated organization which eventually received a Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREF) Award. In 2016 our member Mary Potter nominated San Antonio Youth Literacy as a STP recipient. This organization had cultivated a group of 2nd Graders who were ready for books and reader/mentors. Maria not only collected children's books to donate to the organization's Book Buddies program, but she also became a reader/mentor for their Reading Buddies program. Maria became an exemplar of the kind of member involvement and social justice outreach that STP and CREF are designed to cultivate. Thank you, Maria!

Nominating an Organization for Share the Plate, 2023-24

The Social Justice Committee is seeking nominations for the upcoming fiscal year's Share-the-Plate. In order to nominate an organization, one must be a member of our congregation, the charity must have 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, and its mission should support issues of social justice, as shown in a listing below. Please email the following information at any time to sharetheplate@uusat.org:

- The name of the organization.
- A one-sentence description of the organization for the ballot.
- The organization's Website or contact information.

Qualified nominees will be voted on by the Congregation at our annual meeting in May. The organizations with the highest votes will be recipients of our Share the Plate offerings in the upcoming church year.

In addition to the community organizations with which we Share our Plate each year, we also dedicate one monthly offering collection each year to our church and denominational programs: the Community Responsibility Endowment Fund, the Minister's Discretionary Fund, the Trust Fund of Endowments, and UBarU Camp & Retreat Center. Other non-designated monthly offerings may be used for improvements to the church facilities.

An extensive, but not exhaustive, list of issues we wish to support follows:

- Income inequality;
- Educational inequality;
- Climate change;
- Food insecurity;

- Refugee crisis;
- Universal healthcare;
- Poverty;
- Gender-based violence;
- State violence;
- Threats to the LGBTQ+ community;
- Eroding democracy;
- Political extremism;
- Reproductive rights;
- Racism;
- Public safety and right to privacy.

Others may also be considered.

Examples of recent monthly giving to STP include December's collections on the third Sunday and Christmas Eve for the Minister's Discretionary Fund, which tallied almost \$3000 and January's Share the Plate offering which donated \$1,219 to the Interfaith Welcome Coalition.

Thanks to us all for supporting this worthy effort of our Social Justice Committee.

Capital Campaign on Hiatus

Say "Yes" to the Future

By Dorothy Wallace

To avoid confusion our Capital Campaign will be on hiatus until after the Stewardship Campaign concludes at the end of March. We will open a four-week window starting April 1st for final donations to the Capital Campaign. We will also put the Commitment Form online at that time. If you have a "must make" Capital Campaign commitment before then, please contact either Dorothy Wallace or Alan Chase directly at capitalcampaign@uusat.org.

Next Steps:

Once we close the window for Capital Campaign Commitments at the end of April, we will start prioritizing projects to be completed. We will be seeking congregational input around the end of the church year for the final project list. Then, we are going to get to work!

Thank you to so many who have made commitments to the Capital Campaign Project! We continue to seek commitments of all sizes! Please consider your commitment.



Nevin Rupp's Invaluable Role in the Life of First UU Church of San Antonio

By Bruce Beck

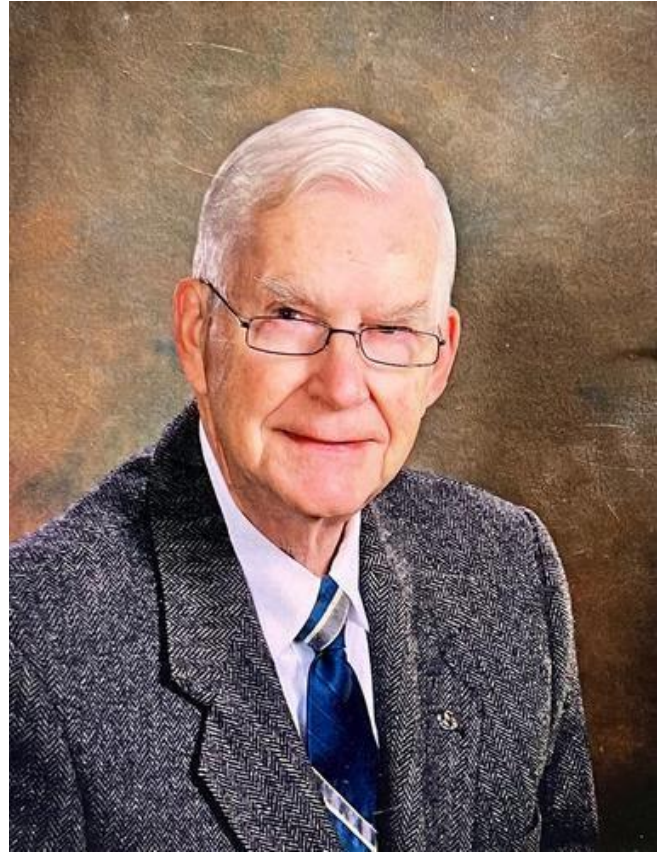
The life of a church ebbs and flows with energy as its hopes, dreams and aspirations meet the hard, brute facts of the "real world." Our church was at its nadir in the early 1980s. We worshipped in the Fellowship Hall, while a large empty field stood where a sanctuary had been planned to stand. Dissatisfaction was so rampant 30% of the congregation gave only nominal financial support.

To rescue itself, the congregation (guided by the excellent interim ministers, Revs. Sam and Billie Wright) organized to identify our goals and purposes, and to prepare a long-term plan to accomplish them. Simultaneously, the church 1) searched for a new minister to call; and 2) decided to sell the current land, move and build new church facilities that would have twice the square footage (including a sanctuary space) and twice the acreage for the grounds (with a half million-dollar endowment left over to finance programs). A buyer was approved, architect engaged, building plans approved, a contractor selected, and a contract for it all approved. A new minister was selected and called. Dreams were about to come true.

Then, Pres. Ronald Reagan passed massive tax reforms taking away many tax benefits of real estate development. The buyer/contractor — doing its "due diligence" — withdrew from the contract. The minister left within four years.

A decade later, the church's spirits were again deflated. The disappointment of our failure to reach our goals despite our best efforts was demoralizing.

So, we called Rev. Art Severance as our new minister. And Nevin Rupp took the congregation's malaise upon his shoulders. He prodded us out of our "funk." Nevin provided the "drive" to build a new, beautiful sanctuary on the current property.



Henry Lippert (and a couple "UU angels") raised the money and arranged the necessary finances. Nevin pushed the process forward — setting goals and requirements; selecting, negotiating with, and employing the architect; building a congregational consensus on the design (aided ably by Lisa Reitzes who insured the aesthetics); selecting a contractor; negotiating a construction contract; getting approval of the construction contract, as well as, interim and permanent financing; and supervising the contractors performance.

Nevin Rupp did not build our sanctuary with his own hands, and he had the help of many in the congregation. BUT we would not have the beautiful sanctuary that we enjoy today, if Nevin had not pushed, prodded, cajoled, pleaded, and snookered us into action. Nevin Rupp is a "UU saint", because of the miracle he performed at our church.

UU Retired Women's Group

By Martha Cooley and Stanna Welch

On July 17, 2021, responding to Marilyn Stavinoha's invitation, about 35 women of First UU gathered for brunch and thus the UU Retired Women's Group was founded. In her invitation Marilyn posed the question: "What do we need from First UU Church and what can we do for First UU Church?" She further challenged: "We are still here, and we care about the church. That is the message."



Founding member, Marilyn Stavinoha

Although COVID interrupted the meeting schedule for a while, retired women and friends of the church have been meeting on the third Saturday of the month ever since to share inspiration, information, encouragement, good humor, fellowship and, occasionally, food. Addressing the diversity of interests in the arts, aging, staying active, etc., Marilyn arranged diverse programs. For example, Carol Bertsch gave advice about planning for senior years; Dorothy Wallace and Lee Hampton led a photographic tour of their travels throughout Europe; Albert Gonzales shared his struggle to find success as a now well-known artist in San Antonio. Marilyn began most meetings honoring women of the church who are no longer with us but remain in our fond memories.

In December, after a luncheon celebrating her birthday, Marilyn announced her retirement as

facilitator of the group and passed the torch to Stanna Welch, with Martha Cooley as her sidekick. The group thanked Marilyn with a generous contribution to the Capital Campaign in her name; in fact, as of this date \$700.00 has gone to the Capital Campaign. The opportunity to donate is ongoing.

Looking forward, the group spent its recent January meeting planning programs for the coming year. Hoping to tap the professional and experiential expertise represented in the group, members were asked to volunteer to plan, moderate or lead programs. All dates were quickly filled. On March 18, Marianne Ross will talk about the emotional issues surrounding aging and especially retirement. Time is



Members enjoying lunch

always left for sharing collective wisdom. Continuing its mission to contribute to the needs of the church, the Retired Women's group is sponsoring a jewelry sale in April. All proceeds will again go to the Capital Campaign. Specific information will be forthcoming.

Retired women of the church or those near retirement and interested friends are cordially invited to attend the monthly meeting on the third Saturday of each month from 12:30 pm until 2:30 pm. It's a great way to stay connected, be inspired, and meet new friends.

Haul & Hang a Great Success

By Heather Hedquist

A group of dedicated volunteers came out on December 3rd to help clean up and decorate the church for the holidays. An entire trailer was filled with broken, unusable items, as well as limbs and brush. Usable building supplies were taken by several volunteers to Habitat for Humanity. Others took usable items to Goodwill. Buildings 4, 5, and 6 were cleaned from top to bottom, including shampooing the furniture and rugs in Buildings 4 and 6. The rug in Building 5 was replaced and windows in Buildings 3, 4, 5, and 6 were cleaned. All storage spaces in Building 2 were emptied out, cleaned out, organized, and put back together including the maintenance shed and kitchen.

A HUGE thank you to everyone who came and helped with the Haul and Hang today: Deb Loya, Dorothy Wallace, Terry Palin, Polly Noel, Oscar and Tina Solis, Betty Burgner, Cheryl Lardy, Allison Hom, Claudia Glass, Carol Collins, Kathy McFarlane, Andi Abbot, Larry Painter, Cindy Daugherty, Beth and Katie Klar-Broadus, Tim Barr, John (didn't catch the last name), Jessica Latimer, Glenna and Valerie, Sylvia Wheeler, Rev. Mark and Rev. Nell! Apologies if I missed anyone.

Finally, wonderful treats were provided by Deb Loya and Oscar and Tina Solis as a Christmas tree was put up. Thank you to all the hard workers who volunteered.



UBarU Still Needs Our Help

Our Special Haven in the Hill Country

By Roy Ellzey

Last August UBarU launched a capital campaign to fund four badly needed projects. Three of the projects are to rectify serious water-related infrastructure issues of which one, the creation of a new water well that can meet state requirements for a Public Water System (PWS), is so critical that UBarU would be forced to shut down if not done in the immediate future. Fortunately, the initial response has been good enough that funding for the project is close enough to what is needed that we expect to have the new PWS well in service prior to the beginning of summer youth camps.

In fact, once sufficient donations were received the PWS project was started so that it could be completed before June. A driller was hired and the necessary new well was drilled and cased but cannot be made operational until the other components are in place and connected to form a PWS that can pass inspection before we can switch over from our current private water system that is going dry. This requires purchasing all new pumps, storage tanks, and electrical and piping connections, since we are not allowed to reuse the counterparts from our existing system. However, our water engineer who is managing the process tells us we are on schedule to finish in time.

As of the end of February the capital campaign had raised just over \$121,000 toward a goal of \$300,000 for the four primary projects plus an additional \$25,000 toward our continued efforts to make UBarU as sustainable as possible with respect to renewable energy and water conservation. Of that amount raised, slightly over half was from the 100% participation of the UBarU board member's personal contributions. But more is needed since the completed PWS project alone is expected to cost about \$20,000 more than the initial estimate of \$120K.



Drilling a new well for UBarU

Given that capital campaigns are rarely successful if attempted too frequently, it is all the more important that we be able to fund the other important projects also. The swimming pool is leaking badly from its bottom which has been made porous, because the chemicals used to make the pool safe for swimming have eaten away at the natural limestone bottom. Smoothing out and applying a layer of reinforced concrete to the bottom is needed at a cost of some \$25K. It's hard to imagine camps and other summer events at UBarU without a pool.

The septic system for the Ranch House is over 60 years old and must be replaced since it can no longer meet state inspection requirements with just patch-up repairs. A new septic system that can support both the Ranch House and the planned nearby new cottage will cost \$18K.

The fourth project needed is to add a new cottage near the Ranch House that will be ADA accessible. As most of you know, UBarU receives no outside institutional funding from the UUA or anyone else. Thus, it depends primarily on usage fees from those who visit and/or attend events there for its operation and maintenance costs. Over the years this has often been marginal at best so we need to find ways to increase usage in order to remain financially stable.

It turns out that the cottages are the most often requested type of lodging for most events. They are also the best source of revenue apart because they can be rented for private use throughout the year with only minimum requirements from UBarU staff other than routine cleaning before and/or after use. This demand for cottages seems to be common at other camp and retreat centers as well, not just UBarU, so is a prominent part of the long-range planning for additional lodging at UBarU. Intermediate plans for additional lodging call for two new cottages, one near the Ranch House and a second near the Brown

Center because both locations will be able to share septic systems with other lodging buildings.

The new cottage that is proposed for this campaign will be the first cottage at UBarU that is fully ADA accessible. UBarU has made considerable progress in accessibility over the past several years, and having a new accessible cottage would mean that each type of lodging on campus has an ADA accessible option available. The cost for the new cottage is \$120K.

Given that the church is in the midst of its own capital campaign, please do not see this appeal for UBarU as an either-or choice. They are so interrelated in many ways that hopefully many of you will support both to the degree you are able and willing. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me (Roy Ellzey), Paula Pebsworth, or San Antonio's newest UBarU Board member, Jennifer Courtwright.

Christmas Eve Service & Egg Nog Social

by Terry Palin

First UU San Antonio had a beautiful Christmas Eve service this year. Carlos Gonzales, Rob Mahon, Esperanza Garza and Luis Gonzalez, and the First UU Choir performed lovely music. Our ministers told the Christmas story, but with a twist. While Rev. Mark read the story from the gospel of Luke in the Bible, Rev. Nell explained the biblical text in modern terms. Throughout the story, we sang hymns that highlighted the story being told.

This was one of the most unique Christmas Eve services (in a good way) I have ever attended because of this juxtaposition of the Nativity story. And, of course, the music was beautiful.

After the service, the Board of Trustees hosted the annual Egg Nog and Cookie social. There was Egg Nog, of course, with spirits if you chose, alternative nogs, and wine. Congregants shared their homemade Christmas cookies. We all had a wonderful time, as we always do.

If you have not seen the Christmas Eve service, click this link to watch the recording. The service begins 9 minutes into the recording.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/6gcpVE9W9C8?feature=share>



The 8th Principle

What is it and why do we need it?

By Tina Solis

“We, the member congregations of the UUA, covenant to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

The proposed 8th Principle (above) was originally drafted in 2013 by Paula Cole Jones and Bruce Pollack-Johnson (both from what is now the Central East Region Group) and a group of allies and was presented to the UUA in 2017. More information on background is available at [Background — The 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism \(8thprincipleuu.org\)](https://8thprincipleuu.org). As of February 2023, there are 227 UU congregations across the U.S. who have voted to support the 8th principle.



The 8th Principle specifically deals with racism, as well as other oppressions. Many feel the UUA and individual congregations have been making significant progress on some oppressions, including discrimination against women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and persons who are differently abled - though these still exist. But there remain widespread feelings that not enough is being done on issues of race. Much has happened in our country, and within our denomination, in recent years that has highlighted the extent to which “white culture” is imbedded in our social institutions (criminal justice, healthcare, housing, education, etc.) and churches. Anti-racism and anti-oppression work is not intended to “make (me/you/us/some) feel guilty.” It is about realizing we ALL “drink from a well we did not dig.” Understanding that obligates us to work toward identifying systemic racism and inequities within ourselves and our institutions.

First UU Church of San Antonio has already been making changes that many of us have embraced, including more diversity in our pulpit services, guests, readings, and music. We have offered challenging educational programs on anti-racism and racial justice and have engaged in responsible social justice partnerships and outreach. Future steps will continue to be prioritized and developed together. A spirit of love is palpable among all who commit to this spiritual work.

Pagan Celebrations at First UU

Celestial Celebrations Circle Updates



By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle (CCC) is the CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) affiliated organization for our church community. It is open to everyone who is 18 years or older, whether or not affiliated with our church - those under 18 must come with legal parent or guardian.

Since the last newsletter, CCC has celebrated Winter Solstice and Imbolc. We also sponsored a labyrinth walk in January when there was no ritual. We have found that having both celebrations for the Sabats (specific ritual times) and labyrinth walks helps us reach more people with varying spiritual needs. All labyrinth walks are outside on the laid out path which is between the Sanctuary and the access road. There is never a problem with lighting as the Highway Department lighting for the freeway provides ample light. January's walk had only two participants and three CCC members as the weather was not cooperating.

Our Winter Solstice Ritual was inside, as Texas weather is unpredictable at this time. It was well attended with 30 participants of all ages. We welcome younger children with their parents if they sit quietly and pay attention. The planners always structure rituals with the hope that people will want to take an active role. Winter Solstice is about the Sun being at its lowest point of the year, as ancient peoples were unsure if the warmth it provided would return. This is one of our most interactive rituals with spoken parts for many people.

Our next ritual was in February and is named Imbolc. It was also held indoors, and we had a good crowd of 25 participants. It celebrates the rebirth of the Sun. By this time in the calendar year, those who watch the heavens notice that there is an infinitesimal amount of additional sunlight. The Sun is returning! We have made it through another winter! The Ritual focused on preparing for Spring and the planting season.

During each ritual, we have a space for anyone to voice Joys and Concerns, along with our community project of food donations for San Antonio Food Bank. Since last Spring, we have included constructive energy for Ukraine and its people.



MLK March

A Beloved Community in San Antonio

by Mary Barad

For the first time in three years church members were able to don our yellow "Side with Love" shirts, hop on a bus at Freeman Coliseum, and unfurl our First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio banners near Martin Luther King Jr. Academy as we prepared to walk together in San Antonio's 36th annual Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day March, the largest such march in the nation, on January 16, 2023. The weather was ideal, and the atmosphere was one of reverence and joy.



Our group of 30 or so earned a spot this year with other religious organizations near the front of a crowd of hundreds of thousands. We walked up Martin Luther King Drive and ended the 2.75-mile march at Pittman Sullivan Park, on San Antonio's historic East side.

We seemed to garner cheers from the crowds lining the street as we sang songs and justice chants lead by Rev. Nell Newton, Patty Stout, and Tavis McGeachin. After posing for our commemorative photo, some stayed to enjoy the celebration which included a main stage with multicultural performances, a health and wellness area, a youth area, food and merchandise vendors, and information booths.

It was humbling to consider the life and legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as we walked together in a multicultural atmosphere of love and hope. MLK popularized the term "Beloved Community" during his lifetime of activism and gave it new meaning, inspired by his faith that such a community was actually possible. His was a global vision, one in which all people could share in the wealth of the earth. One where poverty, hunger and homelessness would not be tolerated because international standards of human decency would not allow it. We heard language about building Beloved Community during our own MLK service this year, on the Sunday before the march.



In addition to the 7000 steps some of us took on the walk, our church may decide to take next steps and talk about what can do here and now to advance love, socio-economic justice, and racial amity in our community. I hope First UU members will agree to begin the journey of learning together to recognize and overcome the limitations of historical inequalities and exclusion in our society, and work to become a church where Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color tell us they feel welcome and perceive no barriers to their spiritual growth--- a place where dreams like MLK's can flourish.

Basura Bash

River and Waterway Clean-up for 28 Years

By Cheryl Lardy and Alison Hom-Crosier

The Green Sanctuary Team would like to thank all those who participated in this year's Basura Bash, San Antonio's annual city-wide waterway clean up. First UU volunteers helped clean the Zarzamora Creek area on the city's west side.

We are grateful to all those who attended as well as those who helped us advertise it: Tim and Ari Barr, Linda Nash, Cheryl Lardy, Diane Duesterhoeft, Mike Phillips, Alison Hom-Crosier, Sylvia Wheeler, Elizabeth and Mike Richardson, Charice Hoptowit, Chara Booker, Polly Noel, Andy, Mary Lynne and Rosa Hill, Peter Myers, Rob Hines, Tommy Burden, Sylvia Wheeler, Richard Backus, Bridget Laflin, and Steven Stechshulte.



Inner City Development

Serving the poorest area of Bexar County since 1968

By Carol Collins

Have you ever wondered about that large metal bin in the hallway outside of the Fellowship Hall? Have you ever even noticed it before? Unbeknownst to many, especially new members, our church has been collecting food donations for the SATX Inner City Development program for well over a decade. First UU members Elke Walten and Carol Collins have served as our ICD liasons for years by collecting all of the donations and delivering them to ICD.

The Inner City Development (ICD) program offers groceries to families in crisis and sack lunches to those who are homeless. ICD is a nonprofit, community-based organization that responds to emergency, educational, and recreational needs of the neighborhood on the near Westside of San Antonio in the vicinity of the Alazan-Apache Public Housing Project. It has been operating in this area, the economically poorest area of Bexar County, since 1968. The mission of the organization is to lift the dignity of the individual. This is done by providing critical, supportive, basic life services and inspiring people to participate in the betterment of their neighborhood through volunteerism. With the exception of one part-time administrative assistant, the organization is run by an all-volunteer staff and administration.

In addition to food donations, our church members have participated in ICD's annual Christmas Toy Sale by donating new or slightly used toys. ICD offers these toys to families at very low prices, which allows low-income families to purchase toys for their children for Christmas at prices that are within their budget.

If you want to help this organization, leave your non-perishable food donations in the ICD bin just inside the Fellowship Hall entrance from the patio. For more information about ICD visit [Inner City Development](#)



TXUUJM Legislative Day

Bending Texas Toward Justice Together

By Dorothy Wallace

It was an early morning, but 25 First UU members boarded a bus at the church at 7:00 am on Monday, March 13 to join the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry (TXUUJM), representing 40 congregations around the state, for a legislative day at the Texas Capital in Austin. Rev. Mark rode the bus with us and Rev. Nell met us in Austin. We visited numerous Senate and House of Representatives' offices to tell them about what we considered our priorities in the legislature – and what we thought was harmful!



First UU members visiting a Congressional office

First on the list, we explained that any new law that hurt our church's families was a bad law – which include any anti-trans or anti-LGBTQ bills. We told the story about two of our loving families who had or were planning to leave the state because of these types of negative actions coming from the state government. Timing is everything and we were all able to “drop cards” or register our position to OPPOSE SB15, an anti-trans bill coming up soon for a vote in the Senate. We also expressed our opposition to school vouchers and any money for education being diverted to other purposes. We expressed our support for women's bodily autonomy,

expanded Medicaid for postpartum care, better maternal mortality outcomes (especially for Black women), the protection of voting rights, support for renewable energy, strengthening the grid and protecting our environment. We also advocated for common sense gun laws to help make Texas a safer place.



Group photo of UUs from all over Texas in the Capitol Rotunda

Most of our participants had never participated in a legislative day. They learned a lot about how to do office calls with our representatives in “our house”. There were many highlights to the day but two of them were our youth caucus being able to meet with Donna Campbell, our only UU rep at the Capital, and the singing in the Capitol Rotunda! Our joyful singing brought down the house and took away from a hateful rally being held outside at roughly the same time. A real example of how love and joy can conquer darkness and hate. We finished the day supporting a rally for Black Women's maternal health and morbidity on the south steps of the Capital. It was a great day, with many great causes. Thanks to all who physically went to the Capital and for everyone who was with us in spirit! And thank you to the Social Justice Committee for organizing and providing a bus.



Senior's Valentine Luncheon

By Mary Wright

We were so excited to once again host the Senior's Valentine Luncheon here on campus. The luncheon, held in the Fellowship Hall, was jointly sponsored by the Stewardship Committee, the Member Care Committee, and the Membership Committee. The turn out was fabulous and everyone, reportedly, had a wonderful time.



Mardi Gras Masquerade Party

The Krewe of First UU Lets the Good Times Roll

By Mary Wright

In case you haven't heard, the Social Activities Committee is back! After disbanding many years ago, the committee has been revived led by First UU member, Oscar Solis. The committee got right to work and hosted a Mardi Gras Masquerade Party on Saturday, February 18. The party featured a potluck dinner with lots of Cajun treats, a costume contest, and dancing. The committee has lots of ideas for upcoming events, so make sure you read those What's Happening emails to stay up to date on the latest.



Volunteer Hub

A One Stop Shop for Getting Involved

By Mary Wright

It takes a lot of moving parts to keep this church running. There's the paid staff: Ministers, Religious Education staff, Music staff, Administration, and more. There's Board Committees, Congregational Committees, Program Committees, Working Groups, and Covenant Groups. There are religious education classes for youth and adults. There are social functions and FUNd lunches. Whew!

There is so much going on, it can be overwhelming. Especially if you are new and trying to figure out how to get involved. We are rolling out a new service that will hopefully make this process a little easier. It's called the Volunteer Hub. Basically, it's an online sign-up app that will list all the various volunteer opportunities at the church. You can click on the link and browse the listings until you find something you like. We hope it will make it easier and more convenient for you to share your time and talent with your church family. It is truly the volunteers who keep this church going. We need you!



Go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0E4FA9A628ABF49-volunteer> to visit the Volunteer Hub and get involved!

Congratulations

...to Sarah Frey and Tavis McGeachin who were married on 3/11/2023.

Condolences

... to the family & friends of James Lambert, the husband of beloved member, Lorelei Lambert, who passed away on 12/29/2022. Lorelei wants to express her thanks to everyone who sent cards and well wishes and who attended Jim's memorial service.

...to the family & friends of Nevin Rupp, who passed away on 1/23/2023. Click the link to view Nevin's obituary [Richard Rupp Obituary \(1932 - 2023\) - Santa Cruz, CA - Legacy](#)

...to the family & friends of Jennie Lee Dietz, who passed away on 2/4/2023. Click the link to view Jennie's obituary [Jennie Dietz Obituary - San Antonio, TX \(dignitymemorial.com\)](#)

...to the family & friends of Marguerite Myers, who passed away on 3/11/2023.

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
7150 W. Interstate 10, San Antonio, TX 78213-3465
(210) 344-4695 www.uusat.org