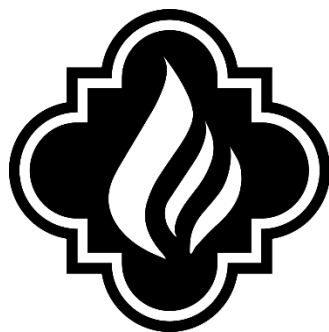
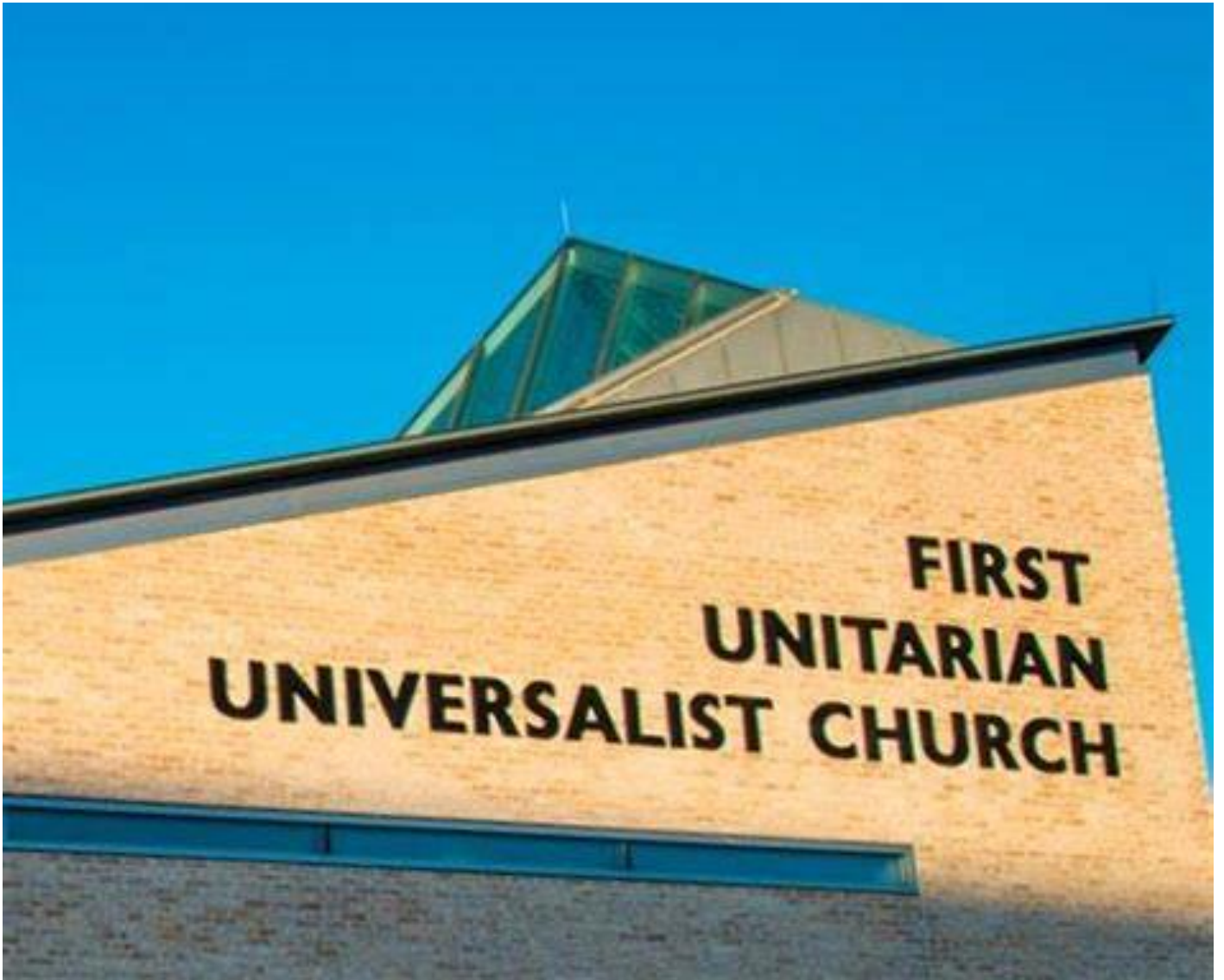


Summer 2023

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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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 Inspire@uusat.org.

Cover photo: The façade of our Sanctuary featuring the pyramid pinnacle skylight.

Held and Inspired in Creativity

by Rev. Mark Skrabacz

Do you know about the descriptive symbols and meanings that our architect had in mind with the design of our Sanctuary?

Our award-winning building with its rising mass and pinnacle skylight represents the Flaming Chalice, the symbol of our Faith. The pyramid-shaped skylight has prisms attached to it, which were donated by members of the church from meaningful sources, such as a grandmother's chandelier. These prisms cast small rainbows on the walls, pews and floor, which move with the sun, the weather, and the time of year. Colors are made naturally by the sun filtered through the histories of family members. Some have referred to our pyramid-shaped pinnacle prism as 21st century stained glass.



The focus of the Sanctuary's interior is abstracted "trees." These are arranged high above the Chancel at the southern end of the Sanctuary. Trunks are seen in the structural wood beams from which symbolic leaves fashioned from maple panels are suspended. These maple leaves consist of the same panels that sheath the walls of the

interior. The design is intended to be simple and uncluttered, so that the plain wooden architectural elements provide a sense of calm serenity.

At the opposite north end of the interior is a glass view of the courtyard with its magnificent Red oak tree. Visually, the symbolic interior tree covering the southern Chancel relates and reflects the natural exterior trees.

The building's relationship to Nature and its seasons is made more real by the four trees planted around a central engraved limestone paver located in the courtyard just outside the Sanctuary. The paver states: "To Everything there is a Season. To every purpose under Heaven" from the scriptural passage in Ecclesiastes. Each tree represents one of the four seasons. Next to the native Yaupon Holly it is written: "Winter afternoons, there's a certain slant of light." And near the native Mexican Plum, it says: "Spring's glory renews the world. Our spirits soar." At the foot of the adapted Crepe Myrtle, the paver states: "Summer's heat sears the world and tests our souls." And adjacent to the native Texas Persimmon symbolizing Fall, it is written: "As geese fly, we fly. Each gives, each receives. The journey is long."

The light from outdoors is let in through the glass walls and doors of the Foyer at the north end of the Sanctuary, symbolically illuminating the entire wood-lined interior with light from the natural tree-filled courtyard. Newly designed foyer furniture purchased with Capital Campaign Funds is made of maple to match the Sanctuary's interior. The pieces even have scalloped design elements to match the chairs used to seat the Choir.

Creativity and simplicity of design adorn every aspect of our Sanctuary. We see and feel a blending of Nature and a built environment all resonating with the energy and vibrations which consist of our lives and love gathering inside and transiting outside. May our experiences both individually and collectively be informed and embraced by this rich creativity. Blessed be!

Foyer Refresh Ribbon Cutting

By Danny Derrick of Derrick Architects

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio held a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 16th for their freshed-up Sanctuary Foyer, which included the custom design furniture that we designed with the church! So grateful to be a part of this upgrade!

The furniture is made of maple to match the Sanctuary's wood tree, choir chairs, and wood panels (all maple). The furniture reinforces the foyer's connection to the Sanctuary, as it also embraces the courtyard with the natural light and leaf embossed floors. A really special space as you come in from nature and enter the sacred Sanctuary. Great day for the church!



Sanctuary Foyer Refresh

By Shannon Hawkins, Aesthetics Co-Chair

The Foyer is the space in which members and visitors are first welcomed into our most sacred space and we have long wished for it to be both more beautiful and more functional. We started with a meeting of Membership, Capital Campaign, Aesthetics, and other interested parties to discuss needs and ideas. From that meeting, we chose to focus upon three areas that most needed to be addressed: Furniture, Signage and Nametag Racks. Capital Campaign generously offered to fund the project.

Furniture: Membership asked that there be two Greeters' tables so visitors could spread out a bit more. Youth Religious Education still needed a table and we wanted to add a bench for emergency seating if someone felt a bit wobbly. Working with Aesthetics, our architect, Danny Derrick, designed the maple furniture to match our choir chairs in style and stain color. We viewed the bench as a piece that could be sculptural as well as functional.

Signage: We added two Welcome Table banners, designed by Randy Blood. We wanted them to add a bit of color and to be



tall enough to be read even with people standing in front of them. We also bought two signs: one to clarify what was down the hallway and the other for the Emerson Bookshop Plus. An automated external defibrillator (AED) sign was also purchased, and the AED machine was attached to the wall to comply with code.



Nametag Racks: We finally found a nametag storage solution that worked for us and we bought two wire grid racks with wheels that can be easily moved wherever we choose.

As Rev. Skrabacz recently wrote about our Sanctuary design: "Creativity and simplicity of design adorn every aspect of our Sanctuary. We see and feel a blending of Nature and a built environment all resonating with the energy and vibrations which consist of our lives and love gathering inside and transiting outside." And now our foyer finally echoes the beauty of our Sanctuary as we welcome all into our most sacred space.



The Story of Norbert Capek's Flower Ceremony

By Teresa and David Schwartz

Reprinted with permission of the UUA Worship Web in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Flower Ceremony. First UU will celebrate the Flower Ceremony during our June 4th Worship Service.

His mother was a devout Catholic, his father agnostic. He became an acolyte at age 10, in 1890 at St. Martin's Catholic Church. In the years that followed, he became disillusioned: his priest was a cynic.

At 18, apprenticed to his uncle, a successful tailor in Vienna, Norbert discovered the Baptists and became a minister. He founded almost a dozen churches from Ukraine to Budapest. Yet, slowly, his faith became more and more liberal.

He left Bohemia under government threat and accepted a call to serve a Baptist church in New York City... until one day in 1919. That day, he wrote in his diary: "I cannot be a Baptist anymore, even in compromise. The fire of new desires, new worlds, is burning inside me."

*Norbert and his wife, Mája Čapek, joined a Unitarian church in New Jersey in 1921—for the same reason a whole lot of you did: their children liked the religious education program. That's the power of our Sunday School teachers. Kids, that's your power, too!

World War I ended. His home country now independent, he and Maja returned home to Czechoslovakia.

His Unitarian church was the Prague Liberal Religious Fellowship. In just 20 years, his church had 3,200 members.

The traditional Christian communion service of bread and wine wouldn't meet the needs of his congregation because his church—like ours—had people who believed different things.

Čapek turned to the beauty of the countryside, to the beauty of flowers. In 1923, he developed the flower ceremony. He asked his congregants to bring a flower to church—from their gardens, the field, or the roadside. He invited each person to place their flower in a vase. There was the church community, no less unique for being united. Following the service, each person could take a flower from the vase—a different one than they had brought.

Čapek was a visionary minister with a church ahead of its time, a BOLD church, a church thinking beyond its doors, beyond what it thought possible.

It was a church that was willing to take risks; to make tough decisions; to bear disappointment; and to build a new way...first by building a church, and that church could build up the world.

That is our church. That was Čapek's church

For this, the Gestapo arrested him in 1942. The Nazis accused Čapek of listening to foreign broadcasts and sent him to the Dachau concentration camp.

Even in starvation and torture, he held a flower ceremony with his fellow prisoners, finding whatever flowers they could among the weeds of the camp. They testified to a beauty larger than themselves, and a love that would outlive them.

The Nazis killed Norbert Čapek. But his spirit, courage, and commitment live on today. Those qualities have passed, now, to us, to make them real.

His wife Mája brought the flower ceremony to the Unitarian Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1940.

What we are about to do is not a historical reenactment of something over and done, but an affirmation of our continuity with the generations of struggle for ever-widening liberty.

This flower ceremony, lovely though it is, isn't a diversion from ugly reality, but a gentle fierceness which proclaims that in the midst of sinister days there is always the light of beauty.

We are here not to recall something that happened, but to remember something that is happening: to re-member—to put it back together again—and in that remembering, may we put ourselves back together again, each as a part of the body of this community: out of many, one.

Today, we celebrate this ritual of solemnity and joy.

As Čapek asked his people to bring a flower and celebrate beauty, so shall we.

Note: Č is a separate letter of the Czech alphabet, pronounced like the "ch" in "chocolate." Čapek is pronounced "CHOP-ek," and Mája is pronounced "Maya."

Flower Ceremony Centennial

By Mary Wright

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Flower Ceremony, a uniquely Unitarian celebration first started by Rev. Norbert Čapek (pronounced CHOP-ek) in June 1923. For decades, this beloved tradition and its powerful history have provided meaning to hundreds of UU congregations. As the centennial of this ritual approaches, please enjoy the following prayer by Rev. Dr. Petr Samojský, minister of the Prague Unitarian Congregation in the Czech Republic.

Meditation over the Flowers

In the name of what is holy; in the name of what is good; in the name of that which gives life, we have gathered here in this place today. We have been given life to live under the aspect of eternity, for that is the source of happiness; to work on ourselves and bring happiness into our lives; to be as valid as possible to others with whom we are connected by invisible relationships.

You, the flowers, remind us of the wonderful simplicity of the natural order and that we too are a part of it. You remind us of the beauty and harmony of diversity. You remind us that one can feel and perceive and live unity in diversity, and diversity in unity.

Let the spirit of creative life unite us, as it reigns among us.



Annual Congregational Meeting

By Rev. Mark Skrabacz and Rev. Nell Newton

Every congregational vote is powerful, but this year's meeting and vote was especially encouraging to us, as your ministers. We witnessed the detailed preparations ahead of the meeting and vote, and then, listened carefully to all who spoke. It was a pure expression of our 5th Principle – the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process.

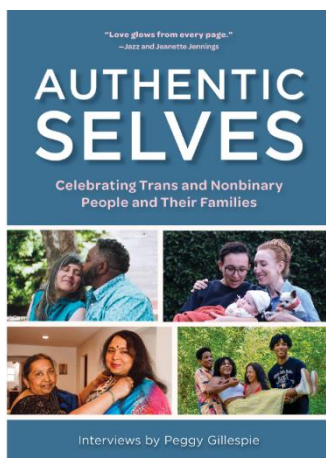
Let's be clear: we don't worship the democratic process, we use it. And, unlike in other systems, we understand that any decisions made through this process must still carry us all together. We cannot use it to separate one from another

Now we have the [results of the vote](#), they will serve to guide the leaders through this next church year and beyond. We used the democratic process, but, unlike in other systems, we understand that any decisions made must still carry us all together.

While the adoption of the 8th Principle has encouraged some and troubled others, it begs the question "What do we do now?" As your ministers, we will continue to accompany you through the work that has always awaited you. And that work is to tend to one another gently, with love, compassion, and curiosity.

Emerson Bookshop Plus

By Carol Collins



Just in time for Pride month! *Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families* is now available at our Emerson Bookshop Plus, \$17 includes sales tax.

Fair Trade Chocolate Clearance! Before the heat of summer our bookshop has its heat-sensitive fair trade chocolate on sale for \$2 per bar or bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips (55% cacao). Bar choices include Panama Chocolate (80% cacao), Very Dark (71%), Orange Chocolate (65%), Lemon Ginger (55%), Milk Chocolate Caramel Crunch With Sea Salt (43%) and Milk Chocolate (43% cacao).

Our bookshop is open after Sunday services June 4 and 18 and other 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays. Our church bookshop is in the room on the left as you leave the Sanctuary. Credit/debit cards accepted.

CREF Awards Grants to Local Non-Profits

By Bill Bush

On October 16, 2022, First Unitarian Universalists' Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREF) awarded \$9,700 to four area non-profit organizations. The 2022 recipients were: Act4SA, Empower House San Antonio, Planned Parenthood of South Texas, and the League of Women Voters San Antonio.



CREF Awards Recipients 2022, L-R: Alene Lindley of League of Women Voters, Ananda Thomas of Act4SA, Andrea Figueroa of Empower House of San Antonio, and Laura Terrill of Planned Parenthood of South Texas.

The League of Women Voters received \$3,600 for voter outreach which included the printing of Promise to Vote cards and translation services for voter education materials. This award supported the printing of 2500 Promise to Vote cards in English and Spanish, 10,000 Promise to Vote postcards, as well as Spanish-language versions of the League's FAQ handout and an election poster. These materials allowed the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area to communicate with 12,750 potential voters in Bexar County.

I promise to vote in the upcoming election!

By mail, if desired AND eligible. Submit the vote by mail application by October 28.

During Early Voting, October 24 - November 4, at ANY polling location.

On Election Day Tuesday, November 8, at ANY polling location.

Polling locations are listed at
www.bexar.org/1568/Elections-Department

I plan to vote HERE: _____

Get informed about what's on your ballot at VOTE411.ORG

Encourage 3 friends to VOTE!



¡Me comprometo a votar en las próximas elecciones!

Por correo electrónico, en caso de requerirlo y ser elegible. He enviado mi voto a través de una solicitud por correo antes de la fecha límite del 28 de octubre de 2022.

Durante la Votación Anticipada del 24 de octubre al 4 de noviembre de 2022 en cualquier ubicación de votación.

El Día de las Elecciones, el martes 8 de noviembre de 2022, en cualquier ubicación de votación.

Puede encontrar las ubicaciones de votación en
www.bexar.org/1568/Elections-Department

Tengo previsto votar AQUÍ: _____

Infórmese sobre lo que habrá en su boleta en VOTE411.ORG

¡Anime a 3 amigos a VOTAR!



Empower House San Antonio received \$2,000 for program materials for three planned events in their Empower Women and Empower Parents Programs. CREF funds supported three of eight events as part of the Empower Women Program: Discovering Frida/ Descubriendo a Frida (September 22); Catrina Paint and Chat (October 27); and Merry and Bright DIY Spa Night (December 12). Altogether, in 2022 the Empower Parents Program served 326 parents, 117 of whom were enrolled in the Partners in Peace Domestic Violence Program.



Planned Parenthood of South Texas was awarded \$2,500 for just over a one month's supply (250 units) of EC (emergency contraception), free, to assist with women's healthcare in the San Antonio area. Abortion was criminalized in Texas in June 2022 after the Supreme Court reversed Roe v. Wade. It has never been more important to prevent unintended pregnancy. While Planned Parenthood will never stop fighting for reproductive rights, they also recognize that we must redouble our efforts to get birth control in the hands of people who need it.

Emergency contraception (EC) helps prevent pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, but it can be too costly for many of patients to afford. To increase access to EC, Planned Parenthood began offering it at no cost to patients on September 1. Any person seeking care at one of their health centers could access this service — no need to see a clinician or book an appointment.

From September 1 to February 28, Planned Parenthood provided 1,023 units of EContra emergency contraception to patients at their five San Antonio health centers.

Health Center	Units of Free EC
2140 Babcock Road	250
8725 Marbach (relocated in March 2023 to 235 Richland Hills)	186
11514 Perrin Beitel Road	261
920 San Pedro Ave.	159
7022 S. New Braunfels Ave.	167

First UU's financial investment, through CREF, helped 250 community members obtain EContra emergency contraception at no cost to them, helping prevent unintended pregnancy.

This program has been so successful that Planned Parenthood has extended it past the original six-month period and will continue to provide free EC to any patient who requests it. In addition, Planned Parenthood has begun to provide free EC elsewhere in the community — at reproductive health pop-ups and at repro health pantries at San Antonio Youth locations. (These locations also include the period packs that First UU volunteers helped assemble!)

Planned Parenthood is thankful that the First UU congregation is committed to helping make reproductive health care more accessible in San Antonio. Your compassion for our patients has real, tangible effects on their ability to control their reproductive lives.

Act4SA received \$1,600 to help with costs of materials for an educational workshop series surrounding abolition, defunding the police, conflict resolution without the police, and anti-blackness and racism in our community. The first event in this series, a Teach-In on the Militarization of the Police, was held on March 9. ACT4SA educated attendees on the events that led to the militarization of the police and federal programs that made it easier for police departments across the country to obtain military equipment. The session focused on Cop City, a proposed military style police training facility in Atlanta, and the new military-style armored vehicle that our city of San Antonio just purchased and the implications of militarization in our city. More events are planned.



2022 marked the 40th anniversary of CREF, which got its start in 1982. Each year since then, CREF trustees solicit nominations from First Unitarian Universalist members. Once the nominations are received, the trustees send the nominees an application packet. In 2022, CREF received seven nominations; six of these completed an application and returned it by the required deadline.

CREF is currently accepting nominations for the 2023 awards cycle! First UU members can nominate an area nonprofit until June 30, 2023. For more information about the nomination process, as well as the nomination form, please visit the [CREF website](#).

Funds for the CREF grants come from the income, interest, and dividends earned from its endowment principal. CREF contributions are added to the principal each year during the October fundraising drive that church members generously support. The amount of interest and dividends earned during one year is the total amount of funds available for grants in the following year. Thank you to the members and friends of First UU.

Celestial Celebrations Circle News

By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle is the official CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalists Pagans) group associated with First UU Church of San Antonio. We hold Rituals for all the 8 Sabbats, the Pagan Holy Days. On months where there are no rituals, we sponsor Labyrinth walks at the church site which was laid out by Celestial Celebrations Circle located on the west side of the Sanctuary. Over the past few months, we held two rituals and one labyrinth walk.

Our March Ritual was Spring Equinox. It is easy to know the meaning of this astronomical occurrence if one understands the meaning of the word, Equinox, equal night. In essence, Spring Equinox is equal parts of night and day. This year we chose to concentrate on the spring portion of Spring Equinox. We focused on the greening of nature as it comes back to life. We also had other concerns that we wished to bring into our circle. To honor the one-year anniversary of the conflict in Ukraine, we read the poem "Poem for Ukraine" by H. Byron Ballard, which was also read last year in our circle. As usual, we collected canned goods for the San Antonio Food Bank and received some donations for our four-legged friends as well.

Our April Ritual was Beltane. This is the time of year to promote a healthy growing season. This includes all kinds of growing entities - plants... animals... humans. It is a lighthearted ritual with lots of play and movement. It has more than your average amount of preparation by the participants as we weave a maypole and burn our written wishes in the bel fire so they may go out into the universe to be fulfilled. We also completed the jumping of the bel fire with those with whom we wish to have a deeper relationship. This year we had a large group of thirty-five adult participants and two children. This group created a lot of energy for our hopes and wishes.

In May, we sponsored a Labyrinth walk, which is a totally different experience from our rituals. There was drumming along with the meditative walk in the night air. The energy is less structured than that of a Sabbat Rituals and attracts different people. We had four people participate. This was held on Memorial Day weekend, so people could focus on anyone who they wanted to honor.

Celebrating & Dancing with the Sun

By Rosa Mari Hill and Mary Lynne Hill

On Saturday, April 29, 2023, we accepted the invitation of the Celestial Celebration Circle to bring five yards of ribbon to join in their Beltane Ritual and the dancing of the Maypole.

Going into the evening, we were unsure what to expect as it was our first interaction with the Circle, but we were excited to celebrate the flow of Spring into Summer with them. Growing up, Mary Lynne had participated in May Crowning events, but Rosa had never had that opportunity. We also had two friends, Shelly, an artist from Wisconsin, and Tricia, a local VA nurse, attend with us. They, also, had not had much experience with a Beltane ritual.

On one hand, it felt strange because it was outside and not inside a Church. On the other, it felt perfect as it was a beautiful evening to honor this moment of the cosmic movement of the Earth.

In earlier eras throughout much of Europe, May Day was acknowledged as the first day of summer, with the most important ritual involving the Maypole. The pole, often oak, elm, or birch, was brought in from the forest and erected in the village square. It was the focus of games, festivities, and general merriment.



John Matthews, in his book *The Summer Solstice: Celebrating the Journey of the Sun from May Day to Harvest* (Quest Books 2002), states that, "the origin of this custom dates back at least as far as classical times, when a Phrygian pine tree, sacred to the Roman god Attis, was taken in procession to the temple of his consort, the Mother Goddess Cybele. Attis was the god of cattle, sheep, and plants. His death ... just after the spring equinox was preceded by a vigil of fasting or abstinence, from which was derived the Christian observance of Lent.

Then, after a night in the grave, Attis was resurrected, and mourning turned to delight” with priests of Cybele dancing through the streets, with dancers attaching strands of wool to the top of the sacred pine and then revolving ecstatically around it. This Roman festival of Attis’ resurrection was called Hilaria or “Festival of Joy.”

Keeping in mind this beautiful history, it was exciting for the four of us to attach our colorful ribbons to the Maypole, along with our written intentions to the wreath that crowned it, then dance, braiding the ribbons around the top of the pole, by weaving in and out amongst each other.

The four of us really appreciated that it was an intergenerational gathering, with ages ranging from a few trips around the sun to those whose hair has gone silver, and that food was collected for the Food Bank. It was a delight to celebrate Beltane with old friends and with new ones. Rosa commented that she had, “expected it to have more younger people than older attending, so it was a surprise for me to see so many older people there, leading the celebration. I loved it.”

An Empty Fortune Cookie on Your 74th Birthday

So, what exactly is my fortune
When I’m out to lunch
At, of all places,
“The House of Joy” Chinese Restaurant
Purported to be the best in San Antonio
(And I concur!)

And after my superb egg drop soup,
Egg roll, sweet & sour pork done perfectly.
My fortune cookie is EMPTY!
A blank.

My friend, also a minster, had one,
And it wasn’t even his birthday.
I worried since I take my Asian wisdom seriously.
Was this an I Ching moment?
Did it mean I had NO fortune, NO future?
And that this happened in “The House of Joy”?

All I know, of course,
is that though I thought it was the best Chinese Food in San Antonio
And that there was no slip of paper in the fortune cookie,
The rest, like all religion,
For each one of us,
Is up to me to find the meaning deep within.

Art Severance

Free Battered Texas Women Spring Updates

by Cathy Marston

WHEN SURVIVORS SPEAK, CHANGE HAPPENS!

Thanks to [Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice](#) (CSSJ) for providing transportation, music, healing, and treats to get us to Survivors Speak at the capitol in Austin on March 30! We are also grateful to everyone who came with us. Our group included Kimberly Dean (not pictured), Bianca Rawlings (foreground), Deanna Boling, Free Battered Texas Women (FBTW) board member Alison Hom, FBTW's new Program Assistant Mia Garcia (who interned for us this past semester), CSSJ staffer Jessica, Guadalupe Valley Family Violence Shelter (GVFVS) Development Director Delilah Reyes, FBTW Executive Assistant Altair Walker (seated), and myself (kneeling).



We were busy getting our message out through tables at Schertz's Movin' on Main wellness event on April 2. I conducted reiki facilitations for a donation and we had coloring handouts for children on bodily autonomy and creating a circle of safety.

We also tabled in Seguin on April 26 for Denim Day, a Sexual Assault Awareness Month event hosted by our colleagues at the GVFVS. Speakers on sexual assault awareness included the mayor of Seguin, Donna Dodgen. The event concluded with chanting and walking around Central Park.

Also on April 26, the *San Antonio Express-News* published a column I co-authored with Danielle Metz, the Director of Clemency for the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. Entitled "[Texas women deserve pardon, not Daniel Perry](#)," it urges prioritizing pardons of survivors over a man convicted of murdering a protester in Austin.

I am thrilled to announce that the Resist Foundation has awarded us with \$7000 for general support and accessibility. We are honored to be part of the May 2023 cohort of awardees doing worthwhile justice and healing work funded by Resist. For more information about the Resist Foundation, please check out their website at: <https://resist.org/> or on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (@CallToResist).

Coming up in June for LGBTQIA+ Pride Month, we will be cosponsoring a workshop with Concrete Yoga on Friday, June 23 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Pride, Poses, and Poetry. I will teach this workshop on poetry and yoga. The cost of the workshop is \$45, which will support our work. For more information on the workshop, please go to: <https://www.concrete-yoga.com/> or our Facebook page.

Lastly, the singer Tori Amos in her autobiography, *Resistance*, asks, "When is the justification for 'tough love' just an excuse for abuse?" Caging people so they can be tortured is not an acceptable way to treat people who are accused of a crime or to hold people accountable for violating the law. While the Mercy for Survivors/Duress Bill (HB 327/SB 968) was passed by the Texas House on May 10, it never got past the Texas Senate – a repeat of last session. Similar provisions that would allow evidence of acting under duress from domestic violence or trafficking is currently law in 33 states.

Trans Day of Visibility

By Mary Wright

On April 2 we celebrated International Transgender Day of Visibility, also known as Trans Day of Visibility. This is an annual event that celebrates transgender people and raises awareness of the ongoing discrimination transgender people experience on a daily basis. The event was created by Rachel Crandall, a transgender activist, in 2009. There already was a recognized Transgender Day of Remembrance, celebrated in November, which lifts up transgender individuals who have been murdered for being their authentic self. However, Rachel wanted a day to celebrate living transgender people and recognize their accomplishments and contributions to society.

To recognize the holiday, we set up a table outside the Sanctuary and distributed trans and other LGBTQ+ flags. We had information about how to be a good ally and displayed selected books from our bookshop. We also had a sign up for the next Trans Inclusion in Congregations class. We have already offered this class two times here at the church. People who have gone through the six session class have had nothing but positive things to say. Facilitated by two trans UU leaders, the class goes beyond the bathroom and pronoun discussion and delves into the deeper systemic roots of acceptance and belonging.

Our Worship Service featured words from transgender UU ministers and testimonials. After service we all enjoyed paletas in the courtyard. With the onslaught of anti-trans legislation coming out of Austin and all over the country, there is no time more important than now to support our transgender friends and family.

Circle Dinner Program

By Cindy Daughtrey

Since February our church Circle Dinner program has been on hiatus. However, in May, we restarted the program and had a great turnout.

What are Circle Dinners? Circle Dinners are a great way to meet other members of First UU Church of San Antonio in a more comfortable and small group setting. The dinners are usually scheduled for every third Saturday of each month, but may be adjusted for holidays, as well as the months of June - September. Special events, like cocktail hours and BBQs, are planned for the months July - August. So, mark the dinners on your calendars.

How do Circle Dinners Work? At the beginning of the month, you will receive an email requesting that you RSVP for the dinner that month. Based on the response for “hosts” and attendees, the guest lists are prepared. You will most likely be at a different house each month. You might see familiar or different faces each month depending on the number of attendees for each month.

How does Hosting Work? We are looking for hosts that can accommodate 6-8 people including yourself and your partner, if applicable. Hosts are responsible for letting their guests know what they should bring to the dinner, contact information, and directions to the dinner. Hosts generally provide the main course and guests usually bring a side dish, bread, or dessert as requested by the host. Everyone has a great time and the libations flow. All participants are expected to “host” at least once a year. If you cannot host in your home, the lounge at the church is available for you to use.

Need help hosting? There are participants who would very much like to partner up to host a dinner. Let me know if this interests you and I will take note of your name for host partnering. I am trying out a new “Sign Up Genius” process. Please be patient because this is a new experience for me and there may be some learning curves to overcome. If you are not comfortable using the “Sign Up Genius,” just send me an email and I will complete the sign up for you. If you are not able to access the “Sign Up” site, please let me know this as well.

Deadline for RSVP is June 10th. The “link” for June’s Circle Dinner “Sign Up” list is: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084DADAF23A1FEC61-circle> You can contact Cindy Daughtrey, the Circle Dinner Coordinator at circledinners@uusat.org.

We Want You in the First UU Choir

By Susan Dill

Why sing in a choir?

Singing exercises the brain and the body. Research supports the following physiological benefits of singing. Singing improves breathing, posture, and muscle tension. There is even some evidence to suggest that music can play a role in sustaining a healthy immune system by reducing the stress hormone cortisol and boosting the Immunoglobulin A antibody.

Singers who regularly sing in choirs report that learning new songs is cognitively stimulating and helps their memory. Also, the satisfaction one derives from performing together, even without an audience in rehearsal, is likely to be associated with activation of the brain's reward system, including the dopamine pathway, this keeps people coming back for more.

Psychologists who have studied the benefits of choral singing share that it can improve our sense of happiness and wellbeing. Research has shown that people feel more positive after actively singing than they do after passively listening to music. Improved mood probably in part comes directly from the release of positive neurochemicals. It is also influenced by changes in our sense of increased community with others.

Please join us.

The First UU choir is a welcoming choir. Just make an appointment (usually by coming a bit early to rehearsal) to sing by yourself for Susan. We welcome trained singers and those who have never sung in a choir before. The only requirement is the ability to match pitch. Susan will help you decide which section (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) you are most comfortable singing in. If you don't have a musical background, you will gradually learn how to read music as you participate in the group.

The First UU choir has had fun performing a variety of styles of music this year. We will be able to accomplish even more with greater participation so we are hoping you will join in the fun. The group rehearses from 11 am - 12:15 pm every Saturday beginning the first Saturday in August. The group goes on summer hiatus in June and July. During that time the music slots are filled with solos and small ensembles. We are also looking for volunteer instrumentalists to play for our services.

If you are interested in sharing your musical talents with us, please email Susan at susan.dill@utsa.edu or text 210-843-6474.

Church Patio Improvement

By Carol Collins

Our church patio is now much less slippery when wet! I am grateful to the hard-working people who made this happen in three shifts over three days of cleaning, sanding, and applying two coats of anti-slip paint: Frank Cervantes, Jessica Latimer, Marsha Meredith, Linda Nash, DeAnna Bowling, and Heather Hedquist. Thanks also to Mike Phillips for lending his 20 foot roller pole!

Jewelry Sale/Silent Auction a Big Success

By Martha Cooley and Stanna Welch, on behalf of the First UU Retired Women

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then these pictures should tell in at least sixteen thousand more what a fun time everyone had and also what a success the First UU Retired Women's jewelry sale/silent auction was. Thanks to all the jewelry contributors, worker bees, AND everyone who attended and went home with lovely "new" jewelry!







Condolences

...to the family and friends of Robert Andrew Noel, father of First UU member Jim Noel, who passed away on May 30, 2023. Click [here](#) to read his obituary.

...to the family and friends of Don Hymel, who passed away on May 29, 2023. A celebration of Don's life will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2023 at 2:00 pm in our Sanctuary. A reception will follow in the Fellowship Hall.

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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