

## The Official Magazine of First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio



## Table of Contents

- The Search for a Minister – page 3
- A Summer of Transitions – page 5
- Flower Celebration – page 6
- Get Out the Vote Letters – page 7
- Trust Fund for Endowments – page 8
- Campus Clean Up Day – page 9
- The Retired UU Women’s Group – page 10
- New Member Ceremony – page 11
- Purple Martins at First UU – page 12
- Pagan Happenings – page 13
- Easter Egg Hunt – page 14
- Free Battered Texas Women – page 15
- Community Volunteer Initiative – page 16
- Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust – page 17
- Fighting for Democracy – page 18
- A Review of Our Church’s History – page 19

## Inspire

Contact us at [Inspire@uusat.org](mailto:Inspire@uusat.org)

Visit our website at [www.uusat.org](http://www.uusat.org)

Check us out on [Facebook](#),  
[Instagram](#), & [X](#)

### Editor

Mary Wright

### Contributors

Mary Barad  
Philisse Barrows  
Pat Beck  
Carol Collins  
Martha Cooley  
Tracey Homburg  
Cathy Marston  
Arlis Olson  
Rev. Art Severance  
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 [Inspire@uusat.org](mailto:Inspire@uusat.org).

**Cover photo:** Carolyn and Rev. Mark Skrabacz at their farewell party on May 25, 2024

# The Search for a Minister

By Mary Barad

We all know the importance of having a minister in a church of our size and how important it is to find the right person for the job. There are many ways to search for a minister, and (at least in the Unitarian Universalist world) a few different types of ministers to search for. As a Fair-Share Giving Congregation our church can share in all of the resources available from the national Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). We are able to receive the expert advice they can provide during ministerial searches, as well as have access to the new MinistrySearch system in which congregational records and the ministerial records of applicants are shared. (The MinistrySearch system is open only to ministers in Fellowship with the UUA.)

The board has been considering our next ministerial options for a long time. Two years ago, the board gave presentations and asked for input from the congregation as to how to move forward. It was decided that an interim ministry would be the best choice. This church year, the board worked on getting the church ready and designated a search committee to begin work in January 2024.

There are four main types of ministry searches. Each of these is briefly described below. Contract, developmental, and interim ministers are hired by the Governing Board for a specific time period. Contract ministries are usually for a year with an option to renew. Developmental and interim ministry contracts are set for a specific number of years, though they may be extended for a year with approval from the UUA Transitions Office. Settled ministers are called by a congregation, with at least a 90% vote to accept a call.

**Contract Ministry** is the simplest and most flexible type of ministry search. This is usually a transitional ministry occurring between settled ministers, although it may lead to a settled ministry. There is no search team established or congregational participation in the decision. The church's Governing Board looks for and hires the minister. Reverend Mark was, and Reverend Nell is, a contract minister.

**Developmental Ministry** is a type of ministry that is also a Board hire and may be an option following a recommendation by UUA Congregational Life staff or an interim minister. During a developmental ministry, a congregation works intensively on cultural change goals with an experienced ministry partner.

**Interim Ministry** is a transitional type of ministry, usually two years long, between and/or before settled ministries. A search team made up of a few congregational members is designated by the board to assist in coordinating with the UUA, putting together information for the congregational record, and reviewing interested Interim Ministry applicants. The process remains confidential throughout. Charged by the board, the search committee reviews and ranks applicants, and if a match is made for the congregation, submits the applicant recommendation to the board, where a final decision by the Governing Board is made. An

interim minister cannot go on to become a settled minister in the same congregation after their interim time is up (at least not for several years).

**Settled Ministry** is a “permanent” ministry, and every congregation hopes that the ministerial relationship will last for many years. Most average about seven years. Settled ministers are called by a congregation. Because the entire congregation has a part in selecting a settled minister, the process to get everyone involved and ready takes thought, time, and care. It requires the congregation to engage over time in surveys, cottage meetings, and/or focus groups, facilitated by specially trained search committee members, where information is collected regarding what members think about the church and what qualities they want to see in a minister, and hear what others say.

Understandably, a settled minister search is a much more involved process, with a specially trained and selected search committee fielding multiple applicants, engaging in pre-candidate weekends, in-person interviews, and on campus visits when possible. In the end, the search committee will rank and choose an applicant and applicants will rank and choose a congregation in a process of mutual selection. Rather than with a Governing Board decision, the process culminates with a congregational vote to approve the candidate, or a congregational “call”. Most ministers desire at least a 90-95% approval vote to accept a call.

In order to find the best, long-term good fit between a congregation and minister, almost all congregations, including ours, decide to have an interim ministry between settled ministries. As well, almost all ministers searching for settlement expect and rely on an interim or transitional ministry to follow and precede them. This is because often, when a ministry ends, a congregation’s anxiety is high. An interim ministry allows time and opportunity for a congregation to shift from looking backward and reacting to the last ministry to looking toward a future settled minister. After the interim work has begun and the anxiety has settled, any search committee that is formed will be more likely to work better on behalf of the congregation toward their goal of finding a settled minister. The most successful searches for a settled minister take place during a time when the congregation is supported by an Interim Minister.

Our Interim Minister, Rev. Xolani Kacela, will come to First UU San Antonio as a qualified minister, with specialized Interim training. Beginning in August, he will lead our worship services, provide pastoral care, and work with the board to manage the church. With our help, he can establish himself quickly, and provide our congregation with the stability and guidance it needs now, and over the next two years. During this time, with Rev. Kacela as our Senior Interim Minister, our congregation can reflect, prepare, and do the emotional work that change requires. Harnessing the energy of change, we can explore new ideas and gain clarity about what is essential and move toward a new future together.

*Reference: UUA Settlement and Transitional Ministry Handbooks, 2022-23 edition. Produced by the UUA Transition Office.*

# A Summer of Transitions

By Mary Wright

The last weekend of May we said our farewells to Rev. Mark Skrabacz and his wife, Carolyn.

After over four years as our Contract Minister, Rev. Mark will be enjoying a well-earned retirement. The Board of Trustees hosted a fabulous retirement party for Rev. Mark on Saturday, May 25 and the following day, Rev. Mark and Carolyn said their goodbyes to us from the pulpit in Mark's last sermon as our Lead Minister. They will both be missed.

Sadly, we will also be saying goodbye this summer to our Assistant Minister, Rev. Nell Newton, our Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Bridget Laflin, and our Youth Advisor, Charice Hoptowit, who will all be moving on to new adventures.

Not to fret, however, as we will also be welcoming new faces to First UU this summer – Rev. Dr. Xolani “XK” Kacela as our new Interim Minister and Tim Veerstag as our new Director of Lifespan Religious Education.



**Rev. Mark and Rev. Nell at Mark's Farewell Service.**

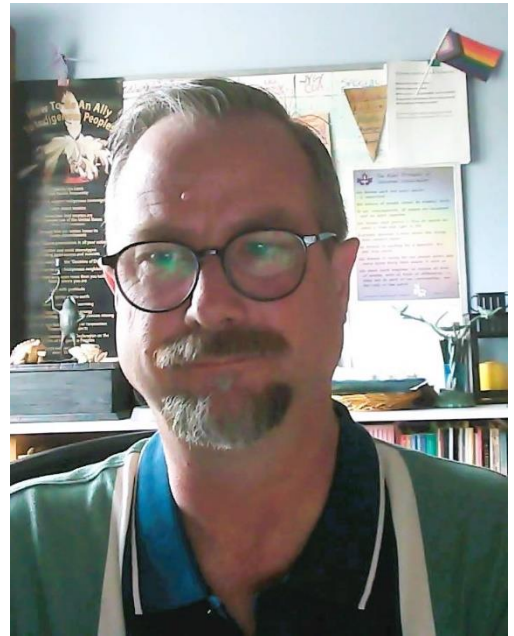


**Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela**

Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela, also known as Rev. XK, comes to us from First Unitarian Church of San Jose in San Jose, California. Rev. Kacela holds a BBA from Morehouse College, an MBA from Boston University, and a PhD & Master of Divinity from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. He was ordained in 2004 and received Full Fellowship as a UU Minister in 2012. His experience includes additional Professional Interim and Transitional Ministry training. He has been a Chaplain in the US Air Force and Air National Guard and has served our country in Iraq. He was an adjunct faculty member at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and currently serves as Chaplain for the Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM). He has authored numerous publications and has served on the boards of many community

organizations. Rev Kacela and his wife, Tamara, will be joining us here at First UU-San Antonio in August 2024.

Tim Veerstag comes to us from the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton in Hamilton, Ontario (Canada). Tim was born in Ontario and trained in secondary education in English Literature and History. He spent a decade working for pet food companies and a dozen years as a stay-at-home parent for his three children, who were all raised in the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton and are now grown. Tim served First Unitarian Church in multiple roles, including on the worship committee, on the canvass committee, and on the board. He served as board president for two years. In 2012 he was appointed as a lay chaplain, a uniquely Canadian role that performs rites of passage services on the church's behalf. In 2018 he began working as the church's Religious Education director. Children, youth, and families have always been at the center of his work, with a strong emphasis on nurturing connections between all generations. Tim will be joining us here at First UU-San Antonio in August 2024.



**Tim Veerstag**

While saying goodbye to those we love is not easy, we welcome the change and excitement new faces bring. We look forward to welcoming Rev. XK and Tim this summer.

## Flower Celebration

By Mary Wright

On May 12 we celebrated our Flower Celebration, a uniquely UU tradition first celebrated in 1923 by Dr. Norbert Čapek, who founded the modern Unitarian movement in Czechoslovakia. We were treated to wonderful music from a Jazz trio, which included our own Jaime Ramirez, and enjoyed the beautiful flowers.



# Get Out the Vote Letters

by Philisse Barrows

One of our church's active volunteer groups is *First UU the Vote SA*, our church's branch of the national Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA's) *UU the Vote* program. The purpose of this group is to Get Out The Vote in 2024.

The most popular activity among the *First UU the Vote SA* volunteers is to send non-partisan letters to people in "swing states" encouraging them to vote. The names and addresses come from the national group, [Vote Forward](#). Vote Forward gathers lists of registered voters—people in marginalized groups people who are eligible to vote but often simply don't.

Our local group is headed by Nancy Pridgen, who organizes letter-writing "parties" once a month at the church. The letters are prepared already for the volunteers except for a couple of key sentences. The letter has a space for volunteers to write in a continuation of "I vote because...." There is space for the volunteer to hand-write one to three heartfelt sentences about their personal reason for voting.

Personally, I like the fact that I can say why voting is so important to me, and I have a chance to encourage someone else to vote too.

Vote Forward does scientific research about the effectiveness of their program. They have done 20 studies in the past 6 years. Nearly all of their letter-writing campaigns show a positive effect on voter turnout.

A personal story about why voting is important to you helps to sway the person to vote. The monthly letter-writing parties are easy to join - just send Nancy Pridgen an email at [diceyt1@gmail.com](mailto:diceyt1@gmail.com) letting her know that you would like to participate. Nancy prepares folders, usually with 10 or 20 letters to write and 10 or 20 envelopes to address. There is a brief training for new participants and, usually, snacks are provided. Stamps are provided by the letter-writers or other volunteers.

Note that volunteers use only their first name and initial of their last name, so they are not identified. Nancy will keep all the letters until October, when she will be mailing them ahead of the November election.

I have taken part in a couple of the parties and also written additional letters at home on my own, and sitting with my best friend who is also writing them. However you choose to take part, it is a worthwhile cause, and it is definitely not too difficult.

It gives me a good feeling to be helping support our democracy. Please join us at the next letter writing party on June 15, 10-noon in the Fellowship Hall. RSVP to [diceyt1@gmail.com](mailto:diceyt1@gmail.com).

# Trust Fund for Endowments

By Arlis Olson

I joined the Unitarian Church in 1988 because I felt totally accepted for who I was. Over the years, I've done what I can to further the church's mission and goals because it's meant a lot to me. I don't have a lot of money, have health concerns, and like you, I have family obligations, but the church has been an integral part of my life and I want it to be here for others after I'm gone. To that end, I've included the church in my estate planning. I know this isn't something everyone can do for various legitimate reasons. However, I ask those of you who can, to please consider designating an amount in your will at least equal to your yearly pledge.

There are several ways of doing this. Some of the most common are specific dollar amounts or percentages of your estate designated in your will. You can also designate a specific item, such as real estate. Probably the easiest is to designate a percentage of your mutual funds (if you have them) to the church.

We want to recognize the people who have made a commitment. To that end, we have established a Legacy Society. This consists of a list of past contributors over the years (we're in the process of making a plaque) and those who have made a commitment to do so (listed on a legacy certificate in the lounge). There are only eight members so far. Surely there are other people out there in similar circumstances to me for whom the church has played an important part. This is only a commitment to the church after your death. It doesn't affect your current finances. If you or your family need it before you die, you just use it.

Some people have told me we have not emphasized the importance of the Trust Fund for Endowment. Believe me, it's important! This is the fund that supports the church long range. It is the fund that built the Sanctuary. Interest and dividends from the fund have provided for many smaller things like roof repair, air conditioners, furnace replacement, sewer line installation and other necessary expenditures. Some people are confused about the difference between the Trust Fund for Endowment and the Community Responsible Endowment Fund (CREF). The Trust Fund for Endowment supports our church. CREF supports other community organizations.

If this church is to be here tomorrow, it needs your support today. If you have made a commitment and missed telling us, let us know. If you haven't made a commitment, please do so now. Let us know you're in the process. Contact us at [trustfund@uusat.org](mailto:trustfund@uusat.org).

We are thankful to those who continue to donate every month. Our thanks to the following people who made donations since the last issue of Inspire.

November: Undesignated - Michelle Willhelm; Birthdays - Martha Cooley, Pat Ellis

December: Undesignated - Christine Duda; Birthdays - Kimberly Cornwell

January: Birthdays - James Noel, Carol Bertsch



February: Undesignated - Diane Duesterhoeft, Tracy Knouse; Birthdays - Virginia Shapiro, Gail Reinhart

March: Loden Memorial - Claudia Glass

April: Undesignated - Daphne Vasquez

Total collected for since last published: \$1,082

## Campus Clean Up Day

By Mary Wright

The Facilities Team (which is comprised of the Grounds Committee, the Green Sanctuary Team, the Maintenance & Repair Committee, and the Aesthetic Team) hosted a Campus Clean-up day on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Closets were organized, classrooms were cleaned, and weeds were pulled. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped with this important job.



# The Retired UU Women's Group: A Fundraising Powerhouse

By Martha Cooley and Stanna Welch

The Retired UU Women's Group was established by Marilyn Stavinoha in 2021, shortly after we returned to in-person events following the COVID-19 pandemic. The group was created to harness the creativity and tenacity of our First UU women. Over the years the Retired UU Women's Group has provided fellowship and educational offerings. One of the group's biggest contributions, however, has been the various Capital Campaign fundraising efforts. We want to take this opportunity to highlight some of those efforts.



Upon her retirement from leading the group, which she also founded, members honored Marilyn Stavinoha by donating \$750.



Dr. Karen Waldron, continues to donate all of the proceeds from her most recent book, *A Woman's Journey: Not Done Yet*. To date, that amount is \$2,976.



The jewelry sale and silent auction held in April 2023 brought in \$5,807.



Bill Westney's concert held in April of this year added \$3,907 to the Capital Campaign.

**All of the above brings the grand total raised by the Retired Women's Group for the Capital Campaign to \$13,440!**

We couldn't have done this alone, so in addition to thanking Marilyn, Karen, and Bill, we thank ALL OF YOU who have donated money for Karen's books, attended Bill's concert, and bought jewelry! The Retired UU Women's Group is proud to have had a part in contributing to our church's Capital Campaign!



## New Member Ceremony

By Mary Wright

On Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> Rev. Mark and our Membership Chair, Donna Pereira, welcomed our newest members to the congregation. Welcome new members to our First UU family!



# Purple Martins at First UU

By Carol Collins

The Purple Martin is the largest of the eight swallow species that regularly occur in Texas. They breed almost exclusively in backyard birdhouses and typically arrive in Texas in early February after spending about five months in South America. Purple martins stay in Texas until their young have fledged, which takes about 28 days, and then leave by the end of September to migrate south to their nonbreeding grounds in South America. Their diet includes mosquitoes and other insects.



Thanks to the efforts of our Green Sanctuary Team, we have obtained our own Purple Martin house. Many thanks to maintenance chair, John Faultersack who installed the house on our campus, down on the playground. The photo below shows two purple martins on a nearby power line, but more are inside the I2 apartment house.

After they leave our area, we will need to clean out the house for their return and plug the apartment entrances to exclude starlings and sparrows. If you want to help with this project in October, contact Carol Collins, [greenteam@uusat.org](mailto:greenteam@uusat.org).



# Pagan Happenings

By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle is the official Covenant of Unitarian Universalists Pagans (CUUPS) group associated with First UU Church of San Antonio. We hold Rituals for all the eight Sabbats (the Pagan Holy Days). In months where there are no Rituals, we sponsor Labyrinth walks with a drum circle at the church's labyrinth, located on the west side of the Sanctuary. This Labyrinth became a joint project of the church and Celestial Celebrations Circle members. It is available to whomever wishes to walk it, whenever they wish.

Our March Ritual was Spring Equinox, an astronomical event. This is when the days and the nights are of equal length - thus equi-nox. It is a time, in ancient cultures, of much joy all around, as the daylight is ever increasing, thus more chores can be done. This is also the time of the Christian holiday, Easter. In some ancient cultures, it is called Ostara. As for Celestial Celebrations Circle, this Ritual honored the balance of the sun and the moon. We also decorated hard boiled eggs as a symbol for rebirth in nature.



**Ostara Altar**

Our next Ritual was Beltane, also known as May Day. This is a time of feasting and frivolity. It has an overlay of blatant sexuality, as ancient people noted that animals began to act on mating instincts at this time. These instincts, for humans, included interested couples chasing each other around the Bell Fire, as well as choosing to physically jump over the Fire. And then there is the traditional May Pole, that great phallic symbol that very few talk about. Our energy during this year's May Pole was spectacular. The winding of the ribbons by the participants - including many children - was so together and smooth as to duplicate the smoothness on the pole. We had 35 participants, including seven children.



**May Pole**

The last event, which is usually a labyrinth walk, was replaced this year by a special Ritual which was initiated by a former planner, then taken up by the planning group as a whole, along with many others who had special talents for the topic. We finally labeled this Ritual 'Welcoming People of All Genders'. Celestial Celebrations Circle wants to explore cultural topics

which are relevant to the lives of those on our planning committee. This one tested our Ritual planning abilities.

We found that we needed to seek ideas from outside sources if we were going to be successful in this endeavor. We want to thank all those who were called on and used their energy to make this a great success. From the very beginning, we structured each part of the Ritual to raise stronger and stronger energy for our intention. In the very beginning, we brought forth - Peace be with us/We are one. We wanted to make absolutely certain that there was no us vs. them energy. We called specific Goddesses/Gods who are known for their gender roles. We did two meditations. One to call forth painful memories from our past which pointed out our perceived differences from others while growing up so that we could banish them from our existence forever and the other to find a suitable constructive replacement for that banished memory. Having done this, we energized the new replacements for future use. This Ritual seemed to fulfill its purpose well, as all 17 participants, many from the wider community, felt refreshed by the end.

## Easter Egg Hunt

By Pat Beck

After church on 3/31/24, our children hunted Easter eggs on the playground. Eggs contained play money. Participants donated this “money” to any of the organizations below and exchanged their eggs for an Easter gift bag.

- [Animal Defense League of San Antonio](#)
- [UBarU Camp & Retreat Center](#)
- [Multi-Assistance Center \(MAC\) at Morgan's Wonderland](#)
- [American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions](#)
- [Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation](#)

Children had been learning about these organizations in their religious education classes so they could make an informed decision about which of the above organizations to donate to. They could donate all to their favorite or split the money among two or more recipients.



Since the amounts of play money in the Easter eggs added up to the total amount of money donated by the congregation, our congregation generously helped our children give donations to these charities.

# Free Battered Texas Women Spring 2024 Updates

by Cathy Marston, PhD

We had a busy spring, with the highlight being the 4/21/24 premiere of our exhibit, “Acting under Duress, Surviving with Resilience.” This exhibit was funded by \$400 in directly impacted stipends to the four formerly incarcerated women featured in the exhibit from the Social Justice Committee (SJC), plus an \$1800 grant from the Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREF) to help support refreshments and the printing of the exhibit guide.



**L to R: Board Member Cheryl Craig, curator Brenda Hafner, Exec. Director Cathy Marston, & curator Robin Gara at the “Acting under Duress, Surviving with Resilience” exhibit in the Fellowship Hall.**

Thank you to the more than 40 people who attended the premiere! Thank you to our curators, Brenda Hafner and Robin Gara! And thank you to CREF and the SJC! We are looking forward to setting up our next Metro area showing of the exhibit. Also, thank you to everyone in the congregation who contributed to FBTW’s Share the Plate honeypot that we received that same day of \$1046!

Let me back up and thank the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry (TXUUJM) for featuring me on the 3/28 action hour to talk about FBTW and my survivor story! TXUUJM has been uplifting our survivor sister, Kwaneta Harris, as well.

We had two other events in April, the first of which was tabling at the Schertz annual wellness event, Movin’ on Main. We handed out our usual resources on healthy relationships and domestic violence prevention, as well as coloring sheets for kids. Our table featured its first dog water station for our four-legged friends. We enjoyed the good food and music.

Then we tabled at the annual Denim Day event for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which was in Cibolo this year on 4/24. We thank Thriving Hearts Crisis Center for inviting us again! The event included speakers, musicians, dancing, crafts, and a walk/march. Our very own Cheryl Craig danced with the best of them to the Cha-Cha Slide and Cupid Shuffle!

Good news on the governance front: we are welcoming Patricia Lerma to our board! She is a doctoral student in Rehabilitation Counseling at UT-RGV, has more than 15 years of experience in education, and more than a decade of experience advocating for women and

youth in the Rio Grande Valley. Please consider joining our board, as we still need members. Apply at [FBTW Board Member Application](#).

Lastly, please send healing energy to our board member, US Army Retired SFC Cheryl Craig. She has completed her first rounds of chemo and radiation therapy for stage II ovarian cancer. She says she's in a holding pattern right now until she gets a scan on June 4.

Thank you all so much for your support and love!

## Spring 2024 Community Volunteer Initiative

By Tracey Homburg

On Sunday, May 26th, at least 15 members of our congregation teamed up with the Social Justice Committee to assist [Planned Parenthood South Texas](#) with its goal of easing period poverty. We packaged up a variety of donated period products and assembled them into neat packs that also included a short, handwritten note of love and encouragement. These packs will be used to re-stock Planned Parenthood's reproductive pantries here in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley. Our target was 500 packs, and we exceeded that number with a final total of 600 completed! **A big, heartfelt thank you to all those who donated supplies, helped with the assembly, or both!**





# Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust

By Rev. Art Severance, Minister Emeritus

My book is out! I am a published author on Amazon! After 35 years of ministry, I have written poetry for countless memorial services. This book, *Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust: Writings & Poetry for Aging, Reflection, & Memorials*, is my way of sharing my experiences with others.

I describe myself as a “Mystical Humanist on the cusp of Emersonian Natural Theology.” Writing poetry is part of my spiritual practice and as a liberal religionist, I find inspiration and comfort from many sources. These are poems and writings to be used for memorial services as well as personal inspiration and possibly comfort.

The book is available on Amazon at this [LINK](#) for \$15 in paperback. Or you can purchase it directly from me and receive a friends discount of \$14 through check, Venmo, or Paypal. Email [emeritus@uusat.org](mailto:emeritus@uusat.org) for more information. If you are in a UU Church that has a bookstore, let me know for group rate and if you are in a nearby church of any kind, I would love to do a poetry reading/workshop. I'll be working on an e-version as well as an oral version; stay tuned!

## Ashes to Ashes, Stardust to Stardust

Writings & Poetry for Aging,  
Reflections, & Memorials



Art Severance

Copyrighted Material

### About the book

After 35 years of ministry, I have written poetry for countless memorial services, trained in Grief Counseling, and wanted to share with folks my experiences. I describe myself as a “Mystical Humanist on the cusp of Emersonian Natural Theology.” Writing poetry is part of my spiritual practice and as a liberal religionist, I find inspiration and comfort from many sources. These are poems and writings to be used for memorial services as well as personal inspiration and possibly comfort.

### About the author

Art graduated from Laconia, NH High School in 1967, Ursinus College in 1972, and Lancaster Theological Seminary in 1986. A retired Unitarian Universalist minister, Art served First Unitarian Universalist Church in San Antonio from 1991-2007, as well as other churches in CA, CO, NJ, NY, OH, & PA. Originally from NH, he is also a folksinger, songwriter, poet, as well as a photographer. He and his wife, Cathie lived in Doyelstown, Bucks County, PA, and went into ministry in mid-life. He has worked as a counselor for troubled adolescents as well as at a psychiatric hospital. He moved to San Antonio to be a minister in 1991 with his wife, Cathie and three daughters, and had six grandchildren, but left to serve another church in OH, returning to San Antonio after retirement in 2017. Some of his writing was recently published in an anthology, *Beyond the Sabbath*, available on Amazon. He has also recorded a CD of original folk music, *Art Severance, Searching for Love, Truth, Beauty-Perhaps Even God*.

Riverhaven Books



[www.RiverhavenBooks.com](http://www.RiverhavenBooks.com)



Copyrighted Material

# Fighting for Democracy

By Mary Wright

Our *First UU the Vote SA* group has been working tirelessly all year long to protect our Democracy and stress the importance of Voting. They launched a weekly email newsletter to keep the congregation up to date on all things related to voting and the democratic system. This has been no easy task as we have already had four elections in Bexar County so far this year, with another coming this month and the all-important national election in November.

Their most popular effort thus far has been monthly letter writing parties. *First UU the Vote SA* has partnered with [Vote Forward](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers grassroots volunteers to send handwritten letters encouraging fellow Americans to vote. In April and May, volunteers met to write non-partisan letters to low propensity swing state voters. Our volunteers shared what voting means to them and provided encouragement to get out and vote. In addition to the letter writing parties, we have many others who are writing letters from their home. So far, we have scores of volunteers who have written hundreds of letters, all of which are being collected and will be mailed to the voters in October, ahead of the November election. The next letter writing party is scheduled for Saturday, June 15 from 10am-12pm in the Fellowship Hall.

In addition to letter writing, there are volunteer opportunities in phone banking, voter registration, block walking, and as election officials. If you would like to volunteer for letter writing or any other activity, contact [firstuuthevote@uusat.org](mailto:firstuuthevote@uusat.org).



**Volunteers at the May 11 Letter Writing Party**

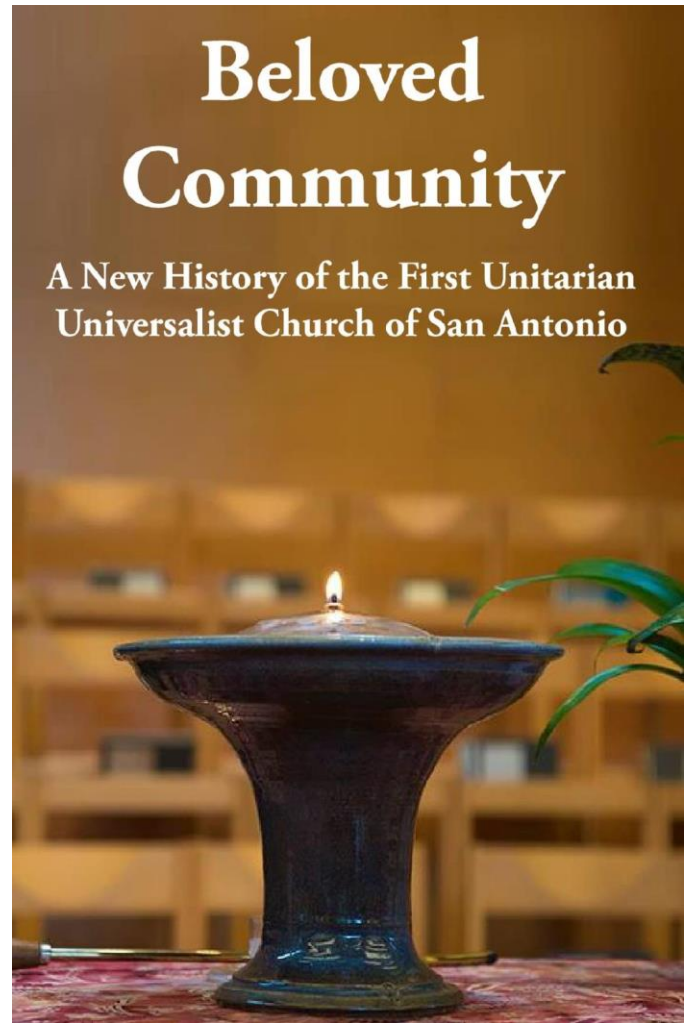
# A Review of Our Church's History

By Mary Wright

We were very pleased to learn that our church history book, *Beloved Community: A New History of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio*, was recently reviewed by the UU Studies Network in their most recent publication, *The Journal of Unitarian Universalist Studies*. The book was written by First UU member and professional historian, Dr. Bill Bush, in 2019 in honor of the 75th Anniversary of our church.

You can read the review at the link below. Apologies that the quality is not that great, but hopefully you will be able to read it without much difficulty.

<https://uusat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/UU-Studies-Book-Review.pdf>



This past March, Bill gave a well-received presentation and Q&A about the history of the church, based on the book, at the monthly meeting of the Retired UU Women's Group.

If you don't already have a copy of the book and would like one, contact the church office at [office@uusat.org](mailto:office@uusat.org). The books are free for members and \$10 for non-members.

**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](http://www.uusat.org)