



FIRST UU  
SAN ANTONIO

# Inspire

FALL 2024

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



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## Inspire

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**Cover photo:** altar at Celestial Celebrations Circle's Summer Solstice Ritual, photo by Dan Radcliffe

## **First UU Welcomes Dr. XK**

By Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela & Mary Wright

In August we welcomed our new Interim Minister, Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela, also known as Dr. XK. As Interim Minister, Dr. XK will be with us for the next two years to assist us in preparing for our next Settled Minister. This interim period will be a time to take a deep look at our congregation, evaluate our needs and wants, promote healing, and identify our dreams for the future.

Rev. Kacela holds a BBA from Morehouse College, an MBA from Boston University, and a PhD and Master of Divinity from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. He was ordained in 2004 and received Full Fellowship as a Unitarian Universalist Minister in 2012. His experience includes additional Professional Interim and Transitional Ministry training. He has been a Chaplain in the U.S. 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.

Dr. XK's office hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. You can reach him by email at [drxk@uusat.org](mailto:drxk@uusat.org).

**Click on the image below to watch a welcoming message from Dr. XK.**



# The Dangers of Project 2025

By Kathleen Fonseca

Envision this:

- Children being taught the Bible in public schools, when many of them and their families are of a different faith – or no faith tradition – from our political leaders: true Indoctrination.
- Forests burned down and wildlife dying by the thousands with no food to eat and no shelter.
- Drought and extreme heat gripping our country with water supplies dwindling fast.
- Women around the country dying in Emergency Rooms – or at home - unable to receive needed care for life-threatening miscarriages.
- Pregnant people forced to give birth – including girls who have experienced rape or incest.
- LGBTQ+ people forced to go underground and stay silent about the people they love, marry, and live with.
- Transgender people, especially youth, committing suicide in greater numbers because they cannot get the healthcare they need.
- Tens of thousands of federal and state employees given the choice of pledging allegiance to a person (the President) rather than to the Constitution and their country - or leaving their jobs to those who will be loyal to the President.
- Sky-rocketing prices of goods and services due to high tariffs.
- Christian Nationalism as the state of things in our government, schools, companies, and our lives.
- All currently independent, non-political agencies, such as the Federal Reserve, controlled directly by the President, with the ability to force changes for corrupt or political reasons.
- Federal agencies run by corporate executives whose goals are counter-productive to the mandates that established the agencies.
- People of color, as well as those not in the political party in power, restricted from voting.
- Mass deportations and people from “undesirable” countries banned from entering the United States.

Does all this sound like an extreme, futuristic, dystopian scenario that could only be found in a sci-fi film or book? If you think so, you would be wrong! All of these things, and more, are a distinct possibility for our very near future, if Project 2025 becomes reality. Project 2025 is a

detailed plan for the next “conservative” presidential administration. Produced by the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank, this plan would be a blueprint for dictatorship and for the loss of our democracy.

Project 2025’s policies would increase the wealth, power, and political influence of billionaires and corporations, along with corporate executives and owners. With Project 2025’s plan to decrease the tax rate of corporations even further, taxes for the rest of us would have to increase.

Recruitment of people to serve in such an administration and training sessions are being held now, so that the next conservative administration can rapidly implement the policies of Project 2025. These devastating policies would destroy our planet, our rights, and our freedom – while lining the pockets of corporations and billionaires. Everything in our lives will be impacted. If Project 2025 is implemented on Day One as promised, one can only imagine the chaos that would result.

How can we stop this? VOTE! Make sure those around you and those you know vote. Make sure they are aware of the issues. Give rides to people who want to vote but don’t have a way to the polls. Volunteer to be an Election Judge, Clerk, or poll monitor.

Even before election day, there are things you can do as well.

- Become informed on the details and concepts of Project 2025.
- Volunteer to help citizens get registered to vote.
- Show people how to check to make sure their voter registration is still active.
- Use bumper stickers and yard signs to get the message out.
- Use social media to spread the word.
- Contact your federal and state legislators with your concerns.
- Write Letters to the Editor.
- Have important discussions with relatives, friends, youth, etc. about the impact of Project 2025 on every one of us. It is not a partisan discussion per se. Many Republicans are against Project 2025. Discussing it is about issues and caring about fellow human beings.
- Volunteer with our *First UU the Vote SA* group.

Working together, armed with knowledge, love, humility, caring, and ACTION, we can make a positive difference! Our very futures depend on it. I know which world I want to live in. Do you? For more information on how to get involved, contact [firstuuthevote@uusat.org](mailto:firstuuthevote@uusat.org).

On August 25<sup>th</sup>, our *First UU the Vote SA* team and the Social Justice Committee held a Town Hall to discuss Project 2025 and its potential impact to our country. If you missed it, you may watch a recording of the [Town Hall on our Youtube](#) channel. [Click here](#) to view the Town Hall slides and program, including a list of resources.

# Saying Goodbye to Rev. Nell

By Mary Wright

Photos by Lito Bujanda-Moore

On July 7th we bade farewell to First UU-San Antonio's first Assistant Minister, Rev. Nell Newton. Rev. Nell served our congregation splendidly for two years. She provided support for our Senior Minister, produced fabulous sermons, provided Pastoral Care, served as a liaison for many of our program committees, and much more. She will be greatly missed. After her final Worship Service with us we said our goodbyes at a reception featuring punch and Rev. Nell's favorite dessert – pie!





# Association for UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MUSIC MINISTRIES

## Association for UU Music Ministry (AUUMM) Conference 2024

By Dana Clark

I know I am where I belong when I walk through the doors of First Unitarian Universalist Church-San Antonio. I feel a special rapport when I hang out with a bunch of musicians. When I arrived at the Unitarian Universalist Musician's Conference in Albuquerque at the beginning of August, I felt a double kinship with everyone! As one of the speakers declared, "I think this is the best association in the nation for people who do what we do." I agree! And what is it we do? We all freely admit our shared goal of using music to make the world a better place.

Attendees came from all over the country--even Hawaii. The quality of musicianship was superb. There were inspiring singers and master players of piano, guitar, bass, violin, percussion, and drums. There were composers, instrumentalists, bands, singer-songwriters, and like-minded musicians eager to strike up conversations and form instant friendships. Imagine a large church filled with 250 musicians spontaneously singing perfect multiple-part harmony!

There were worship services every morning with dynamic speakers and lots of music. There were workshops on topics of vital importance to me given by experts who could pack a fantastic amount of information into an hour: Community Songwriting, Incorporating Indigenous Music, Virtual Hymnal Development, Building a Band, Choral Repertoire, Children's Choirs, Instrumental Improvisation, Hymnody, Composition Masterclass, Songs for Protests, Solfege, The Aging Voice, and much more.

The conference fostered an open and welcoming atmosphere, rooted in the many commonalities in our lives and work. This environment left me feeling affirmed, inspired, and truly 'seen'. It provided a clear vision for my path forward. The prospect of missing a future Conference is unimaginable. This annual event, with its wealth of inspiration and goal-setting opportunities, will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of my life!

The 2025 AUUMM Conference is set to take place in Atlanta, and the anticipation is already building. I can't wait to experience the same sense of community, inspiration, and learning that I did in Albuquerque. Let me know if you want to come along!

# Writing Letters to Get Out the Vote

By Mary Wright

There must be a lot of sore hands around First UU based on the number of letters and postcards we have been writing. Since June of this year our *First UU the Vote SA* team has been holding monthly letter writing parties. In coordination with [Vote Forward](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers grassroots volunteers to send handwritten letters encouraging fellow Americans to vote, our volunteers have been sending letters to low propensity voters in swing states ahead of the national November 5th election. In the letters, our volunteers express why voting is important to them and encourage the recipients to get out and vote. According to research done by Vote Forward, letters can boost voter turnout by as much as 3.4 percentage points. Our handwritten letters are one of the most effective ways to help get out the vote.

Our letter writing parties have attracted both members and non-members of the church. Our in-person parties, which have been averaging between 8 to 15 people, are not only productive, but are also a lot of fun. While writing letters, we talk with each other, listen to music, and consume lots of breakfast tacos! In addition to the letters written at the parties, many letters have been written at home by individual members. We have been handing out packets of blank letters every Sunday that congregants pick up, take home to complete, and return the following Sunday.



We have written letters to people in several swing states, including Arizona, Michigan, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. All of the letters are nonpartisan. We mention no political parties or specific candidates. We do, however, talk about issues, such as mass shootings, reproductive rights, public education, affordable healthcare, and preservation of our democracy. We explain how these issues, among others, are why voting is so important. As of right now we have written 2740 letters. We have one more Letter Writing party scheduled for October 5th. We expect to have over 3000 letters completed by then. All of the letters will be mailed out in early October so they can reach the voters before the November 5th election.

In addition to the Vote Forward letters, we have also partnered with the [Center for Common Ground](#) to send postcards. We sent 100 postcards to Georgia prior to their primary election and are currently completing postcards to send to voters of color in Bexar and Tarrant counties. Like the letters, the postcards are nonpartisan in nature and are designed to



encourage individuals to vote. So far, we have handed out 400 postcards for Bexar County and 350 postcards for Tarrant County to be completed.

As much as we have done so far, there is still more to do. This next election is too important to stand on the sidelines. Here are some ways for you to get involved:

- Make plans to attend our next Letter Writing party on Saturday, October 5 from 10 AM to 12 PM in Building 5.
- If you prefer to complete your letters/postcards at home, look for our *First UU the Vote* SA volunteers at church on Sundays before and after service in either the Lounge or outside of the Sanctuary.
- Donate stamps!! We have already received many generous donations of stamps, but need many, many more. You can bring these with you on Sundays to give to our volunteers or contact [firstuuthevote@uusat.org](mailto:firstuuthevote@uusat.org) to coordinate drop off.

We want to thank our many volunteer letter and postcard writers. We also want to thank Nancy Pridgeon for coordinating the letter writing program, Philisse Barrows for coordinating the postcard writing program, Marilyn Stavinoha and Jan Realini for their stamp donations, and all of our other *First UU the Vote* SA volunteers. If you have any questions about the Get Out the Vote programs or how to get involved, email us at [firstuuthevote@uusat.org](mailto:firstuuthevote@uusat.org).

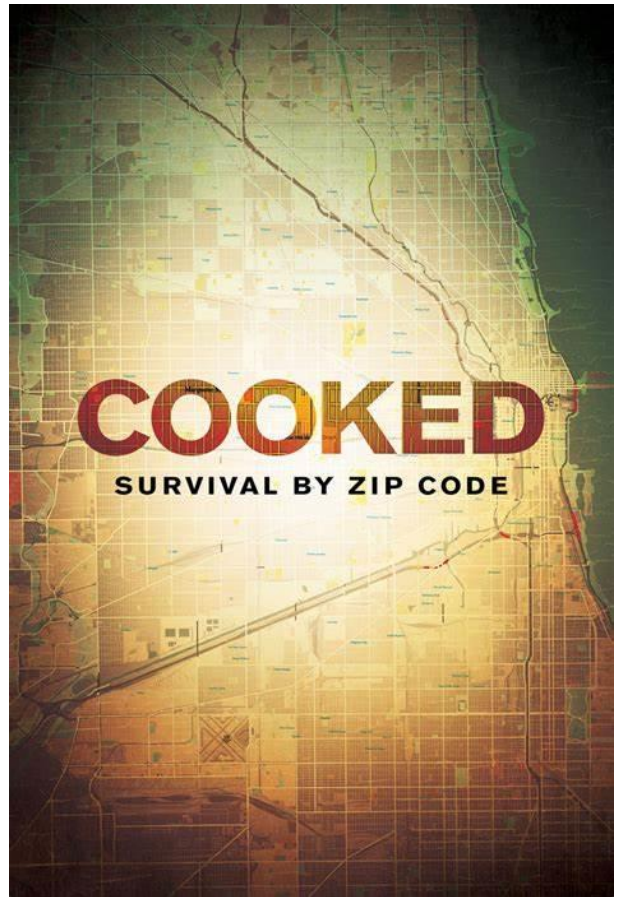


# Screening of *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code*

By Diane Duesterhoeft

On Sunday morning, July 14, 2024, the air-conditioning in all the church campus buildings, except the Sanctuary, was out. The internet service was down. The Green Sanctuary Team had prepared to show the documentary, *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code*, and community members outside First UU had been invited to participate.

Fortunately, Green Sanctuary Team Co-Chair, Alison Hom-Crosier had downloaded the video, rather than relying on internet access. Since the only building that had air conditioning was the Sanctuary building, we served light refreshments in the Choir Room. We weren't able to override the program that shut the air conditioning off in the Sanctuary at noon, but we were blessed with a cloudy day (a remnant from Hurricane Beryl) that kept the building cooler than it might have been. It appeared that only a few people left during the screening due to discomfort.



The air conditioning problems were very apropos to the screening, as this documentary delves into the story of the worst heat disaster in U.S. history in 1995 in Chicago, when 739 residents—mostly elderly and black—died over the course of one week. The film links the deadly heat wave's devastation back to the human made disaster of structural racism, shining a light on the issues of poverty, race, class, and education that underlie how natural disasters take lives. It also includes more recent disasters and the resources that are dedicated to some disasters that have an unlikely occurrence.

Following the screening, during question and response time, Kate Jaceldo, Climate Adaptation Manager with the City of San Antonio's Office of Sustainability, and Janell Garcia, Public Engagement Office with the City's Office of Emergency Management, responded to questions.

Marisol Cortez wrote [and published an article](#) at [Deceleration News](#) about the screening with analysis and a number of local actions that we can take to reduce the negative impact of extreme heat.

A few actions to highlight:

- Share this Extreme Heat Guide from Deceleration News - <https://deceleration.news/2022/08/17/extreme-heat-guide/>
- Sign the petition asking the Bexar County Medical Examiner and San Antonio Metro Health to count people who have perished from extreme heat - <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/count-the-bodies-extreme-heat-is-killing-us-we-demand-a-better-medical-response/>
- Take the Cool Neighborhood Survey (regardless of which City Council District you call home) at <https://saspeakup.com/coolneighborhoodsurvey>
- Learn about the [City of San Antonio's Climate Ready Neighborhoods](#) program and fill out the [interest form](#)
- Prepare for Extreme Heat with these tips from the San Antonio Office of Emergency Management - <https://www.saoemprepare.com/BeInformed/NaturalDisasters/Heat>



Photo by Greg Harman, Deceleration News

## UUs for Justice in the Middle East

By Paula Pebsworth

The newly formed UUs for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME) has shown several short documentaries and held discussions. On August 4th, we showed our first full-length documentary *Israelism*. The film is about two young American Jews - Simone Zimmerman and Eitan who were raised to defend the state of Israel at all costs. The film discussed how they were encouraged to spend time in Israel and join the military. While in Israel, they witnessed Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians. Both joined a growing movement of young American Jews who are demanding freedom for Palestinians. About twenty-five people came for the film and a luncheon that featured typical Middle Eastern cuisine. Possible fall plans include more films, discussions, and guest speakers. If you have suggestions for a movie or a speaker, please reach out to us at [fuusa-uujme@googlegroups.com](mailto:fuusa-uujme@googlegroups.com).



## Fellowship Hall HVAC Update

By John Faultersack, Chair of the Maintenance & Repair Committee

As you are probably aware, the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the Fellowship Hall has given up the ghost, after serving us (more or less faithfully), for all of 35 years. That's about triple the expected life of an HVAC system! We are in the process of replacing this much-needed system. Unfortunately, it is not a simple process and will take some time. If all goes well—and Murphy (and his Law) may have something to say about that – we will probably be without Fellowship Hall HVAC until at least Thanksgiving.

The old location of the unit (in the Sanctuary equipment yard) cannot be reused, as it is too remote from the air handling unit (in the south end of the Fellowship Hall building). Thus, we will be required to move the electrical service and provide a new structural slab for the new unit, located outside the west Choir Room wall, adjacent to the little AC condensing unit for that space. And some kind of screen/security wall around the unit will be required so it doesn't get "scavenged".

We also had to rush out an order to pre-purchase this new heat pump/air conditioning unit because of manufacturing limitations (new refrigerant requirements are coming). The unit has now been selected, an order has been placed, and the unit has been paid for, thanks to a church benefactor. Upon delivery, it will be furnished to a contractor to install.

The rest of the system design is being finished up, thanks to my old boss – pro-bono! As soon as it is complete, we will ask for proposals from three trusted contractors and select one to finish the job. Now if we can just keep Murphy at bay...!

# Pagan Happenings

By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle (CCC) is the official Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) group within our church. We hold Rituals to celebrate the nine sabbats of the year. In months where there are no Rituals, we sponsor a Labyrinth walk with drum circle on the west side of our Sanctuary. The Labyrinth isn't just for scheduled walks, however. It is available to whomever wishes to walk it - whenever they wish. Thanks to the highway lights across the access road, there is always light for walking and the highway drone becomes white noise.

Since the last issue of *Inspire*, CCC held two Rituals and one labyrinth walk. Our first Ritual was Summer Solstice. This Sabat (Holy Day) is an astronomical event. It is the time when day and night are of equal length. After this Solstice, darkness will start to increase incrementally and daylight will decrease. In South Texas, this phenomenon is hard to recognize, as our outside temperatures are soaring and the sun seems omnipotent. However, astronomically, this is what is happening. At our Ritual, we focused on our interface with nature - how we, as humans, fit into the world around us. Specifically, we asked the Universe to bring sufficient rain so our lives and those of beings - both animal & plant - around us may function more easily. Celestial Celebrations Circle has an ongoing Rain Spell which we energize at the end of each Ritual. Living in South Texas, it is always a good idea to ask for rain. Sometimes we get too much rain, but more often we get not enough.

Our next Ritual was the first of two harvest Rituals. It seems slightly odd to have a harvest Ritual in South Texas in August, but CCC practices in a tradition which comes out of the British Isles. This makes it follow a much more northerly tradition. In order to make this path fit our lives in South Texas, we focus on what we can harvest in our lives as humans. This year, as an attitude of fear is more pronounced, we chose to focus on gratitude for what is abundant in our lives. Also, we created a spell to strengthen democracy in our country. We had sixteen participants for this Ritual.

In August, in the heat of the summer, we held a Labyrinth walk - outside! We had nine participants at this walk which, for August, was a healthy gathering. Our labyrinth walks and drum circle offer Spiritual enrichment and with satisfying drumming before the journey back to everyday reality.



Drum circle following our August labyrinth walk, photo by Darcy Walker.

# The Music Program Wants You!

By Susan Dill

## Choir

Research has shown that singing can be good for you on many levels. It may help lower stress, boost immunity and lung function, enhance memory, improve mental health, and help you cope with physical and emotional pain. One of the best things about singing is that you don't have to be an excellent singer to reap the rewards. Aristotle's phrase, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" is particularly applicable to choral singing. When you join a choir there are even more benefits such as connectedness and a sense of belonging.

The only pre-requisite to sing in our choir is the ability to match pitch. If you can't match pitch and would like to sing, Susan will work with you to help you attain this skill. The First UU choir rehearses on Saturdays from 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM. We would like this to be an intergenerational group so interested Middle School and High School age singers are welcome to join us. All you need to do to join us is show up on a Saturday morning and introduce yourself. You will be warmly welcomed.

## Instrumentalists

We started a successful flute ensemble last year. This group generally rehearses twice a month on Saturdays at 12:30 PM. The exact rehearsal and performance dates are flexible so we can coordinate with the group member's schedules. The flutes have a lot of fun together and we welcome interested flute players to contact Susan.

We also would like to invite other types of instrumental musicians to share their gifts with us. I'm sure you have all enjoyed Stephen Spikes' guitar playing during our worship services and we would love to add more instrumental volunteers to our program. If you are interested in participating with your instrument, please contact Susan at [choir@uusat.org](mailto:choir@uusat.org).

## Children's Choir

Children's choir will begin rehearsals after our new Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Tim Versteeg, gets here. Please check the weekly announcements for information on when the group will start up again. The children's choir rehearses on Sunday mornings from 9:00 AM to 9:30 AM. We will be needing parent volunteers to be safety monitors and assist with walking the children to their Religious Education classes after the rehearsal ends.

Sharing your musical gifts with others is a personally fulfilling activity and a profound service to our community. We hope you will join us.

Please contact Susan at [choir@uusat.org](mailto:choir@uusat.org) with any questions about music at First UU.

# UBarU Happenings

By Paula Pebsworth



Snapshots of UBarU - Photo credit Joy Hayes

This summer was busy at *your* UBarU Camp & Retreat Center! June was packed with camps. We hosted 81 youth, of which 22 were from First UU-San Antonio. We also had one junior counselor (JC) help out at camp. The kids took field trips to Mo Ranch, had star parties, did community service projects, played archery and frisbee, walked the Labyrinth, did crafts, had dances, ate yummy food, and more! We're already planning next year's summer camps. Please encourage your children to attend and serve as a JC. For adults, please consider volunteering as an adult counselor!

After youth camps, UBarU hosted the 3rd Young Adult (YA) summer retreat. This year 42 people gathered to reconnect and make new UU friends and welcome bridging seniors. This retreat serves as a "bridge" for graduating seniors to meet other UU young adults. This year's theme was *Dungeon & Dragons (DnD)*. They spent time playing DnD, swimming, walking the labyrinth, in community service, and spending quality time together. If you're between the ages of 18-29, consider yourself invited to next summer's YA weekend.

After the YA weekend we held the Southwest Unitarian Universalist Summer Intergenerational (SWUUSI) camp. The weekend was filled with fun, learning, and fellowship around the theme *Musings of the Muses*. There was Worship, Crafts, Small Group Discussions, Sunset Talks, Spiritual Practices, Campfires, Music, and lots of fun, games, conversation, and community.

In August, we held our GenderfUUU retreat for UU trans, non-binary, and agender folks to gather for a relaxing weekend and community building.

On Labor Day weekend we held our annual Star Party, which included star parties and four wonderful presentations.

In addition to a new well, with a generous donation, we also built a new 2 bedroom/2 bath cottage that will be ADA compliant!

This fall we have more wonderful events planned!

**October 4-6**, we will hold our Fall BioBlitz. Come learn about the flora and fauna at UBarU and help us document the different species. Fun for all ages! Saturday 4-8 pm we will have an exciting, guided herpetology walk and talk with naturalist, Tony Gallucci. This event will offer a unique opportunity to learn about the rich herpetological diversity in Gillespie County, understand their ecosystems, and gain insight into the life of these remarkable amphibians and reptiles. Master Naturalist learning credits and volunteer hours are available. Come for Saturday afternoon or the whole weekend!

**October 11-13**, will be our *Women-aligned* weekend to recharge your body, mind, and spirit in the beautiful Hill Country. Enjoy the labyrinth, lounge on the Meeting House porch, or do what your spirit needs. This weekend is free from compulsory workshops and classes, although opportunities for worship, spiritual practices, and other group experiences will be offered. Add an extra day and stay until Monday!

**October 18-20**, join other *Men-aligned* folks from UU churches across Texas who will gather for a weekend retreat. Come and enjoy fellowship in the Texas Hill Country. Rest, relax, enjoy delicious meals, and use the time as a break from your normal routines and schedules.

**November 27-29**, join us at UBarU for a Thanksgiving Feast. Add an extra day before and/or after to enjoy UBarU and the surrounding Hill Country. More details coming soon.

You can register for events at - <https://www.ubaru.org/>

UBarU is also a great place to go for a family getaway. If you want to rent a cottage at camp, we would be happy to coordinate a personal/family stay with you via email- [director@ubaru.org](mailto:director@ubaru.org). We have 3 (soon to be 4!) cottages with refrigerators, cook stoves, microwaves, dishes, and coffee makers. Just bring your food and enjoy some time away! It is lovely to spend a weekend (or weekday) at camp.



# CREF to Announce Awards

by Margaret DePiere Neiheisel

On Sunday, November 3rd, the Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREF) trustees will award grants to four outstanding community organizations.

Celebrating 42 years, CREF began in 1982 with an initial donation of \$500. Since that time, CREF has grown substantially and awarded over \$190,000. Each year CREF awards grants to organizations in our San Antonio community that reflect the values of our church. They must be nominated by a church member and be involved in charitable religious, educational or scientific endeavors. Each organization must submit a plan for a project that will be completed in under two years.

Previous awardees have included: peace centers, youth/children/baby services, refugee services, women's shelters, mental health programs, visual arts & music programs, libraries, public health /AIDS programs, family services, minority programs, victim assistance programs, respite care, bereavement care, LBGTQ+ services, incarceration services, as well as UBarU Camp & Retreat Ctr, the UU Common Endowment Fund, and the UU Housing Assistance Corporation.

We are excited to share this year's well-deserved recipients with our fellow UU members on November 3rd. All four organizations are dedicated to a better future by investing in our youth. We hope you will join us that Sunday for Worship Service as we present the CREF awards and stay after to get to know the recipients at a reception on the patio.



2023 CREF awardees reception

# Thoughts About the New UUA Shared Values

By Marilyn Stavinoha

*The opinions shared in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect the official views or opinions of the church.*

We should take note of the summer's Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) adoption of different values for Article II of the UUA by-laws.



For the center of our faith's values to be Love is the same as most Protestants, especially Methodists who teach children "God is Love". Formerly the Principles of Unitarian Universalism (UU) by which to live was more primary. No one now can say whether this is true.

Equity, Justice, and Pluralism sort of get in the way of living with believers in religions which are self-centered and do not want to communicate with us. In fact, one religion's book insists that non-believers must be killed. Some practice this. I once explained our faith to a Catholic who replied, "That's why people don't like you."

Transformation as a value suggests white members must do this as minorities (ethnic, sexual, or of color) are not. Supposedly Transformation might mean Spiritually, but the other three have been emphasized for several years.

Generosity is a very good one. Without more sharing of resources, the UUA is going to lose many buildings across the country due to age and deterioration. Those who don't like the 400, 300, 200, and 100 years old places in which to gather as our communities will simply let them go. Ours is about 65 years old and is falling apart. We are deciding what to do about it just as we decided in 1990. It took 10 years to get up the generosity to build the Sanctuary.

Generosity of faith and presence (existence in a city) is also very important. To be or not to be at UU when you want freedom of belief needs a community of UUs to be available. But some will just move on to sample other belief systems. Our children do this now.

Generosity leads to Interdependence. We seldom have any doubts of connections throughout Nature. Many of our Bards have helped broaden the U and U faiths from their origins. But, if we don't use the words reason, climate change, animal and people rights, vaccine and the truth of science along with our experiences we will contribute less in the future than U and U have in the past.

I do believe the stated values will be easy to teach in our Religious Education classes. Whether it will go over in the adult orientation class, I just don't know because it will be like an appeal to goodness for life's guidelines.

# Trust Fund For Endowment

By Arlis Olson

Our thanks to the following people who made donations since the last issue of *Inspire* magazine.

**May-July:** Undesignated donations: Christine Lopez, Wendy Friedman, Bob Petit  
Birthday match donations: Sheri Phillabaum, Pat Beck, Polly Noel, Christine Chesnut, Mary Grace Ketner  
Memoriam for Sally Dunlap: Marilyn Stavinoha and Maggie Joseph

Thanks to your generosity we increased the Trust Fund for Endowment by \$1,298 this quarter. Birthday donations and memorial gifts are designed to allow gifts of smaller denominations that those typically included in estate plans.

THANKS TO ALL!

## LEGACY SOCIETY

The Legacy Society was established to recognize those who have included First Unitarian Universalist Church-San Antonio (First UU) in their estate planning. There is a plaque in the choir room listing those members who have passed on that included First UU in their estate plans. There is a framed certificate in the Lounge listing those members who are alive but have said they have included First UU in their estate plans or are planning to do so. We hope you will add your name to that list. **Let us know at [trustfund@uusat.org](mailto:trustfund@uusat.org).** We recently sent a personal letter to those of a certain age who are the most likely to have estate plans or might be considering doing so but we'd like to hear from anyone who is planning on including First UU in their estate plans.

I know there are a myriad of reasons why this may not be possible for you. Some are having problems with day-to-day bills, others have college expenses, some have medical expenses, the list goes on. I can only speak for myself. I am older than most of you and started raising children when I was younger. I couldn't afford to send my children to college, nor were they inclined to go when they were of the age when most people start but they are all doing well now, including my grandchildren and great grandchildren. First UU has always felt like family to me, and I appreciate this church. Consequently, I have added my name to that list. Surely there are others who have already done so or are willing to do so. We have scheduled an estate planning session for October 27<sup>th</sup> for those who need more information. Details to follow at a later date.

# Game Night is Fun for All

By Mary Wright

Our monthly Game Night get togethers resumed this summer with new hosts, Mary Wright and Bill Bush, and a new night, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays from 6-9 PM. We've also started offering dinners for the event. So far, we've enjoyed spaghetti, pizza, chili, and lasagna. Attendees typically bring additional snacks and desserts. The church has many games in stock, but often people bring their favorite games from home. In June, one attendee even brought a game he had created himself called 'Chicken Run'. We have played a variety of games including Magic the Gathering, Generations Trivia, Apples to Apples, Trivial Pursuit, Codenames, and Anomia. If you enjoy playing any kind of board or card game, we invite you to join us at the next game night on Thursday, September 19. We will meet in the Lounge and you can drop in anytime between 6-9 PM. Dinner for September will include black bean soup, yellow rice, and salad. We hope to see you there!



# Save Me From Too Many Mixed Blessings

By Rev. Art Severance, Minister Emeritus

Save me from too many “mixed blessings”  
As I get older and yes, even older,  
As well as from  
those damned “learning experiences”!

I want my blessings straight up,  
And my experiences joyful,  
Not mistakes!

Yes, as I get older  
My mistakes still haunt me,  
And I try not to repeat them,  
Even learn from those “errors of my ways.”

I blame no God or Goddess;  
Indeed, I give up blame  
And a sense of being punished  
To change it into compassion for myself  
And even others.

I try not to “mix” my blessings  
Nor go on any guilt trips,  
But take responsibility for my actions or  
inactions.

To be human is to make mistakes,  
Wrong choices,  
And a desire to understand why  
Or to pin the blame elsewhere.

Save me from a vindictive God,  
Or the one from the story of Job,  
Where his suffering  
Is from the divine whims  
Like the citizens of Mt Olympus  
Act out in ancient mythology.

No, we must have a beloved community  
To nurture and comfort us,  
A sense of meaning even in pain,  
That the cause is not important.  
But the comfort is the blessing.

I believe that God is Love,  
The Spirit of Life,  
And love is a powerful force  
Especially in beloved community  
That we come to with faith  
Because we can see the results of Love,  
And interconnection of all life.

We use language too loosely  
When we don’t think deeply enough,  
And as a result, revert  
To cultural and theological cliches.

We decide  
On how to interpret,  
All religious writings  
As well the meanings of life.  
Mixed or straight up!



# Free Battered Texas Women (FBTW) Updates

by Cathy Marston, PhD

FBTW educates and organizes to stop incarcerating battered women and to support these survivors on the inside and in their reentry.

The Resist Foundation brightened our busy summer with a \$10,000 general operating grant in early July! Then the BRIDGE Movement Fund selected us for the final round of sixteen for their nonprofit accelerator. Although they did not select us for the top three in the cohort, they were so impressed with us that they have been giving us free coaching on financial management, programs, and fundraising as part of their Innovation Lab.

On July 21, we held a fundraiser at Nairobi Bar and Grill to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my release from prison. Thanks to all of you, we made more than \$500!

On Saturday, July 27, we tabled as part of the Nehemiah Reentry Forum, which included a survey by University of Incarnate Word and UTSA to glean more information about healthcare outcomes for returning citizens. We networked with our formerly incarcerated colleagues and direct service providers – many of whom, like FBTW, are formerly incarcerated folks doing good for the community. The event featured two panels moderated by formerly incarcerated business owner Jarvis Moore: a panel of returning citizens discussing their reintegration (LeReta Gatlin-McDavid, Chris Sepulveda, LaRita Brown of Honey's Kitchen, and Christopher McDonald) and direct service providers to returning citizens (Sonja Sandoval, MSW, of the Bexar County Probation Department, Lisa Rodriguez of Nathaniel's Corner, Light Walker of Freed Texas, and Michelle Arredondo of Steadfast Sparrows). We enjoyed a lot of good food, earned a gift card, and made a lot of friends!

Our survivor sister Margaret Crayton wants everyone to know that her colon cancer surgery on August 8 went well. However, she will be having another surgery to remove a stomach tumor. She asks for everyone's prayers and wants everyone to know that she is not afraid, "because God's got me in his hand." Everyone will recall that Margaret was recommended for clemency by the Texas Council on Family Violence in the 1990s and is featured in our exhibit, *Acting under Duress, Surviving with Resilience*.

We hope you will join us for one of our upcoming events:

- FBTW fundraiser at The Purple Pig BBQ in Schertz, Saturday, 10/12, 1 to 4 p.m.
- FBTW's Cheryl Craig and myself will be panelists for a screening of *The Strike*, a documentary about hunger striking to improve conditions in the California prisons, at the Lost River Film Festival at the Price Center in San Marcos on Saturday, 10/19, beginning at 5 p.m.

- FBTW's Annual Holiday Newsletter Mailout will be on Sunday, 11/3 from 12:45 to 2 p.m. in room 404 at 1<sup>st</sup> UU San Antonio! Please join us to send love to the sisters in TDCJ! As usual, light refreshments will be provided.



Left to right: Board Treasurer Cheryl Craig, Executive Director Cathy Marston, Board Chair Alison Hom-Crosier, and Program Assistant Mia Garcia enjoyed serving our home-cooked goodies to the folks at Nairobi Bar & Grill on 7/21/24.

## Congratulations & Condolences

Congratulations to Sarah Frey and Tavis McGeachin on the birth of Tiberius Robert Frey, born on August 27, 2024.

Condolences to the friends and family of Glenna Jones-Kachtik, who passed away on August 18, 2024. Glenna's memorial will take place in the First UU Sanctuary on Saturday, October 5, 2024 at 1:00 PM.

Condolences to the friends and family of Roger Kramer, who passed away on May 13, 2024. Click [here](#) to view Roger's obituary.

Condolences to the friends and family of Sally Dunlap, who passed away on April 23, 2024.

Condolences to the friends and family of Janet Byrnes, who passed away on March 11, 2024.

**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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