

The Official Magazine of First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio



Table of Contents

Free Battered Texas Women – page 2
Fellowship Hall HVAC Replacement – page 3
Elizabeth Granado Joins Staff – page 4
UBarU 25 th Anniversary – page 4
Parents Gather for Faith Formation Forum – page 5
Kwanzaa Celebration – page 6
Thanksgiving Potluck 2024 – page 7
Playground Receives New Mulce – page 8
Celestial Celebrations Circle – page 9
Annual MLK March – page 11
Membership Committee Updates – page 12
Capital Campaign: Renovations – page 14
Seniors Valentine Lunch – page 16
Retired Women’s Group Meeting – page 17
Westney Benefit Concert – page 18
Courageous Love Award Ceremony – page 19
Charice Hoptoit Returns as Youth Advisor – page 21
Vidas Robadas Project – page 22
50 State Protest – page 23
Charlotte Blackwood Speaks at State Capitol – page 24
All Means All – page 25
Trust Fund of Endowment – page 27
We Shall Not Live in Fear – page 28
CREF News – page 29
Leadership Reception – page 30

Inspire

Contact us at Inspire@uusat.org

Visit our website at www.uusat.org

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

Editor

Alicia Smart & Mary Wright

Contributors

Betty Burgner
Diane Carl
John Faultersack
Claudia Glass
Rev. Xolani Kacela, Ph.D.
Mary Grace Ketner
Tracey Knouse
Cathy Marston, Ph.D
Polly Noel
Arlis Olson
Alicia Smart
Tim Versteeg
Syliva 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.

Cover photo: Our Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Tim Versteeg, during Story Wisdom with our youth at the March 2nd Worship Service.

FREE BATTERED TEXAS WOMEN WINTER 2024-2025 UPDATES

By Cathy Marston, PhD, Executive Director

On Saturday, October 12, 2024, we raised \$315 at our Empowering Survivors fundraiser at the Purple Pig BBQ in Schertz. Cheryl and I then traveled to San Marcos on Saturday, October 19 to show our exhibit *Acting Under Duress, Surviving with Resilience*, featuring 4 formerly incarcerated survivors, at the Lost River Film Festival. That evening we joined Joe Bill Muñoz, the director of the documentary *The Strike*, in a post-film panel and shared their experiences with incarceration in segregation.



FBTW's staff and board were joined by new and returning First UU volunteers to send holiday cheer to our incarcerated survivor sisters on 11/3/24.

Thanks to all of you who helped out at our 11/3 Newsletter Mailout to bring holiday cheer to our incarcerated and released sisters! We enjoyed good food and each other's company. The sisters are grateful! We also held our staff and board retreat after the mailout. Our Board Secretary Patty Lerma drove in from the Rio Grande Valley to join us!

Our new website is up, thanks to a \$750 special project grant from the BRIDGE Movement Fund! We hope to eventually include our virtual exhibit and a blog. Please check it out: www.fbtw.org.

As many of you know, our exhibit also showed for 2 weeks as part of Dream Week San Antonio, at University of the Incarnate Word's Condos Student Gallery. We'd like to thank:

- Claudia Cruz Hidrogo, the UIW gallery director, for coordinating and supporting us.

- Central Market for donating \$200 towards our catering for the reception.
- The Community Responsibility Endowment Fund for their funding of this event.
- The BRIDGE Movement Fund for their \$750 sponsorship of the closing panel!



CREF helped fund FBTW's Dream Week exhibit and closing panel on transformative justice at UIW on 1/25/25.

The exhibit's closing panel on Transformative Justice for Survivors was January 25, in the UIW Library Auditorium. I'd like to thank the panelists, who included Judge Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez of Bexar County Court-at-Law #13; Executive Director Patricia Castillo, LMSW, of the PEACE Initiative; and myself. Thanks also to our moderator, Dr. Doshie Piper of UIW's Criminal Justice Department and San Antonio's MLK Commission. Lastly, thanks to all of you from First UU who came to these events! The exhibition sparked many conversations about prevention of abuse and the justice system.

FELLOWSHIP HALL HVAC REPLACEMENT

By John Faultersack

Yessss! We now have heating and air conditioning in the Fellowship Hall. The project was completed last week (February 7th), and is performing well. Thank you all for putting up with the tunneling, outage (which lasted much longer than we'd hoped), and disruption of the sidewalk from Gate 1 to the Sanctuary.

We suffered trying to do an HVAC project during the busy holiday season (and deer hunting season, which makes contractors hard to come by!), and year-end factory shutdowns, etc. All of these conspired to make things difficult to accomplish, but we made it.

We now are the proud owners of a new 20-ton heat pump system, with electric heat backup for really cold weather (like now!!). Average life expectancy for this type of system is 15 years, but with our light usage pattern, maybe we can break our previous system's life of 35 years! Here's hoping. Next up, we hope to landscape the space between the FH and the Sanctuary. Grounds team?

ELIZABETH GRANADO JOINS STAFF AS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AIDE

by Alicia Smart

A warm welcome and congratulations are in order for Elizabeth Granado, our new Religious Education Aide! A San Antonio native, Elizabeth joined FUUSA in September 2023. Prior to moving back to San Antonio, Elizabeth was the director of religious education at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula in Monterey, California. She was also a public school music teacher and enjoys playing violin in chamber ensembles and spending time with my two-year-old daughter. Elizabeth's new role as RE Aid recognizes her incredible expertise, talents, and unwavering dedication to the well-being of our youth. She has already made an incredible impact, from stepping up during the DLRE transition over the 2024 summer to her continued behind-the-scenes efforts throughout the year. Now, as an official member of the church staff, Elizabeth's role will be vital in supporting the YRE program's success. Elizabeth's hard work and passion are truly appreciated!



UBARU 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

By Alicia Smart

Friends of UBarU Camp & Retreat Center gathered for the organization's 25th anniversary celebration on Saturday, February 1st. The event featured an open house tour of ongoing improvements to the property, hayrides, campfire, presentations, music, and fellowship.



PARENTS GATHER FOR FAMILY FAITH FORMATION FORUM

By Alicia Smart



Parents and guardians gathered on February 8th for a Family Faith Formation Forum for food, fun, and fellowship with childcare provided. The purpose of the event was to also discuss dreams and visions for the future of the Youth Religious Education program and the church overall. After a fun game of UU Jeopardy, lunch was served for children and parents followed by a walking tour of the campus led by Tim Versteeg, Director of Lifespan Religious Education. The tour covered the history of the First UU of San Antonio which held its first service at the current location on September 10, 1961. An overview of the YRE program calendar of events was given with ideas for expansion of programming. Participants then divided into groups for a

brainstorming session on dreams and visions for the future. one year, two year, and five year plans were presented with additional ideas for fundraising. In closing, parents and guardians shared how they discuss and practice UU values at home with their children, such as reading together or discussing social justice issues over a family meal.



Tim Versteeg, DLRE leads discussion at Family Faith

KWANZAA CELEBRATION

with T-Bow Gonzales & Rev. Xolani Kacela, Ph.D.



T-Bow Gonzales with Tamara Kacela and youth participants

Sunday December 29th service honored and celebrated the African American tradition of Kwanzaa, which is about empowerment, awareness, family, and community-building. T-Bow Gonzales, Dana Clark, and fellow musicians performed “Woyaya,” “Harambe,” and “Kwanzaa Dance.” Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela delivered an insightful message on celebrating Kwanzaa, saying “Kwanzaa is about weaving ourselves into a tapestry of meaningful relationships. This means being present without taking center stage. Grappling with the seven principles as a guidepost



for genuine connection, not as items on a cultural checklist. Supporting black-owned businesses throughout the year because they are a part of our community’s ecosystem.” Kwanzaa is celebrated annually in the United States from December 26th to January 1st.

THANKSGIVING POTLUCK 2024

By Alicia Smart

Thanksgiving Potluck 2024 was a great success, with over 75 individuals in attendance, bringing a wide variety of traditional and vegan dishes to the Fellowship Hall.



Many thanks to all who contributed to the beautiful spread so that all could have access to fellowship and an abundant Thanksgiving dinner. Elizabeth Granado donated additional table décor and arranged the welcoming centerpieces. Shout out to the Parent Group volunteers for organization, decor, setup, equipment, and cleanup: Elissa Curry, Sal and Valerie Lopez, Kendal and Alicia Smart, and Ruth Castillo. Thanks to Dr. XK for leading the moment of prayer and meditation.



PLAYGROUND RECEIVES NEW MULCH THANKS TO CAROL COLLINS

By Alicia Smart

Volunteers gathered after service on Sunday, December 22nd, to remove the dwindling wood mulch and install a new rubber mulch beneath the children's playground.



Carol Collins



Rubber mulch was chosen as a longer-lasting and more cost-effective option over other available materials. According to the EPA (2024), "Tires can be used in environmentally safe applications such as ground rubber, like the one used in rubber-modified asphalt and playground applications, and rubber mulch. Some 56 million tires are recycled in the US for civil engineering projects and some 16.5 million are re-treaded." A heartfelt thanks is in order for Carol Collins for her generosity in purchasing the mulch so that our children may continue to enjoy playground time on Sundays for years to come.



CELESTIAL CELEBRATIONS CIRCLE

By Sylvia Wheeler

Celestial Celebrations Circle is the official CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) group with First UU Church of San Antonio. We celebrate all 8 Sabbats (Holy Days). In months when there is no Ritual, we sponsor a labyrinth walk with drum circle on the west side of our Sanctuary on the church property. The Labyrinth became a joint project for Celestial Celebrations Circle members. It is available to whomever wishes to walk it - whenever they wish to make the journey through it. Thanks to the highway lights across the access road, there is now always light for walking the path & the constant highway drone becomes white noise.



For this issue of Inspire, Celestial Celebrations Circle (CCC) held 2 Rituals & 1 Labyrinth Walk. Our first Ritual was Winter Solstice. This is an astronomical event when our Sun is at its lowest point in relation to us on Earth. On the Wheel of the Year, it is the point of least light because of the position of our Earth to its Sun. This darkness produces different effects on people - especially early humans. These people looked at the sky & wondered why their source of light & heat had diminished so greatly? Would this source recover its strength & once again make the land more livable? As time progressed & it became apparent that this would happen, this point in the year became a time to 'go inside' - both physically & metaphorically. In today's Pagan world, it is a time of meditation & being together with community in close inside quarters.

Our CCC Ritual focused on Mother Goddess rebirthing her Son (Sun) & bringing forth more light; therefore, more warmth. There is a point in this Ritual where we turn off most of the ceiling lights to replicate the darkness of the season & then light a fire in the cauldron to replicate increasing light. This year we had a record number of participants who found us through many different sources. Many of these are not First UU congregants, including several families with children under 10 years old, plus many solitary practitioners.

The next CCC event was a Labyrinth Walk in January. It appears that the weather cooperated. There were seven participants, including the CCC host. Four people said they found us on social media - UU Instagram. One learns something new every day. The remaining 2 participants are semi-regulars. These are the ones who want a different experience to a structured Ritual. We are glad that we can provide diversity in our offerings.

In February, our Ritual was Imbolc. It is what is known as a 'cross quarter day.' On the Wheel of the Year, this is the halfway point between the two astronomical points of Winter Solstice & Spring Equinox (more on that in the next Inspire). Generally, this is the least known & celebrated of all the Sabbats. It is also known as Brigid's Day. The CCC intention for this Ritual was : This is the first stirring of the Light. The Goddess is again young ... She banishes all that is outworn. She sweeps away the debris of winter & prepares for the new. We will use stillness to further our quest for inner peace & calm." We chose to focus on not only Brigid, but also on Janus, God of beginnings & transitions - thus the name of the first month of the Gregorian calendar - January. Our work for this Ritual was a meditation on the coming Light as represented by a candle flame. We then used flash paper to send these meditative thoughts out into the Universe. Our participants were fewer this time than at Winter Solstice. This had little effect on the energy of the Ritual.



REV. DR. XOLANI KACELA & MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL MLK MARCH

By Alicia Smart



A hearty group of 16 marchers, representing First UU of San Antonio, braved the 32-degree temperature to join the city's annual Martin Luther King Jr. March on January 20th.



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATES

By Claudia Glass

The growing energy of nature is reflected in the visitors to our Church and in the people who have chosen to make this their spiritual home. Belonging and feeling at home is one of the best feelings. It's encouraging to see people of all age groups and persuasions checking out and joining First UU and the UU faith. And it is encouraging to see our members take an extra step to be welcoming during Sunday and for meetings and events.

Events from the beginning of 2025:

- Steady guests attending UU 101 - not only a helpful activity, but a checkoff for becoming a member along with completing the "New Member Interest Form" and a "Pledge of record"
- On January 12th we welcomed 12 new members and their children and significant others. It was memorable, solemn, and happy event followed by the New Member Reception.
- Along with our regular committee members, 4 people have offered to help on an occasional basis, like for events. Thank you! To all who make this a robust group.



Coming up:

- UU 101, the 4th Sunday of each month in the Conference Room - alternating times of 9:30 AM and 12:15 PM
- A picnic FUUND lunch on Sunday, April 13. The proceeds go to funding the painting of visitors' parking in the parking lot, completed in mid-December, which turned out great and helps newcomers navigate the campus
- New member ceremony on May 4 for people joining since our very good one in January. The next one will be in September

Thank you! To our very strong committee members who make it happen. Please join us if you would like to be a part of the enthusiasm.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: RENOVATIONS

By Polly Noel

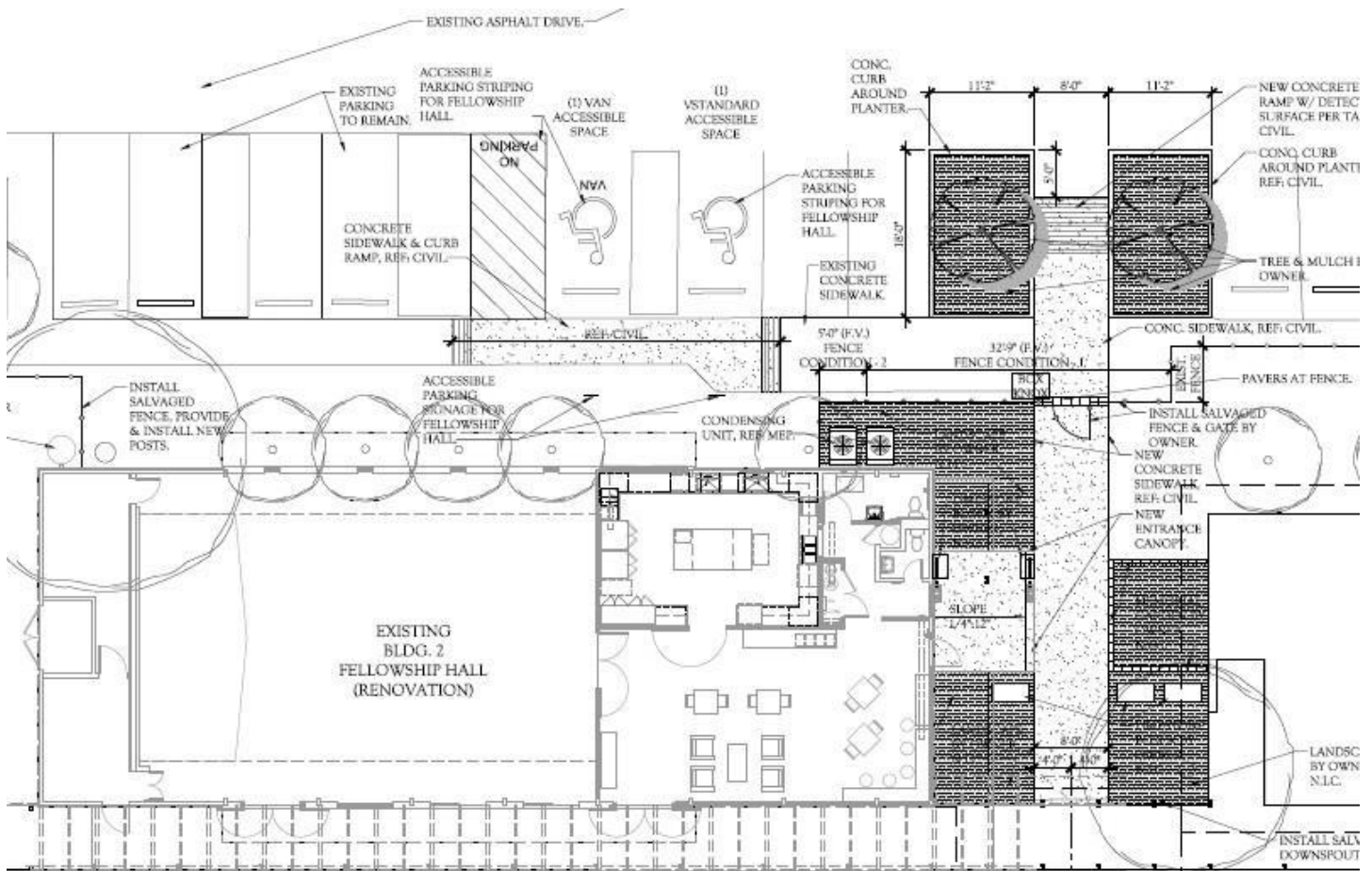
It's finally happening! Construction on the long-awaited renovation of the kitchen & lounge in the Fellowship Hall will begin on Monday, March 3rd. As a reminder, the renovation will include:

- Replacement of all exterior siding & any damaged wood studs throughout building
 - Store-front windows with new structural framing on the northeast corner of building (lounge area)
 - All remaining siding replaced with new siding, waterproofing, sheathing, insulation, etc.
 - Rock walls remain unchanged
- Replacement of “skinny” windows on west side of meeting room
- New emergency exit doors (in meeting room) and new fire alarm system & smoke detection for whole building required by fire marshal/current codes
- New accessible entrance & canopy on north side with new accessible sidewalk to parking lot centered between Fellowship Hall & Office
- Renovation of larger restroom to meet accessibility standards; smaller restroom will remain the same size
- New porcelain tile in the kitchen, lounge, & both restrooms
- Enlargement of kitchen / lounge (by removing foyer) with following: new HVAC split system, ducts, & vents; new electrical system & panel with proper grounding, new lighting, more electrical outlets; rough-in for future access control system; new plumbing & water heater; new energy-efficient appliances; water softener system to extend life of appliances

One of the first things that congregants will notice is the construction fencing that will be placed around all sides of the Fellowship Hall. This will make the gate and entrance between the Fellowship Hall & Administration Office temporarily inaccessible.

We apologize for the inconvenience, but it is necessary due to safety and liability concerns. After March 2nd, we ask that parking lots on the west and east side of the campus be reserved for visitors and congregants who are mobility-impaired, and that others park instead in the north parking lot. In addition, entrance into the construction zone will be strictly forbidden. We keep hearing from the general contractor that the renovation is expected to take only 6 months, so we ask for everyone's patience during construction.

The chain link security fencing will allow congregants to observe many of the major exterior changes as the new siding is replaced and the walls in the northeast corner are removed to install the new accessible entrance and storefront windows in the lounge.



As of February 23, 2025, the Capital Campaign has received a total of \$1,332,244. Our congregants' generosity has allowed the completion of several smaller projects and enabled First UU to begin work on its long-time goal of making the Fellowship Hall more welcoming, accessible, energy-efficient, and safe! If the remaining Capital Campaign commitments totaling \$223,023.5 are completed by December 2025 and we minimize additional changes so we can receive back all or most of the unused owner contingencies, First UU should be able to complete the project free of debt and to return \$240,066 withdrawn from the Trust Fund. We will provide monthly updates on our progress meeting this goal beginning in April.

SENIORS VALENTINE LUNCHEON

By Mary Wright

On February 6th the Stewardship, Membership, Member Care, and Capital Campaign Committees jointly hosted our annual Senior's Valentine Luncheon. First begun in 2017, this event has become a much beloved tradition. So much so, that during Covid we held a drive-thru luncheon in our parking lot.

This year's event was held a little earlier than normal due to our upcoming Kitchen/Lounge renovation. Approximately 52 seniors gathered in the Fellowship Hall and enjoyed a variety of sandwiches, salads, desserts, and each other's company. Our Member Care team thoughtfully sent out Valentine cards to our members who were unable to attend in person. Many thanks to our committee chairs who made the luncheon possible: Polly Noel, Claudia Glass, Pat Beck, and Marsha Meredith.



RETIRED WOMEN'S GROUP MEETING

By Tracey Knouse



The Retired Unitarian Universalist Women's (RUUW) group held a very special meeting on January 18th. Thanks to Geri and Frank Cervantes, who live at The Towers, the group enjoyed a delicious buffet while dedicating the meeting to Martha Cooley and Stanna Welch. We honored their outstanding leadership of RUUW, for the last two years by presenting them with cards of appreciation, a musical interlude by Brian Asher and Carlos Gonzales, and original gift jewelry sets created by member, Becky Brenner, of Adolphinastudios.com.

New co-chairs, Brenda Hefner and Tracey Knouse, planned and hosted the surprise event. Even though Martha was laid up at home, she was able to attend the event by Zoom. Brenda and Tracey have many people to thank for the

success of the meeting: Geri and Frank Cervantes for arranging the Magnolia room, with the sound system and the delightful food, the wonderful Towers' staff who made us all feel very welcome. Jessica Latimer gets a huge thanks for arranging Brian and Carlos' performance and for being a brilliant and tireless trouble-shooter.

We also thank Brian and Carlos for their terrific musical performance. Finally, thanks to all of the women who stepped up to make the jewelry gifts possible, and for putting pen to paper to let Martha and Stanna know that they are truly appreciated.



WESTNEY BENEFIT CONCERT

By Mary Wright

Bill Westney wowed everyone once again at his January 26th concert, featuring music from Mozart, Grieg, and Beethoven and showcasing First UU's Steinway grand piano in the Sanctuary. The audience was captivated and delighted by Bill's masterful performance, as well as by his commentary and anecdotes about compositions on the program.

In addition to being a First UU member, Westney holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Yale University and is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Texas Tech University. Winner of numerous performance prizes, most notably the Geneva International Competition, has concertized on four continents to critical acclaim.

The benefit concert raised \$1,780 for the Capital Campaign. Thank you to Susan Dill and the choir for organizing the concert and huge thanks to Bill Westney for sharing his enormous talent with us!



COURAGEOUS LOVE AWARDS CEREMONY

By Mary Grace Ketner

On a cold January 19th destined to become colder, we gathered for one of our most heartwarming joys: to honor folks who have made our lives more loving in our local community by their courage.



Award recipients pictured from left to right: Rev. Bob Mueller, Ramón Vásquez, Ada Babineaux, Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson, Rico Espinosa, Mary Grace Ketner, & Jan Realini.



Mary Grace Ketner presents the award to Ada Babino

The UUA established the Courageous Love Award to acknowledge that a national membership organization cannot really be familiar with all the active and creative people in each local community all over the nation, so it invites local congregations to make those selections. In our church, the task falls appropriately to our Social Justice League—yes! *League!*—for in this case they used their superpowers to discern these five brave and compassionate individuals and recognize them with this honor.

The ceremony began with an award for **Ada Babino**. Ada founded and continued to direct the San Antonio Black international Film Festival. By courageously envisioning an *international*

event from the very beginning, she has quickly brought attention and love to our city with well-known filmmakers and actors such as Felicia Rashad, and she has been able to carry out a personal goal of giving voice to the voiceless.

Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson, is Poet, singer-songwriter, and hip-hop artist and activist. She is presently exploring how to make the best use of her new job as the Arts Education and Community Engagement coordinator at the Carver Community Cultural Center, but you may recognize her as our city’s Poet Laureate for 2020-2023. We suspect that will come naturally for her since she has long taught poetry workshops, mentored young poets, and builds up and encourages artists to pursue their art, and given them platforms to showcase their talent.



Rico Espinosa presents the award to Andrea “Vocab” Sanderson.



Rev. Rob Mueller accepts award

Rev. Rob Mueller, now in Austin, served in San Antonio for much of his career and was very active in COPS/Metro during his ministry at Divine Redeemer Presbyterian Church on San Antonio’s West Side. He is was a strong leader in COPS/Metro on issue concerning immigration and gun violence prevention, and continues to address the issue including the making of the “*Vidas Robadas*” (Stolen Lives) T-shirt exhibit which was displayed at our church in November of 2023 and will be displayed on the capitol in September.

Our fourth award was presented to **Ramon Vaseuz y Snachez (posthumously) and to his son Ramon J. Vasquez**, co-founders of the American Indians of Texas at the Spanish Colonial Mission. The father and son team have built the organization into a welcoming

community which an office and museum on West Commerce street. They were named San Antonio Peace Laureates just last year. They have been leaders in the effort to treat native remains with dignity as San Antonio and its building and rebuilding grows, notably on “reversing extinction.”

This award is presented annually, and all members of the congregation are encouraged to notice who is doing what around this town. If you spy someone whose efforts should be rewarded, let your Social Justice Committee know!



Ramon J. Vasquez accepts award on behalf of himself and his father Ramon Vasquez y Sanchez.

CHARICE HOPTOWIT RETURNS AS YOUTH ADVISOR

by Alicia Smart





We are overjoyed to welcome Charice Hoptowit back to FUUSA as our new youth adviser as of Sunday, February 2nd! Charice is an incredible leader with a deep passion for empowering children and families. Currently a site leader at Learning Tree, she has been a dedicated advocate for children since 2014, supporting families as a Children's Special Education advocate, a CASA Court-Appointed Special Advocate Volunteer, a Child Advocate for Court-Ordered Visitation, and a licensed foster parent. Charice's connection to First UU runs deep. She previously worked with our 9-12 teens, leaving a lasting impact with her

warmth, compassion, and inspiring leadership. Now, she returns to guide and support our high school youth every Sunday in the high school classroom, bringing her remarkable energy and experience to create a dynamic and nurturing space where they can connect and thrive. We couldn't be happier to have Charice back in our community!

VIDAS ROBADAS PROJECT

By Mary Wright



Many of you may recall the Vidas Robadas tee shirt project. This time last year our congregation, along with other organizations throughout both the city and the state created tee shirts honoring individuals lost to gun violence. The shirts were displayed for several weeks on our campus before joining with other shirts created in San Antonio for a march and exhibition at the Alamodome. Texas Impact has continued this effort to create memorials to the thousands who have lost their lives to gun violence led by one of our

Courageous Love Awardees, Rev. Rob Mueller.

A second San Antonio installation of the tee shirt memorials took place on Sunday, November 24, again at the Alamodome in conjunction with the second City-wide Gun Exchange. First UU members were once again on site to help with this moving installation.



On Tuesday, February 27th Texas Impact brought their tee shirts to Austin from all over the state for a massive installation at the Capitol in advance of Gun Safety Advocacy Day. They joined with hundreds of gun safety advocates to fight for stronger gun safety laws.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS & FRIENDS ATTEND 50 STATE PROTEST IN AUSTIN

Seven members of the congregation engaged in peaceful protest at the state capitol in Austin on Wednesday February 5th. The event was described as peaceful and encouraging with over 1000 Texans coming together to make their voices heard.



CHARLOTTE BLACKWOOD SPEAKS AT STATE CAPITOL IN AUSTIN



18-year-old Charlotte Blackwood, along with the Youth Advocates of Healthy Futures of Texas visited the State Capitol in Austin on Thursday (February 28th) to speak directly to Texas legislators. This is Charlotte's second year speaking at the Capitol and the second year the group is advocating for free period products in public schools. For Charlotte, this is a very important topic on which she has worked hundreds of hours. This work has even influenced her to consider continuing sexual education and/or nonprofit work in the future.

Charlotte presented House Bill Number 4199 to legislators, saying, "Not even counting the emotional and moral problems associated with (not having period products free in school), Texas is losing money from lost attendance. \$45 per day, per student costs Texas millions per year compared with even the highest cost of providing period products, which is estimated at between \$4-\$25." You can view H.B. No. 4199 below.

88R12875 BDP-D

By: Flores

H.B. No. 4199

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT

relating to the provision of menstrual products at public schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 38, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 38.037 to read as follows:

Sec. 38.037. AVAILABILITY OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS. (a) In this section, "menstrual products" means tampons and sanitary napkins for use in connection with the menstrual cycle.

(b) Each school district shall make menstrual products available free of charge in each restroom designated for female students located on each campus in the district.

SECTION 2. This Act applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2023.

ALL MEANS ALL: WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY

By Tim Versteeg, DLRE



A curious, but not unexpected thing happened during our recent Parents retreat on February 8. I had prepared a game of UU Jeopardy, using questions that explored our faith's history and culture. We had four groups working together answering the questions, (which may have been a bit more difficult than I intended). At a certain point during the game, when we got to the history category, a couple of teams defaulted to the "phrase it as a question" answer: "Who is some old white guy?"

While they may not have got the specifics right, they were correct in their assumptions of identity. Too often in Unitarian Universalist history and history generally, we have focused on "old white guys." Be it Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Murray or William Ellery Channing.

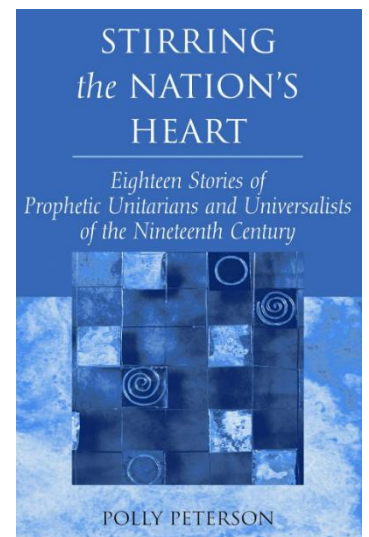


I am currently about a bit more than half-way through completing the Advanced Level Religious Educator Credentialing program, a program run by the Unitarian Universalist Association for the professional development of Religious Educators in our faith. Right now, I'm taking the fourth of five required courses for completion: the Unitarian Universalist Sparks module, and it has been an engaging experience as a group of a dozen REs and ministerial students from the US and Canada meet biweekly with two UUA facilitators to discuss assigned readings and materials.



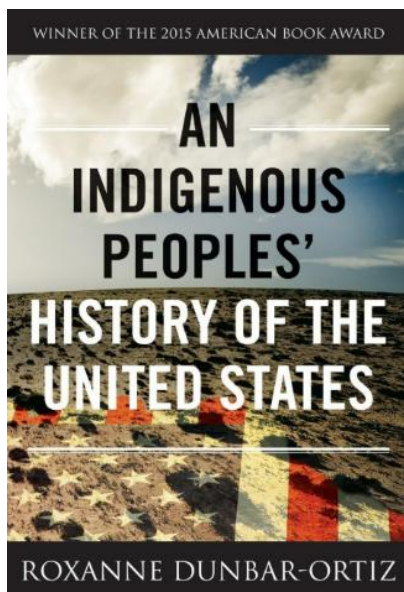
I'm happy to report that the course has not only lived up to my expectations but is exceeding them. At a time when politicians in the United States at the highest levels seem intent on dismantling any initiatives which are progressive and are forbidding Equity Diversity and Inclusion funding in public spheres, the UUA history

program continues to fulfill its mission of widening the circles of understanding and learning about our history but decolonizing the stories and voices we are studying in our course.



Our main texts, *Stirring the Nation's Heart: Eighteen Stories of Prophetic Unitarians and Universalists of the 19th Century* by Polly Peterson, *Missionaries, Builders, and Pathfinders: Unitarian Universalist Stories from the Midwest, West, and South, 1830-1930* by Polly Peterson and Gail Forsyth-Vail, and *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism* by Mark D. Morrison-Reed, all center stories which are not only those expected from a UU history course, but also stories of individuals in our collective past who have often been ignored.

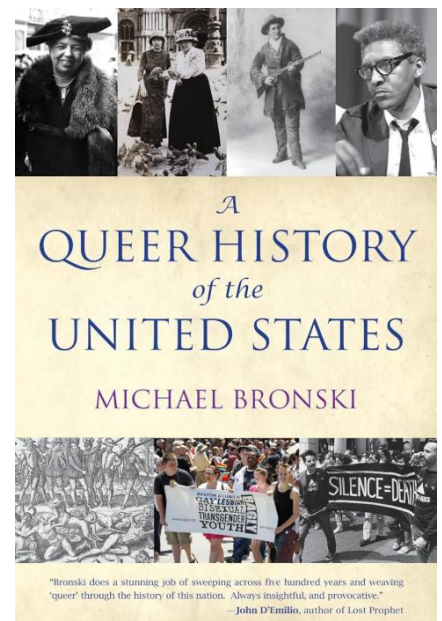
Many of the stories read like examples of initial failure yet bubble up later to be incorporated as part of our accepted principles and values. Bisbee's embracing of the teaching of science, the roles of women like Olympia Brown, Mary Rice Livermore, all those in the Iowa Sisterhood and the Eliot women in the expansion and evolution of the church in the west, and the lack of denominational support of black churches in the south such as those started by Joseph Jordan, all would continue to haunt and define our development as a faith movement.



In our historical moment, the tenacity of these different movements informs our denomination's prophetic voice today. It is not going to be an easy time to be a UU in the next few years, but those are the historical moments when our voices and actions have been the most necessary.

As I continue the Credentialing Process, I will need to write short essays for each of 9 areas of study, supported by the courses I've taken and comprehensive reading lists on each subject for which I submit annotated bibliographies. One of these areas will be UU history and to prepare I've already read a number of the books on that list. Like the Sparks module, the

reading list seeks to deconstruct and decolonize the dominant narratives of the United States, extending and expanding historian Howard Zinn's historical project of "people's history". Three of the books on the list, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *A Queer History of the United States* by Michael Bronski, and *A Disability History of the United States* by Kim E. Nielsen refreshingly takes the accepted narrative of US history and widens the circle of representation, focusing on identities long ignored in the dominating narrative of history as it is taught in school and memorialized in statues and plaques.



TRUST FUND OF ENDOWMENT

By Arlis Olson

Our thanks to the following people who made donations since the last newsletter:

November: Birthday: Kathleen “Katy” Evans, Pat Ellis, Brian Asher, Diane Duesterhoeft
Memoriam: Peter Bauer for Kate Bauer, Diane Duesterhoeft for Glenna Jones Kachtik
Undesignated: Javier Santillan

December: Birthday: Ruth Bujanda Moore Undesignated: Christine Duda

January: Birthday: Jim Noel Undesignated: Mary Wright

Your donations increased this fund by \$1,083 this quarter. Thanks to all who contributed.

LEGACY SOCIETY

The Legacy Society was established to recognize those who have included First Unitarian Universalist Church in their estate planning. We now have 18 people on that list, 13 families. They are: Carol Bertsch, Ellen Clegg, Diane Duesterhoeft and Mike Phillips, Wendy Friedman and James Jauchem, Maggie Joseph and Lucy Norton, Jeff and Mary Grace Ketner, Tracey Knouse, David and Lana Sund, Arlis Olson, Gail Reinhart, Rev. Dr. Terrance Robinson, Stanna Welch, Sylvia Wheeler. Hats off to all of them. We have three more people who have promised to do so. They are: Pat Beck, Pat Ellis and Michelle Willhelm. Four of these people are new additions since last quarter. We’re celebrating! We normally have a certificate listing these people in the lounge but it has been temporarily removed until after construction is completed. History shows only fifteen people who previously donated to the church in their estate plans so this is a vast improvement. Their names are included on a plaque in the choir room. The Trust Fund may actually have hopes of having enough funds for its intended purpose someday.

There was \$284,369.58 in the Trust Fund as of the end of December. The amount for the air conditioning has not yet been taken out. The good news is the capitol campaign may not need all of that money and be able to pay some, if not all, of it back. Help us make this fund grow! Include the Trust Fund in your estate plans! If you’ve already done that or will do so, let us know so we can include you. (trustfund@uusat.org)



WE SHALL NOT LIVE IN FEAR

Beloved Community,

Our hearts are shattered by Friday's (February 7th) news from Gainesville, Tx of Jocelynn Rojo Carranza's death by suicide. Reports say the 11-year-old's death was triggered by school bullying. What a devastating reminder that words cause harm beyond healing.

Today we grieve not just one precious life cut short, but the poisonous climate of fear that has seeped into our schools and congregations, turning one against another. Faced with this heartbreak, we must do more than offer prayers. Let us strengthen our community bonds so no person feels this alone.

Remember: this congregation is a haven of acceptance and fierce protection. Whether you come with tears, terror, or a need for refuge, you're welcome here. Share your burdens. Let us hold your fears. We'll rally resources for your children. Together, First UU rises to transform despair into dignity, isolation into belonging.

In these darkest moments, be each other's light. No force - raid, threat, cruel words - can extinguish the flame of our covenant to care for one another and our children.

With broken heart and unshakeable resolve,

Rev. Xolani "xk" Kacela



COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY ENDOWMENT FUND (CREF) NEWS

By Diane Carl

NOMINATE a non-profit in the San Antonio Metro area to receive an invitation to apply for a CREF Grant. Now through June 30th Church members may make nominations. Please see the CREF webpage (<https://uusat.org/cref/>) for the past few years recipients. To nominate please complete the online form (<https://uusat.org/cref-nomination-form/>) also found on the CREF webpage.

A fabulous FUUnd Lunch was held on February 9th. THANK YOU to all who share a bowl of soup joy at the CREF fundraiser. At least 10 soups & stews and an amazing variety of salads were gobbled up, then topped off with desserts. CREF raised just over \$1,000 from your donations which goes directly into the endowment fund.

Join our CREF Trustee team beginning a new year June 1st. Enjoy a well-coordinated team serving the community by recognizing the efforts of others and providing a helping hand through grant awards. We love celebrating our awardees! Contact either the Leadership Development Committee at leadership@uusat.org or CREF Chair, Diane Carl, at CREF@uusat.org to find out more.

CREf needs a logo! Get your creative juices flowing and delight us with an image that says it all. Take a look at the [CREf Webpage](#) for inspiration. Send image to ceref@uusat.org.

Since 1982 the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio membership has elected Trustees to manage and administer the Community Responsibility Endowment Fund (CREf). Each year the CREf Trustees award grants to support projects and activities in our local community.

LEADERSHIP RECEPTION HOSTED BY STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

By Betty Burgner



Photo of Stewardship Committee members left to right: Justine Hansen, Lana Sund, Alicia Smart, Sam McLaughlin, Jim Noël, Polly Noël

The Stewardship Committee hosted a gathering for Board Members and Committee Chairs this past weekend to gear up for our annual Stewardship Campaign that will officially kick off Sunday March 2nd. There was a Mardi Gras theme, complete with Cajun goodies including a King Cake. Thankfully no one cracked a tooth on the baby!

Your Finance Committee has worked hard to propose a realistic budget, and your Stewardship Committee has created a helpful Giving Guide to assist individuals with making their pledge for the 2025-2026 church year. We had a sneak preview of the Giving Guide that will be rolled out soon. Your pledges are critical for the church to plan how we will pay our staff, cover our bills, fund our projects, and support our children. The final budget will be determined by the amount of our pledges we commit to. After the past two years of a gutted budget, I think everyone will be happy to see funding back to our committees in the proposed budget. Now it is up to the congregation to rise to the occasion.

Stay tuned for the kickoff of the Stewardship Campaign, on March 2nd, where the Giving Guide will be revealed and more details regarding the proposed budget will be provided. Good things are happening with First UU this year. It takes a village, and we are so glad you are part of our loving, energetic and thriving community!

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