



# FIRST UU NEWS

*We gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice.*

## The Wisdom of a Crowd

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



Have you ever been asked to guess the number of pieces of gum in a jar, or the weight of a box of stones?

In his book “The Wisdom of Crowds,” James Surowiecki says the more people who are in on a guess about something definite, like how many pieces of bubble gum are in a jar or what the weight of an ox is, the more likely that the average of all of their guesses will be accurate. The central claim of the book is that a “diverse collection of independently deciding individuals is likely to make certain types of decisions and predictions better than individuals or even experts.”

This is not always true. The crowd must have certain qualifying qualities, which I think describe our congregation well: there must be a diversity of opinion. Each person should have private information even if it’s just their own interpretation of the known facts. The thinking must be independent. People’s opinions aren’t determined by the opinions of those around them. People must have their own experiences with the matter at hand, and draw on their own knowledge of the subject. Finally, some mechanism needs to exist for turning people’s private judgments into a collective

decision.

Even though this congregation has a form of governance where the minister and staff’s task is to determine the means by which we get to the ends the congregation has chosen, it has called a minister who is a strong believer in collaborative decision making. I don’t convene committees to make smaller, easier decisions, but in matters like where we will have church and what our space will look like, I want as many

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voices heard as possible.

Many voices have been included in the decision making about our building project so far. There is a Long Range Plan Team that created the current draft of our LRP, which calls for a church with between 800 and 1,000 members whose mission it is to nourish souls and transform lives beyond our current church community by starting new UU churches to serve our growing city.

We convened a Facilities Research

Team (nominated by the congregation) to advise leadership on whether to move or to stay and build here on site. They decided First UU would best be served by continuing to develop the very desirable site we currently own.

As we draw this phase of our Capital Campaign to a close, we face further decisions: when should we start building? How much will our building budget be? What are our options, given that budget? Do we take out a loan for monies over and above what has been pledged, or work with the money we have pledged? What space issues do we tackle first? Do we work with an independent architect or with a design/build firm? After that: what, in greater detail, is the kind of space do we want to create? How much are we willing to spend to make sure that the components of the building are green and sustainable? What should be the qualifications of the members on the building committee?

We will continue as we have begun, with a team of church members gathering to research, discuss and advise leadership about what to do. I hope you will watch your announcements for invitations to be

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**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

# Finding life-affirming faith at First UU

by **Carolyn Gremminger**



Along with several other church members, I was asked to provide a stewardship testimonial this summer during services. It was an excellent occasion to draw attention to opportunities available at First UU, and to elaborate on what our community has come to mean to me.

I started attending First UU of Austin in 2001. I continue to attend and be involved because my love and appreciation for our community continues to grow as the years go by. My participation continues to deepen as I take part in the various ministries and cultural experiences offered here.

Whenever I set foot in our church, I know I will be surrounded by meaningful activities and interesting people. More than anything, I have found belonging, community, meaning, and service work that nurtures, challenges, and expands my experience of life. I have found sanctuary and hope here; a sheltering, safe place where I can freely disclose my aspirations, longings and struggles. I can also celebrate my successes here as well.

I have experienced our mission here first hand:

My soul is nourished here by worship services, Chalice Circles, and participating in the gallery activities and Paradox Players community.

My life is transformed here through loving friendships, meditation and enneagram classes, attend-

ing General Assembly and serving on the Board of Trustees.

I get to participate in justice work here, taking part in social action projects and attending the Public Affairs Forum where there is an opportunity to be educated and to network with community leaders. I see First UU as a vessel for helping us to become more whole and human.

I experience both Humanist and theistic leanings. I find a renewal of hope in humanity here. I am also encouraged to be open to transcendent experiences, which inspire me and inform my ethical and spiritual life.

I find a life-affirming faith here, through a deeper understanding and practice of Unitarianism and Universalism. We find meaning together as a faith community. I find wisdom through the principles and sources here that I could not find on my own. I am nourished by sitting with friends in the services, singing together, and taking in the sermons. I have also come to appreciate the fellowship in coffee hour.

Our covenantal community makes First UU a safe place for all of us. Our covenant is how we agree to be together in community, as best we can. We honor our covenant because we choose to, not because we have to. Our covenant directs us to conduct ourselves in ways that hold us together; we agree to act in certain ways together, not to agree to believe

the same things.

I am not expected to be perfect, thank goodness, but I continue to show up and be my best self. We all make mistakes, promises get broken, and we begin again. I can try new things, and not be afraid to fail, and learn from the experience. I choose to invest my time, treasure and talent here, and I urge you to do the same.

There are many people in Austin that have not found us yet. They are looking for a community like ours. I hope we can make more room for them, so they will feel welcomed when they walk in the door. We have a saving message: not from some hell after death, but from the internal torment that can come in this life from isolation, fear, lack of connection, and ignorance.

Also, I find comfort and stimulation in the encouragement and support of religious pluralism, which is profoundly needed now. I have found meaningful connection here and I find joy in sharing it with others. Neighbors, coworkers, family members...all are welcome.

We have the opportunity now to grow into a larger home where many more people that need us and our message will find us and stay. A home that reflects our values of a welcoming, loving and sustaining environment. ■

*“Next Steps” from page 1*

part of these upcoming decisions.

**Office Shuffle**

As you may know, Chris Jimmerson is coming on board to fill the job of Director of Finance and Operations. His title will be Assistant Minister with the portfolio of Administration. (As you know, Mari is the Assistant Minister with the portfolio of RE and Congregational

Life.) He will have the office opposite the administrative office, as he will be supervising the staff who work in that office. I have moved into what used to be the RE office, and the library is in there with me. This gives me space to have meetings with groups, as I’m making a conference area. Mari has moved across the hall into the office Sean Hale used to have, and her staff is in what used to be the library. Carol Drennan, our

Interim Director of Finance and Operations, recommended these changes in her diagnostic report, and we are following those recommendations. Come take a look in a month or so after all of our boxes are unpacked!

I am delighted to be back at First UU after a refreshing three weeks in Edinburgh. I’m very much looking forward to this upcoming year with you all. ■



## Music Matters

# Back to school means back to singing at First UU!

**Adult Choir Returns!**

The First UU Adult Choir meets Wednesdays from 7:00 p.m.-8:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary beginning September 10th. The choir sings on average 2-3 services per month, and features a wide variety of music. Open to ages 15 and up. No audition required. Childcare provided.

Not sure about choir? No problem—come check out a commitment-free rehearsal to see if it’s the right fit for you. (Fair warning: it’s a lot of fun!)

**Children’s Choir & Youth Choir Also Returns!**

Our Children’s and Youth Choirs meet during first service RE in Room 13 (Youth Choir, Grades 4-9) and Room 11 (Children’s Choir, Grades K-3). If you’re a second-service kind of family, your children may simply

join us at 10 a.m. Choir ends at 10:40 a.m. Our excellent directors provide top-notch instruction—and a lot of fun!

Pick up your registration packet and schedule outside the RE office, or register online at [www.austinuu.org/wp2013/?p=10544](http://www.austinuu.org/wp2013/?p=10544).

**Brent Baldwin featured on the cover of Chorus America’s *The Voice* magazine**

Our Director of Music recently received national attention when he was featured on the cover of *The Voice* magazine. The cover story was part of the publication’s coverage of Texas Choral Consort’s “Mozart Requiem Undead” concert. *The Voice* is a publication of Chorus America, and is one of the top choral periodicals in the country.



*Nourishing Souls and Transforming Lives Through Music*





FIRST UU IN PICTURES

# Capital Campaign Ice Cream Social was a tasty treat

## Grand total currently stands at \$2.4 million



article by Ann Edwards, photos by Jim Collins and Jon Montgomery

What a celebration—ice cream, entertainment and encouraging news on the Capital Campaign! About 150 of us enjoyed Amy’s best while Schrodinger’s Kittens serenaded with a delightful medley of songs. Your Steering Committee reported the percentage of families contacted and visited so far. As of August 27th,

68% of our members have been contacted, 51% have been visited, and the grand total stands at \$2,451,085. Michael West, Doris Hug and Lisa Carrell spoke from a visitor’s perspective, describing how meaningful these visits have been.

You, too, can share the pleasure of visiting fellow members in

homes or coffee shops--and we offer training! Simply contact us at [capitalcampaign@austinuu.org](mailto:capitalcampaign@austinuu.org), and we’ll set you up for meaningful exchanges. And don’t forget to stop by the Capital Campaign table in the gallery on Sundays to pick up your “I Pledged!” stickers, and wear them proudly on your name tags! ■



**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN 2014-2019**

# Got stock or valuable jewelry?

by **Kae McLaughlin**

In some of the home visits for the Capital Campaign, members have inquired into the possibility of donating stock or jewelry. Here's a brief overview of your options.

If your stock has increased in value since you bought it, you can avoid the capital gains tax by donating the stock to the church. If you have held the stock for over a year and transfer it to the church, the IRS allows you to deduct the full

appreciated value (so long as you itemize your deductions). If you've held the stock for less than one year, you only get to deduct the purchase price.

For information to transfer stock to the church Schwab account, email our bookkeeper, Jamie Schroeder at [jamie.schroeder@austinuu.org](mailto:jamie.schroeder@austinuu.org) or call her at (512) 452-6168, ext. 302.

If you want to donate stock that has decreased in value, you are better

off selling the stock and donating the cash so that you can deduct the loss.

In addition, if anyone would like to give jewelry to the Capital Campaign, we have an appraiser who will be happy to come give a free appraisal for jewelry here at the church.

As with any decision with tax implications, please visit with your tax professional.

### Happy trails, Jim!



On August 27th we bid our Capital Campaign consultant Jim Collins farewell on his long journey home to Virginia. He expressed his appreciation for the chance to work with this community and to learn about UUism. The Steering Committee's Spiritual Emphasis Chair, Michael West, had this

touching blessing to share with him at our last meeting together:

*"In the name of all that is good and holy, with the Spirit of Life and Love which dwells within and among and beyond us,*

*We bless you.*

*May your journey know joy and contentment and satisfaction.*

*May it also know pain and disappointment in just enough measure to grow within you good character and compassion.*

*May both character and compassion guide your lives.*

*May you never feel alone.*

*May you always feel love around you from family and friends and from that great holy source beyond us all.*

*May you always offer your love to the world.*

*May you walk your path, through the light and the darkness, with hope and faith and grace.*

*We bless you."*

- Dana E. Worsnop, In the Name of All That is Good and Holy

### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN'S NEXT BIG EVENT!



Join us as we journey through the halls of First UU's history to see what has made us the congregation we are, and we'll dare to wonder what the future holds. Jump on this trek in celebration of our collective 60th birthday, and the imminent victory of our Capital Campaign. Lunch, music, fun activities for young and old, costumes, and community will nourish our bodies and souls. Stay tuned to the weekly announcements and newsletter as the exciting details are revealed—you won't want to miss this!

October 12th, 11:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
 First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin  
 The voyage begins at the Sanctuary!



FIRST UU IN PICTURES

# CampUU Hogwarts enchants the church

by **Headmistress Esmirelda McGonagall**  
(muggle name: **Vicki Almstrum**)



At the end of July, First UU's building and grounds transformed into a magical place for the fun of Hogwarts / CampUU. During this week-long camp, children entering grades 1-6 enjoyed dressing in capes and hats and wielding wands, as they participated in a variety of camp experiences with a distinctive Harry Potter twist. Teens in 7th grade and above served as prefects, assisting the organizers and helping ensure the success of the camp.

In Wizard Sports, our new quidditch master, Grace Worm, borrowed genuine equipment from the quidditch team at UT Austin. She even arranged for a guest visit by a member of the UT Austin quidditch team, which last April won the 2014 IQA Quidditch World Cup ([www.facebook.com/IqaQuidditchWorldCup](http://www.facebook.com/IqaQuidditchWorldCup)).

Each morning, campers and pre-

fects attended classes such as Music, Potions, Defense Against the Dark Arts, Care of Magical Creatures, Herbology, Opticality, and Astronomy. After lunch each day, campers and prefects participated in service projects to benefit different nonprofit organizations. During two morning classes, campers and prefects created enchanted candies and delectable cupcakes, which they sold between and after services on August 3rd, raising over \$250 to donate to the nonprofit organization Emancipet.

This camp is truly an amazing experience, as we are blessed with creative and enthusiastic volunteers who ensure that everyone—campers, prefects, and adults alike—enjoy an incredible week of fun. We ended the camp on Friday, August 1st with the Great Feast, which featured delicious soup, tasty desserts, sweet music from the campers, and entertaining skits. ■

## MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

# Hands On Housing

by Tom Spencer, CEO of Interfaith Action of Central Texas

*[From the Austin American Statesman, 11/3/2012 "In Your Words"]*

For many years I was sure that I knew the "real" Austin. After all, I spent most of my career producing hundreds of short documentaries and conducting countless interviews about the life of our community for KLRU-TV. I thought I understood the concerns of East Austin and the issues facing the working poor throughout our community. When I took my present job as the CEO of Interfaith Action of Central Texas, I quickly realized that I had been clueless about the very real desperation that exists in our city.

My biggest wake-up call came just a few months into my new job. The Coordinator of Hands on Housing, iACT's housing repair program, had left a flyer on the doorstep of a run-down little home just a few blocks from our office. A few hours later, the owner of the home appeared in our office with her two young children--tears were running down her cheeks and she was clutching our flyer in one of her hands. I greeted her as she stepped through the door and can still remember her shaking voice as she told me that she believed that our flyer was God's answer to her prayers.

Moved by her obvious distress, we went to her house and were shocked by what we found. We quickly realized that the façade of the house and the small room immediately behind

it were the only things still standing. The back of the house was a wreck, the floors and walls had collapsed—there was no running water and no electricity. The mother had fashioned a plastic tent in the one surviving room and she and her children were sheltering in it. Until she found our flyer, this proud mother had no idea of where to turn for help. Needless to say, we quickly organized a response and within a few weeks her home had been repaired with a new roof, floors and walls, furniture had been donated, and the electricity and water were back on.

I visited her just after we had completed our work. It was a blazingly hot summer day, and while she was as happy as she could be, I remember feeling a little off-put by how tiny the space was and how hot the interior was because she could not afford air-conditioning. She sensed my discomfort, maybe the sweat rolling down my face was a clue, but she set me straight. Looking me in the eye, she said, "Mr. Tom, this may not look like much to you, but I want to let you know that when I wake up in the morning, I think I'm in heaven."

Wow. And I thought I knew Austin.

Well, I have learned a lot more since that time. I have learned that the housing conditions that this family faced, while extreme, are not as uncommon as we would like to

believe.

The issue of affordable housing is complicated and I know that many of us feel that it is subject to market forces that are beyond our control. However, I have also learned that together we can make a difference. There are many innovative affordable housing programs operating in our community that are making a huge difference in the lives of impoverished senior citizens and the working poor. These include Hands on Housing which has repaired more than 1,400 homes in East Austin since 1989.

At iACT, we try to harness the shared compassion of area faith communities to address issues like decent, affordable housing. We see the needs of our neighbors every day and we welcome all partners in this good work. While not all of us have the privilege of "knowing" our neighbors in this way, we can be proud that we live in a city that tries, however imperfectly, to remain a welcoming place--a place that we can all call home.

*All groups supported by Monthly Special Offerings will receive a check at the end of the year, when the total of the 12 monthly donations will be divided equally.*

**Eclectic Folk Jam**

**Friday, September 12**  
**Rm. 17**  
**7-10 p.m.**

The Eclectic Folk Jam, an open jam session for singers and instrumentalists, is held on the second Friday of every month. We have “Rise Up Singing” song books, and some people like to bring copies of their favorite songs to pass out. Bring drinks and snacks to share.

Contact Pete and Kim Akenhead at (512) 834-0188, or Mary Jane Ford at (512) 926-4122 or [singalong@austinuu.org](mailto:singalong@austinuu.org).

**UU/Quaker Singalong**

**Saturday, September 27**  
**Friends Meeting House**  
**3701 E. MLK Blvd.**  
**7:30-10:30 p.m.**

Please bring snacks and finger foods, musical instruments, and copies of songs you want to sing. Copies of “Rise Up Singing” are provided. This is an alcohol-free event, round-robin format, held on the fourth Saturday of every month.

Contact Larry Vaughn at (512) 469-0029 or Mary Jane Ford at (512) 926-4122 or [singalong@austinuu.org](mailto:singalong@austinuu.org).

**LEGALIZE HUMAN****Call for artists, authors, performers, storytellers**

**Arts, Advocacy, Education—and Fun!**

**by Cavan Ó Raghallaigh**

**Monday, October 20**  
**Howson Hall**  
**6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Legalize Human and GSR Communities invite you to share your work with the community either in person or digitally. Come give an artist’s talk, read your work, show your video, perform your music, tell us a story. Performance work (including readings) is encouraged!

There will be tables available for you to show and sell some of your work, and to distribute flyers about upcoming exhibits, performances, etc. Though there’s no charge for tables, Legalize Human will gratefully accept any donations you care to offer.

If you’d like to contribute images of your work to be included in a “slideshow” during the events, or copies of your writing to share with attendees,

please get in touch! The work might be stills from a performance or other event, as well as images of visual work. You need not be present to have these contributions included.

It’s one thing to get laws changed, and quite another to actually create an environment of acceptance in society. The arts have an enormous role in helping create an environment where we can all be our own sort of human. As artists and event attendees, we are visibly participating in our communities, visible to each other and visible to those not usually involved in our communities. It’s a positive way for others to develop some connection and empathy with communities they rarely meet. So, share your work and experience, and come play with us! Looking forward to hearing from you. Contact Cavan Ó Raghallaigh at [human@austinuu.org](mailto:human@austinuu.org).



## PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CLINIC

# PCC Profile: Meet Volunteer Veryan Thompson

Summer is winding down, which means school plans and fall activities are beginning to take shape. The same is true at People's Community Clinic, where many families take their children for pre-school immunizations and other medical exams necessary to attend school. These essential services along with many other health and education programs are provided by the clinic to many of our under-insured and uninsured neighbors in Central Texas.

PCC is one of the many organizations that First UU members have chosen to assist with their time and talents. In the coming months we would like to introduce you to some of the wonderful people who volunteer with the clinic.

Veryan Thompson, an English transplant to Austin, and her husband Greg have been busy and active members of First UU for many years. Greg has been a member since 1971 and Veryan, friend and then member, joined in 1973. During those years Veryan has served on many and varied committees, from chairing the Usher Committee to working in the nursery in R.E. when her children were young. She also helped in the production of the directory in the early years when it was produced and collated by volunteers, which she remembers as a huge job. Over the years she has worked on auctions, Hands On Housing, and the Grounds Committee just to name a few.

Presently, she and Greg participate

in the Readers Group and are on the Paradox Players Committee where they have sold tickets, chaired the House Committee, and worked at the concession stand. Greg has even been in some plays. As though all that isn't enough, Veryan also sings with our wonderful choir and continues to give her time and talents to PCC. She is indeed a busy person.

The Thompson's have two sons: Luke and his wife Cindy live in Austin with their 4-year old daughter, Elea. Luke is also currently working on his Ph.D dissertation for Columbia University. Son Seren lives in San Diego and is busy preparing for his wedding on September 5th to a lovely young lady named Angela.

**Next meeting: Thurs. Sept. 4  
2909 N. IH-35  
9:30 a.m. -12 p.m.**

Should you have time and would like to meet Veryan or some of our other PCC volunteers, do join us at the clinic in the second floor conference room. Please note this Thursday meeting is a change from our usual Tuesday meeting time, due to the needs of the clinic. We hope you can join us this month for a bit of work, a bit of visiting and perhaps if you are able lunch together afterwards. All are welcome. It is a lively and inviting group that gets things done while enjoying each other's company. For more information please contact [pcc@austinuu.org](mailto:pcc@austinuu.org). ■

## Women's Spirituality Group

**First and third Saturdays  
10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.**

**Rm. 13**

In tribute to our 30th anniversary at First UU Church, the Women's Spirituality Group is reading and discussing the book that launched our group in becoming what it is today: "Dreaming the Dark" by Starhawk. In August we explored chapter one, so we will start chapter two on September 6th. Then on September 20th we will break from the book to celebrate the Fall Equinox.

This group is for women who are high school age and older. We are open to new members at all times, and we invite you to join us.

Contact: [women@austinuu.org](mailto:women@austinuu.org).

## HEALTHY RELATIONS MINISTRY

# Advice from Covenant Corner

Dear Covenant:

Last Sunday during coffee hour someone in the group I was talking with told a joke about Republicans. Most people laughed, but I know at least one person in the group often votes Republican. I'm certain it made them uncomfortable. I wish I had spoken up, but I can't imagine how to do it without making things worse.

— *Uncomfortable*

Dear Uncomfortable:

Jokes about others are deeply imbedded in our culture. You have only to get Longhorns and/or Aggies together to see this in action. While we

usually recognize jokes about race, sex, disabilities or other protected classes as hurtful, we are still learning that any joke that targets someone as "other" can be hurtful.

We covenant to interrupt hurtful interactions when we witness them. Yet how can we do it in a way that doesn't use a sledgehammer? Questions, especially "I wonder" questions, are often a good strategy. Perhaps, "I wonder how I would feel right now if I voted Republican?" or "I wonder if our Republican members feel welcome at our church?" If greeted with silence, you can say with a smile, "I'm trying to learn how to question with curiosity and respect,"

adding, "It's not very easy."

The goal is not to embarrass anyone, but to create constructive dialogue. It's true that questions like these can create discomfort, but if we remember we are here to learn how to embody our values, we are called to work through that discomfort.

The Healthy Relations Ministry is available to you as a resource if you need help with a difficult situation here at church. It is comprised of Margaret Borden, Ann Edwards, and Sandra Ries and can be reached at [healthyrelations@austinuu.org](mailto:healthyrelations@austinuu.org).

Sincerely,

*Healthy Relations Covenant*

## DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

### **Women's Retreat UBarU near Kerrville, TX Oct. 10-12**

Recharge your spirit in the fellowship of Unitarian Universalist women from across Texas and beyond. Deepen your relationship with old friends and build new friendships. Sing, meditate, dance, walk the labyrinth or the hill country, do what your spirit needs. Free from workshops and classes. No responsibilities other than to be your own true, beautiful, authentic self. Info at [www.ubaru.org](http://www.ubaru.org) under "Events."

### **Fall Harvest Training Nov 7-9, Glen Lake Conference Center Glen Rose, TX**

This conference will feature workshops such as:

- Introduction to Leadership as a Spiritual Practice
- Advanced Conflict Management
- Creating Vibrant and Meaningful Young Adult Ministry
- The Ongoing March to Selma with the Regional Right Relations Specialists
- Returning: Children's Evolution Camp for Children ages 5 to 14
- Introducing: Infant and Toddler Childcare!

A family-friendly opportunity for

expert lay leader training with only a weekend of time commitment. Scholarships are available to help with costs. Email [denom@austinuu.org](mailto:denom@austinuu.org) for information.

### **Save The Date!**

**November 13-15:** Facing Race National Conference, presented by Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation, Dallas, TX

**November 14-16:** Men's Retreat, UBarU near Kerrville, TX

### **Carpool Opportunities**

Looking to carpool to a UU event outside Austin? Email Denominational Connections at [denom@austinuu.org](mailto:denom@austinuu.org).



# New show “Queso Blanco” will be a hootin’ good time

by Gary Payne, creative director

**October 15 - November 2**  
**Howson Hall**

It’s sometime in the not so distant future in the Second Republic of Texas, where secession is a done deal. Liberals are runnin’ like rabbits and boot scootin’ to Queso Blanco, seeking safe passage through Austin to more friendly locales, like San Francisco and New York. Round up the usual liberals and conservatives alike—and bring them to an unforgettable evening of theater.



If you’ve always wanted to be on stage but don’t like to rehearse (much), say anything, or commit to more than one weekend of performances, here’s your chance to be window dressing and have some fun. We need extras for bar scenes in Queso Blanco. Contact Gary Payne at (512) 799-5872 or [capcitymystery@swbell.net](mailto:capcitymystery@swbell.net) ASAP, as roles could fill up fast!

We are also looking for several small

round or square tables, the size you might find in a bar, and also small chairs. Condition and/or look of the tables is not important as they will be covered with table cloths. Reach Gary Payne by the formerly listed contact info.

Our Box Office Manger, Amy Bennett, has her hands full and, after years of going it alone, could sure use some help. Here are the specifics:

The first is help with monitoring the PP phone line and entering reservations into the reservations database. The requirements are having some free time during the day and early evening to return phone calls, and access to a computer.

The second is assisting with delivering reservations lists on play performance days. This involves using the reservations database to export reservations from the database and format them into a list for the house managers and ticket takers. It requires access to a computer, basic skills with a spreadsheet program such as Excel, and free time between 5 and 6 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 12-1 p.m. Sundays.

It would be nice to have more than one person for each of these jobs, so we have some backup and depth.

For both of these jobs, we have a very good training guide with step-by-step directions, and Amy will happily provide training. You can contact her at [amybennett@austin.rr.com](mailto:amybennett@austin.rr.com).

## September Art Gallery Exhibition

**Reception: Sat. Sept. 6 6-8 p.m.**

**Gallery**

This exhibit, “Chaos and Control: A Study in Balance,” will feature the combined works of Marj Wormald and Sarah Barter.

Marj Wormald’s work is driven by a broad interest in the overlap of order and chaos and is inspired by her interest in process, abstract representation of concepts and repetition. She works in a variety of mediums including collage, paint, ink, gesso and graphite. Sarah Barter’s watercolor mosaics are a combination of what she most desires and strives to feel: happy, joyful, free, wishful, connected, hopeful, through her love of color and the playful organic nature of abstract watercolor.

Contact: [gallery@austinuu.org](mailto:gallery@austinuu.org).



**“Getting to Know UU” class**

**Sunday, October 5  
12:15-1:15 p.m.  
Rm. 15**

This class is a basic introduction to Unitarian Universalist history, as well as a history of First UU of Austin. You will also have opportunities to ask questions and share faith histories with other attendees. Childcare is provided.

**RSVP to “Path to Membership” class**

**Saturday, October 11  
9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Howson Hall**

Breakfast and childcare provided. This quarterly class is designed for those interested in becoming members. Learn about the responsibilities of membership from Rev. Barnhouse; learn about UU history and the history of this church; share faith stories with other prospective members (optional); hear about ways to connect in the church; and sign the membership book and fill out New Member paperwork, if you feel ready! Please RSVP to [membership@austinuu.org](mailto:membership@austinuu.org) or Kelsey at the visitor table.

# Explore our ministries and win big at the Connections Fair

**Sunday, September 21  
8:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Courtyard**

Come learn about church groups and enter a raffle to win a prize!

This year’s Connections Fair will be a little different than preceding ones. As in past years, different church groups and committees will have tables set up around the church courtyard, where you can stop by and learn about each group.

What’s exciting about this year is at each committee station you will receive a raffle ticket to go towards seven or so prizes that the church has collected. The following week, we will announce the winning raffle tickets in the church bulletin, which will also be posted online.

The more committees you visit, the

stronger the chance of winning a gift certificate generously donated by these local businesses, all of which have locations very near the church:

- Grand prize: Myo Massage (which also has facials, acupuncture and more!)
- Thunderbird Coffee
- Pinthouse Pizza and Brewery
- JuiceLand

Come to the Connections Fair to learn about what each committee has to offer, and the big and small ways you can get involved with them, in accordance with our mission to gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice.

A note for leaders: if you have not yet RSVP’d for a station at the Connections Fair, please contact Kelsey at [membership@austinuu.org](mailto:membership@austinuu.org) by September 10th.

## Hey kids! Don’t miss First Lego League!



In First Lego League, kids from ages 9-14 learn to build and program LEGO robots to solve challenges on a playing field. They do original research on an invention related to the year’s theme in science or technology. The emphasis is on learning and “Gracious Professionalism,” not winning the game. Kids will share what they discover with their parents and community. The season concludes with a regional robot competition and research presentation.

We will meet for two hours each Sunday after service, from Sept. 14 to about Dec. 1 (about 12 weeks). Contact: [sean.briscoe@austinuu.org](mailto:sean.briscoe@austinuu.org).

**INSIDE BOOKS PROJECT**

# Recycling books means renewed lives

by **Green Sanctuary**

“My Life is so dark I don’t know if it will ever get better. I feel like being in here makes me act like an animal. I get crazy, mean and it is terrifying. I want to do something, something so much better. Here are some of my drawings I know some of them are a little scary and even frightening but I’d like to learn to be an illustrator. Use my time while I’m here to get the skills to have a chance to support myself and be a contributor to society when I get out. Do you have any books of Becoming an Illustrator? It would sure be a huge help if your free books could help me. I’d also like a couple of really

good reads if it’s not too much trouble. These also give me something else healthy & constructive to do. I’ve heard Inside Books Project gets free books to Texas prison inmates. If that is true please help me.” [sic]

It is letters like this one that hit home. This powerful letter from an inmate is a significant reminder of how transformative knowledge can be to improve the lives of men and women behind bars. This and other terrific reads were donated by good folks like you.

The drawings he sent were very impressive, it is clear he has talent.

Now he has the tools to train that talent, and the hope that all is not as dark as it has appeared to be.

The second Monday of each month, an open group of First UU members meet for the Inside Books Project at Space 12 (3121 E. 12th St, 78702) to send free books to Texas inmates. The books you recycle truly change lives. Have books cluttering up your casa? Drop them off Sundays at our bookstore. Or call Beki & Richard at (512) 288-4080. Please help! Tax deductible receipt available.

**GREEN SANCTUARY**

# Tell our representatives your views on energy use

by **Richard Halpin**

**District 4 & 9 Candidate Forum**  
**Monday, September 22**  
**Howson Hall**  
**6:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Mayoral Forum**  
**Monday, September 29**  
**Howson Hall**  
**6:00-9:00 p.m.**

Did you know Austin faces a historic change in city governance? Austin has been divided into ten geographic districts. These ten council seats and a mayor elected ‘at large’ will make up our new city gover-

nance. Are you interested in who is running for Mayor and City Council from Districts 4 and 9, and what their energy views are? District 4 is adjoining and north of District 9, which is where First UU is located. Energy: how we get it, how much it costs, and what the impact on our weather, climate, and planet are ubiquitous questions.

A year or so ago residential energy rates were projected to rise dramatically. Our church and many others met with the mayor, council members and energy officials to find

win-win rate solutions. We were all successful. Energy rates did not reach anything like the 60-80% increases mentioned early in the discussions.

Our Green Sanctuary Ministry and several community partners are hosting two energy forums at First UU: the District 4 & 9 Candidate Forum and the Mayoral Forum. Both will allow participants to mingle and mix with candidates, and light food and drink will be available. Contact: Beki or Richard Halpin, [green@austinuu.com](mailto:green@austinuu.com) or (512) 288-4080.

## ACTION FOR JUSTICE

# Civic Academy puts Listening Campaign thoughts into action

by **Chloe Sikes**

**Austin 10-1 City Council Civic Academy; Monday, Sept. 15  
Howson Hall  
7:00-8:30 p.m.**

Action for Justice, the advocacy group under Social Action, listened to nearly 90 First UU congregants as part of our Listening Campaign this summer in June and July. UUs are well-known for their commitment to social justice, and are only slightly less well-known for our propensity to hop on our soapboxes when asked what we care about and what injustices irk us the most.

We listened to the various pas-

sions and concerns of our congregation, ranging from girls' education to death penalty abolition, all-gender recognition to recycling. Altogether, three major themes arose from what we heard: civil rights, economic justice, and environmental concern.

In order to begin to address these concerns, passions and questions, Action for Justice is hosting an Austin 10-1 City Council Civic Academy. The event will feature special guest Ryan Robinson, native Austinite and City of Austin Demographer since 1990. His presentation includes historic mapping and context of Austin's diverse population,

and the ongoing political implications as they pertain to the new 10-1 City Council structure. After Ryan's presentation and a Q&A session, the Action for Justice members will present non-partisan, issue-based information on all Mayoral and District candidates organized by the three prominent themes from our Listening Campaign.

We hope this Civic Academy can provide First UUs with the electoral tools to make their voices heard through city politics. Please contact [justice@austinuu.org](mailto:justice@austinuu.org) with any questions.

## LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

# The Anti-Racism Intensive coming soon

It's not too late to join the movement! First UU Church of Austin is joining other anti-racism organizations in Austin in the movement to dismantle systems of oppression in our hometown. To continue in this effort in a big way, a weekend-long anti-racism activism intensive workshop will be held at First UU on Sept. 5-6th.

This will be a multi-media, interactive approach to introducing such concepts such as: power and privilege, interpersonal vs. institutional racism, histories of oppression, internalized racism, and next

steps toward activism. Presenters will include: Rev. Marisol Caballero, Assistant Minister; Vic Cornell, student at Meadville Lombard School for the Ministry; Chris Jimmerson, recent graduate of Meadville Lombard; and members of the "Building the World We Dream About," Part I class.

The two-year long course, "Building the World We Dream About," utilizes a UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum to create anti-racism activists and ambassadors within our congregation to help us lead the way toward becoming a truly

multicultural church. This workshop intensive course is open to all, but is a mandatory prerequisite for those wanting to register for Part II of "Building the World We Dream About" (see pg. 13). Registration is \$40 and includes supplies, dinner on Friday, and breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Please email [mari@austinuu.org](mailto:mari@austinuu.org) for more information, or pick up a registration sheet on the Lifespan RE table in the gallery on Sundays.

Please join us for this challenging but life-changing work.



**SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE**

# Lead our committees to cultivate greater justice

by **Peggy Morton**

I want to extend an invitation to fellow social justice seekers, who have both organizational skills and want to help build more relationships within our church and community to keep us welcoming and productive.

As our church membership has grown, our group of social action volunteers has also grown and we need to change our model of service. We currently have 15 project coordinators, who organize volunteers to serve the needs of people by helping them to find food, housing, health care and human rights, and all of these coordinators work under one Social Action Chair. We need to evolve from one person chairing this committee to a council of three leaders, to divide up the organizing and increase our accomplishments.

Thus, this is an invitation for volunteer leaders with an interest in making our world a better place through social action to share their organizational talents with the Social Action Council, which will be made up of three or more people.

The selected leaders will be split up by service needs. One person will work with project coordinators who support the poor (CROP Walk, Hands on Housing, Freeze Night Shelter, Monthly First Sunday Serving Suppers and Weekly Sack Lunch). Another will work with

the project coordinators whose work involves providing health care (Drive a Senior, People's Community Clinic, Bipolar Foundation and National Alliance for Mental Illness). The final person will help those working towards policy change (Action for Justice, Legalize Human, Monthly Special Offerings, Texas UU Justice Ministry and UU Service Committee). The position may include both fundraising and advocating for the organizations designated to them.

Organizing skills needed for the Social Action Council include: tabling support in the gallery on Sundays; maintaining an electronic Social Action Calendar; writing periodic news releases and announcements for the monthly church newsletter, weekly order of service, and electronic bulletin board; creating flyers; finding and nurturing new project coordinators when vacancies arise; and staying informed about both the actions and needs of our dedicated project coordinators. All of our project coordinators do most of these tasks, but at times need extra support.

I look forward to hearing from church members who want to join our important mission to "gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives and do justice" as leaders on our Social Action Council. To show your interest, email Peggy at [socialaction@austinuu.org](mailto:socialaction@austinuu.org).

**Austin NAMI Walk**

**Saturday, Sept. 27**

**Long Center**

It's that time of year for the annual Austin NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Walk! Please join the UU Uniques, co-chaired by Karl Weston and Kathryn Govier. We'll have a table in the Gallery during September to sign you up to walk and/or donate to help change the way America handles mental illness.

We gather at 8 a.m. at the Long Center (W. Riverside at South 1st) and we will have the usual walk starting at 9 a.m. up to the Capitol and back on Congress Ave. More details at the NAMI table.

## LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

# Lifespan RE highlights

by Rev. Marisol Caballero, Assistant Minister



## Fall Lifespan Religious Education is Here! Starting Sept. 14

Get your pencils sharpened and alarm clocks set, because summer has officially come to a close. Back-to-school time means new fall religious education programming for all ages here at First UU! Our fall semester for children and youth begins September 14th, read below for descriptions of the new curricula.

### Pre-K, “Celebrating Me and My World”

By Debora Chandler Pratt

This full-year curriculum celebrates the wondrous qualities of children and the animals, objects, and people around them. Provides preschoolers with experiences and opportunities to grow in trust and caring and to develop their self-identity and sense of connectedness with all of life. ([www.rec-room.org](http://www.rec-room.org))

### K-1st Grade, “Creating Home”

By Christy Olson and Jessica York

This program helps children develop a sense of home that is grounded in faith. Participants explore the purpose and functions of a home for people and for other animals. The program describes home as a place of belonging and introduces the concept of the congregation as a “faith home.” Like a family home, a faith home offers its members certain joys, protections, and responsibilities.

### 2nd - 3rd Grade, “Faithful Journeys”

By Rev. Alice Anacheka-Nasemann and Rev. Lynn Ungar

We will equip children with language and experiences to develop and articulate a strong Unitarian Universalist faith identity, through historic and contemporary stories of Unitarian Universalist faith in action.

### 4th - 5th Grade, “Sing to the Power”

By Lynn Ungar

“Sing to the Power” affirms our Unitarian Universalist heritage of confronting “powers and structures of evil

with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.” Participants experience their own power, and understand how it can help them to be leaders. ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))

### Jr. Youth Group, “The Gospel According to The Simpsons”

By Mark I. Pinsky and Samuel F. Parvin

Jr. Youth Group will resume their weekly meetings and will engage in the series of 10 workshops outlined in the book, “The Gospel According to the Simpsons.” Each session correlates to an episode of the animated comedy that has been on the air since 1989, exploring religious themes such as heaven, hell, and prayer contained within its humor.

### Sr. Youth Group, “Our Modern Family”

By Natalie Briscoe

What makes a Modern Family? For the upcoming RE Year, the Youth will explore how families are made and maintained using the award-winning television series “Modern Family.” As youth struggle with issues of identity, family, peer group acceptance, and values clarification, the Modern Family curriculum strives to offer opportunities to explore these issues in an informed and safe environment. Engaging in modern culture, current events, and Unitarian Universalist values, youth will have an opportunity to explore their family and themselves through a variety of discussions and activities.

### “Money and Meaning” September 14, 2-4 p.m. \$10 registration fee

Co-facilitated by Karen Neeley and Rose Ann Reeser

“Money and Meaning” is a workshop that will explore the ways that we think and talk about money. Our understanding and attitudes affect the way we interact with our family, our significant others, our larger community. Our goals for this workshop include opening up to a better understanding of how our past shapes that thinking, how we can reshape our attitudes, and how money fits in to our spiritual practices. Based on the UUA’s Tapestry of

Faith curriculum, “The Wi\$dom Path: Money, Spirit, and Life,” by Patricia Hall Infante and David H. Messner. Refreshments and childcare provided.

### **F.RE.D Nights Return September 10th!**

F.RE.D. stands for Fellowship, Religious Education, and Dinner. Join us for a delicious meal at 6 p.m., followed by religious education classes from 7-9 p.m. Dinner is \$6 a person, children under twelve eat free! Course descriptions below.

#### **“Building the World We Dream About, Part II” Alternating Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. beginning Sept. 10th, \$15 registration fee**

Co-facilitated by Rev. Marisol Caballero and Vic Cornell

Recent events, such as the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO remind us that racism continues to have a strong foothold in our nation. Part II of this course goes deeper into the quest to undo racism in ourselves, our church, and our larger community. Participants will explore key concepts and practices, learn about and reflect on some important contemporary issues in Unitarian Universalism that call for multicultural competence, and invite voices of People of Color and other people marginalized by race or ethnicity from the congregation and the broader community to share some of their impressions of the congregation and its practices. Participants take a community walk and practice bringing a multicultural lens and perspective to both their observations and their reflections. Participants will engage in an extended simulation or case study to build insight and skills.

Finally, participants will be invited to commit to further initiatives and projects as they engage the congregation and its leadership in building and strengthening an anti-racist/multicultural faith community. ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)) Participation in the September 5th & 6th Anti-Racism Activism workshop is required for registration in this course. Childcare provided.

#### **“What We Choose: Ethics for Unitarian Universalists”**

#### **Alternating Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. beginning October 1st, \$15 registration fee**

By Amber Beland and Manish Mishra-Marzetti, facilitated by Dr. Andy Gerhart

We are regularly faced with moral choices, big and small. How should we respond to a tricky family or relationship situation? What is the right thing to do when faced with a dilemma at work? What is the most ethical course for a community, state, or nation to follow, and how much am I prepared to invest in advocating for that course? How does morality or ethics enter my food and eating choices? How should morality or ethics enter my consumer decisions? How do we treat others? What must I do to follow the values of my Unitarian Universalist faith tradition? ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)) Childcare provided.

#### **Austin Pride-Join the fun! Wednesday, September 3rd Rm. 13, 6 p.m.**

Austin LGBTQ Pride is just around the corner, and First UU Church of Austin is planning to have a big presence at the festival and the parade. Come join the gaiety of the planning committee over pizza as we contemplate how we can create a First UU float under the Pride theme of “Welcome to the Wonderful Land of Oz-tin!” There is no place like our church home. Contact: [mari@austinuu.org](mailto:mari@austinuu.org) for more info.

#### **First UU at Austin Pride! September 20th**

Come be a part of the fun at the festival grounds and/or the parade as First UU Church of Austin once again lets Austin know that we are loud and proud about being a welcoming and affirming church community for LGBTQ folks! Please sign up to help staff the festival booth and/or march in the parade at the Lifespan RE table in the gallery. More info at [www.austinpride.org](http://www.austinpride.org).

*See Lifespan RE’s final news highlight on page 14.*



**Senior Luncheon**

**Wednesday, Sept. 10  
12 p.m.**

**Howson Hall**

Join us for soup, salad, and dessert for only \$5. The Dirgibles Band with Mary Jane Ford, Edward Sledge, Jim Barry, and Kim Akenhead will provide musical entertainment. They will be playing eclectic and original acoustic music. RSVP to Alice Cashman at (512) 837-0988.

**Save the Date!  
Texas UU Lobby  
Day**

**Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2015  
Texas Capitol**

At the start of the Texas Legislative Session, the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry will host UUs from around the state for a UU Lobby Day to let our senators and representatives know what issues resonate with UUs.

To get involved and learn more, email Peggy at [socialaction@austinuu.org](mailto:socialaction@austinuu.org).

**SUNDAY WORSHIP**

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

**SEPTEMBER 7**

**Water Communion Service**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Bring water from a place where your spirit was refreshed this summer. If you forget, there will be water there you may use. This is a UU ingathering service practiced by congregations across the continent. This is an intergenerational service, with activities for small wiggly children to enjoy.

**SEPTEMBER 14**

**Big Gay Sunday!**

REV. MARISOL CABALLERO

Join us this Sunday as we prepare for our participation in Austin's Pride festivities by looking back to understand our involvement in the struggle for LGBTQ equality, and look ahead to how our faith is calling us to action in the days and years ahead.

**SEPTEMBER 21**

**Give Them Hope, Not Hell**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

John Murray's rowing ashore in New Jersey in September of 1770 was the beginning of Universalism on this continent. What is the Universalist element in our faith? Our good news is that no one goes to hell.

**SEPTEMBER 28**

**Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

What does sexual integrity look like? What is the history of our sexual mores?

# THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

## SEPTEMBER 7

### Why Climate Change is a Hard Problem

WITH MICHAEL TOBIS, PH.D.

The world has had a couple of generations of stability, and a global economic system has emerged that has many benefits. Meanwhile, global sustainability problems like climate change have emerged, which are technically solvable but the current world finds very difficult to cope with. This talk will outline the scope of the problem, examine why the usual solutions we have developed to our problems are so ineffective against it, and discuss how we can move forward both locally here in Texas and globally as citizens of the world.

Dr. Michael Tobis recently retired from a career as a geophysicist studying climate physics, and is moving into writing and speaking about climate and sustainability. Michael started out as an engineering student but was drawn to apply engineering skills to large problems with social importance. He received a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 1996 for a novel approach to ocean models, and has held appointments at Argonne National Laboratory, the University of Chicago, and the University of Texas. He is the founder and editor of the [planet3.org](http://planet3.org) sustainability news website, and is currently working on a book about ways to remove carbon dioxide from the environment.

## SEPTEMBER 14

### Do Our Texas State Agencies Serve and Protect Our Vulnerable Populations?

WITH ANDREA BALL

Andrea Ball, reporter for the Austin American Statesman, will describe her work as a journalist covering such programs and institutions as Child Protective Services, the foster care system, state psychiatric hospitals, and state schools for people with developmental disabilities. Given funding constraints

and the limited ability of clients of these services to advocate for themselves, how well do our state agencies protect these vulnerable groups? Andrea Ball will assess how the state is succeeding, how it's failing, and the future of efforts to provide services.

Andrea Ball has been a reporter for 21 years in several states, including New York, North Carolina, and now Texas. She's spent the last 15 years in Texas as a reporter for the Austin American Statesman where she writes about mental health, intellectual disabilities, poverty, and other issues. Her work has been widely praised as exemplary in-depth investigative reporting. Through her work she has uncovered some serious social problems and has helped shape better public policy.

## SEPTEMBER 21

### Our Broken Property Tax System and Steps for Reform

WITH BEVERLY ORTIZ

Beverly Ortiz is with Real Values for Texas, a movement of homeowners, teachers, parents, neighborhood activists, and working families taking action to expose the impact of our state's broken property tax system on homeowners, kids, and local communities. Learn more about the scope of the problem, what is already being done, and strategies for reform.

## SEPTEMBER 28

### How Austin will Solve Climate Change by 2050

WITH JOEP MEIJER

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges that mankind is facing globally, and Austin has decided to be part of the solution to fix it. The city council adopted a policy to bring our climate impact down to zero for everything and everyone in Austin by 2050. This presentation will introduce what climate change is, how it is affecting Texas, and what the

*see forum events continued on page 20*

**First Unitarian  
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(512) 452-6168

[www.austinuu.org](http://www.austinuu.org)

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## THE FORUM, *continued*

city is doing to turn the tide. All people, businesses, nonprofits, and houses of worship will be part of this journey. A major planning process is underway with broad participation of community members and technical experts. Several major city council resolutions around climate change have come up in 2014 and more will

follow in 2015—and they will affect all of our lives here in Austin. Joep Meijer will talk about his personal life and how he and his wife are what they call “carbon positive,” or in other words, how their actions today are improving climate change, not adding to it. ■