



# FIRST UU NEWS

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

## Moving on to our next steps

by **Rev. Meg Barnhouse**



As I write this column, I'm working on the physical therapy exercises for my new knee, weaning myself off of the pain medicine, and looking forward to being back at First UU to continue my work with this exciting congregation.

Before the holiday season, we had Town Meetings in which we gathered information concerning the congregation's opinions about what priorities should be as we move ahead with building plans. The information about people's input was sent out in last month's newsletter.

the highest level of "green-ness" we can afford.

When the Building Team has a plan, we will call for another set of Town Meetings to get congregational input on those. To keep costs down, all building decisions will need to be finalized before we begin, as it is the "change orders" that drive costs over budget.

The Building Team is comprised of people in the congregation with building, regulation, engineering or architecture experience. They are: Brian Moore, Ethan Love, Richard Cleary, Julie Lipton, Sylvia Pope and Christy Seals. I am grateful to them for agreeing to serve, and I'm confident that we will find our way through all the obstacles to build spaces which will uphold and inspire the congregation's mission. ■



The next step is that the Building Team will begin meeting to research the best ways to accomplish the congregation's priorities with the money we have raised. We will explore various possibilities for professionals with whom to work, regulations the city requires us to adhere to, and materials we could work with which would match

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

# Sharing my faith journey

by Carolyn Gremminger



Joseph Addison, an 18th century English writer, stated: “The grand essentials to happiness in life are something to do, something to love and something to hope for.”

This sentiment is reflective of my experience at First UU. Being a member at First UU has brought so much happiness to my life! I always seem to be involved in something interesting with the art gallery, Paradox Players, Chalice Circles, and board work. There are many things about our congregation and faith that I love, and our mission statement and values give me something to hope for in the present and the future.

On January 10, I attended the Path to Membership Class. It was an interesting and informative experience, as always. I once again met remarkable people that have much to offer our community. My favorite part is when we share our faith journey stories. And, as usual, the stories I heard resonated with my own sensibilities.

Prospective new members are invited to describe life passages of the faith and/or culture they were raised in, what they are looking for now, and what they hope to find at First UU. I concur with Michael Kersey's reflections in last year's February newsletter. By both sharing my faith

journey and listening to others, I can get to know them and start “building a more meaningful sense of community.” When I first started attending the class, I chose to not share my story. But now it seems to be helpful to be vulnerable and to share parts of my life narrative, so others can get to know me. Therefore, I would like to share part of my faith journey story with you.

I was raised in the Roman Catholic faith in Weatherford, Texas. Growing up, I attended Mass every weekend. In the 1970's in my teen years, I was an active member of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and I took part in the sacrament of Confirmation. (My patron saint is Veronica, which was a foreshadowing of my future career in social work!) During this time, the “charismatic renewal” was sweeping through the Catholic Church, and probably other denominations too. As a church community, we were asked to take our faith much more seriously and literally. I took part in small group ministry, which usually consisted of people asking for various kinds of healings. We also sought out active spiritual experiences, such as being “baptized in the Spirit.” (If you are interested in what this means, I am not shy, please ask!)

Looking back, I can see how these experiences had a profound impact on me. The group interaction made my faith experience much more personal and, as a teenager, I received much needed attention, love, and guidance from the church elders. However, by the time I graduated from high school and was ready to move to Austin for college, I did not feel that this community was taking what the Bible said “seriously enough.” I was really into a “literal” phase in my life and I began to feel the need for a more fundamentalist community. (Looking back, I also think I was afraid of leaving home.) Soon after I arrived in Austin, I joined a non-denominational charismatic church that was more “Bible based.” On Friday nights, you could find us out on Sixth Street, witnessing for Jesus.

By the time I graduated from UT, I grew disillusioned with that community. My social work program and internship at UT exposed to me to liberal thought and many other worldviews. I no longer felt a mandate to find the “one right way.” My brother also came out at this time. I was very close to him and I saw how hard and courageous it was for him to do that, to be true to himself. The church community made it clear that

*continued on next page*

*“Faith journey” from page 2*

homosexuality was not acceptable to them and condemned him as a “sinner.” That was unacceptable to me. It also began to really bother me that the power structure did not approve of my strength as a female and my desire to be in leadership. This occurred in approximately 1988. It was hard to leave, because I was close to many people in that church, but I left that community and did not feel the need to find another church for a long time.

In the intervening years, I attended 12-step meetings and programs at the Jung Society. My spiritual life came to be informed by many sources.

I have lived in Central Austin for about 14 years. I found First UU literally on a walk about 13 years ago, at a time in my life when I felt the need to be in a faith community again. Our community encourages its members and friends to “build our own theology.” Thankfully, we are not required to sign on to a dogma or creed formulated by someone else. This community provides a method to search for my own answers with others. I felt belonging immediately after I started attending First UU and am so thankful that this is my church home.

In January, I enjoyed meeting with the Nominating Commit-

tee. The Nominating Committee is tasked with suggesting future board members for the congregation’s consideration. This month, you will be hearing from some of the committee in leadership moments during Sunday services. Please consider throwing your hat in the ring for consideration for leadership on the board. I’m glad I did!

Do you have some feedback or questions for the board? Visit us at the 6 p.m. F.R.E.D. dinner every first Wednesday of the month. The monthly board meeting is held on the third Tuesday of each month in the gallery, and visitors are always welcome. ■

## DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

### **The Deep Way: A Workshop for Graduates of Leadership Experiences, Feb. 21**

Connie Goodbread will lead this workshop held at Bay Area UU Church south of Houston. More information and registration at [www.uuasouthernregion.org/events.html](http://www.uuasouthernregion.org/events.html).

### **Marching in the Arc of Justice: Re-Visiting Selma, March 5-8**

Join Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) President Peter Morales, the UUA Board of Trustees, voting rights movement veterans, and others. We will

return to Selma, AL, to affirm our solidarity with all those engaged in the ongoing struggles for human dignity, human rights, and social justice. Registration is now open! Sign up and get more info at [www.uulivinglegacy.org](http://www.uulivinglegacy.org). The church has some money to help with the cost as needed, contact Rev. Meg.

### **“Our Sacred Springs” Southwest UU Women’s (SWUW) Conference, March 6-8**

Hosted in San Marcos, TX. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Rebecca Parker, retired president of Starr King School for the Ministry. Music by Terri Hendrix. Find more information at [www.swuww.org](http://www.swuww.org).

## **Save The Date!**

**April 17-19:** Southwest UU Conference (SWUUC) Spring Conference, First UU Church of New Orleans, LA

**May 1-3:** Deep in the Heart Women’s Retreat, Kerrville, TX. More info at [www.ubaru.org](http://www.ubaru.org) under Events.

**May 15-17:** Heart of Texas Men’s Retreat, Kerrville, TX. More info at [www.ubaru.org](http://www.ubaru.org) under Events.

## **Carpool Opportunities**

Looking to carpool to a UU event outside Austin? Email us at [denom@austinuu.org](mailto:denom@austinuu.org) and Margaret Borden will attempt to pair you with someone to share the ride.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

# Leadership: how we do what we say we will do

Michelle Obama said, “Service is a limitless opportunity, it is the reason why we breathe.” Service as a church leader on the board or a committee is how we do what we say we will do: nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice.

In February, we’ll hear stories from four individuals who have served in leadership positions. Julie Paasche, Michael West, Brendan Sterne, and Carolyn Gremminger will tell us how their lives were impacted by their service with First UU. These stories will invite us all to consider how the act of leading en-

ables us to grow as individuals while making connections with fellow members.

The Nominating Committee is currently working to identify new leaders to fill critical positions on the board and committees. Perhaps listening to a Leadership Moment on Sunday will resonate with you, and alert you to the opportunity for service. If you feel the pull of leadership or have special talents that you’d like to offer, there are many ways to lead within our community, and it’s easy to learn what that entails!

We are inviting interested church

members to fill out a Leadership Interest Form, and to talk to us in the gallery between services during the month of February. Nominating Committee members will also be available during the Wednesday F.R.E.D. dinner on Feb. 4, along with other board members. Or simply shoot us an email: [nomcom@austinuu.org](mailto:nomcom@austinuu.org). Someone will get back to you promptly.

The Nominating Committee is made up of Philip Hastings, Michael Kersey, Lisa Carrell, Susan Thomson, and Elizabeth Gray.

## TEXAS UU JUSTICE MINISTRY

# New date set for Legislative Action Day

**Tuesday, February 17**  
**Texas Capitol**  
**8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.**

To avoid crowds at the Capitol for the recently scheduled inaugural events, the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry has rescheduled its Legislative Action Day to Feb. 17. Anyone wanting to promote UU values is welcome to join us.

Twenty Austin UUs had planned to attend previously along with 65 others from around Texas, and we’re hoping the new date will open this event to even more politically-minded UUs.

Austinites and those arriving the night before will start our day at the

Capitol at 8:30 a.m. with a training to conduct advocacy meetings with our legislators by role-playing with Austin UU Karen Neeley, who’s worked as a lobbyist for community banks for 25 years. Our fellow UUs traveling by buses from Houston and Dallas will receive their training en route.

We’ll gather as a big group at 10 a.m. to hear an overview of what to expect from the 84th legislative session from Representative Donna Howard and Senator Royce West regarding our main issues: reproductive justice, Medicaid expansion, and economic justice. Then we’ll caucus together.

We’ll meet with legislators in

groups for scheduled appointments from 11:45 a.m.-3 p.m., with a break from 1-1:30 p.m., where we’ll join Texas Freedom Network. They will be hosting a Faith Action Advocacy Day for LGBTQ Equality, thus introducing us to a wider range of like-minded faith activists and providing us an opportunity for media coverage. We’ll reconvene from 3:30-4:30 p.m. to debrief and plan next steps together.

To join us, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lykb773> for more details and to sign up by Saturday, Feb. 7. For more info, visit us at the Social Action table in the gallery after one of the Sunday worship services or email Peggy at [socialaction@austinuu.org](mailto:socialaction@austinuu.org).

# Celebrate Chris' ordination into UU ministry



I am so grateful to this congregation for voting to ordain me during the recently held congregational meeting. Even more so, I am so thankful that this is the church that provided the

spiritual home in which I first felt that strong tug, that calling to the Unitarian Universalist ministry.

Folks from this church encouraged me to enter seminary and the ministerial for-

mation process. Having the opportunity to serve as one of your assistant ministers is a blessing beyond words. It very much feels like I am in the place I am supposed to be in this world.

I invite you all to the ordination service on Sunday, February 22, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. We will serve a full dinner and have a wonderful celebration afterwards.

I want to send many, many thanks to the team who have planned this special evening: Gillian Redfearn, Rev. Mari Caballero, Sherry Coombes, and Wayne Bockmon, as well as all of the folks who have offered to volunteer that evening. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

## Austin Presence Group

**February 5 & 19**

**6:30-8 p.m.**

**Rm. 13B**

Each week, we'll start with several meditations from Mark Nepo's "Book of Awakening." Then we'll spend some time on Eckert Tolle's "Uncourse" and also tune in to Eckhart Tolle TV. A \$5 donation is requested in order to support the church.

Come light another candle to illuminate your understanding along the spiritual path called life. Contact: Joe Linsalata, (512) 327-5000 or [Linsalata@austin.rr.com](mailto:Linsalata@austin.rr.com).

## Spring into Action—coming in April!

This year, the Spring Into Action project will focus on environmental justice. More details to come. Contact Luther Elmore, [churchwideproject@austinuu.org](mailto:churchwideproject@austinuu.org).

### *Ordination Service and Celebration*

*The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin invites you to the ordination of*

*Christopher James Jimmerson  
to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry*

*Sunday, February 22, 2015 | 6:00 p.m.*

*Dinner and reception immediately following. Religious professionals are invited to gather at 5:15 to robe and process.*

*Childcare provided. Please send an email to [childcare@austinuu.org](mailto:childcare@austinuu.org) to reserve.*

*Please RSVP to [CJJordination@gmail.com](mailto:CJJordination@gmail.com).*

**“Getting to Know UU” class**

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

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

**February Seniors Luncheon**

**Wednesday, February 11**  
**Howson Hall**  
**12 p.m.**

A scene from “Love Letters,” the February show from Paradox Players, will be performed as this month’s program.

Soup, salad, and dessert will be served for \$5. Please RSVP to Alice Cashman: (512) 837-0988.

**PARADOX**



Paradox Players presents  
**“Love Letters”**

**by Gary Payne, creative director**

**Written by A.R. Gurney**  
**Directed by Gary Payne**

**February 6-22, 2015**  
**Howson Hall**  
**Fri & Sat at 8 p.m.,**  
**Sun at 3 p.m.**

This two-character gem of a play takes you on a funny and emotional ride through the lives of a free-spirited, unstable artist and a straight-laced, dutiful lawyer turned politician. These lifelong friends share their hopes and ambitions, dreams and disappointments, and victories and defeats, through notes, cards and letters read by the actors on a bare stage. It examines the “what ifs” in life and celebrates the

dying art of writing letters.

A different pair of actors, mostly First UU members will perform each weekend, including Ed Nichols and Bobbie Erb (first weekend), Gary Bennett and Sue Bilich (second weekend), and Ethan Love and Laura Wood (closing weekend). A reception with the cast will follow each Friday performance.

Tickets:  
 \$20 Adults  
 \$15 Seniors  
 \$10 Students/return attendees

Champagne and chocolates will be served after the Friday performances and the Saturday, February 14 performance. Make reservations at (512)

744-1495 or at [www.paradoxplayers.org](http://www.paradoxplayers.org).



Love Letters is the perfect play for the Valentine season. Make your reservation early for this heartwarming and hilarious passage through time.

Time magazine called it “Gurney’s finest work, and one of the four or five best American plays of the ‘80s.”

## PARADOX PLAYERS

# Celebrating another successful year of community theatre

article by Susan Thomson

photos by Michael Jones & Tomas Rodriguez

Paradox Players hosted a party on January 10 to celebrate another successful year of community theater offered at First UU, and to thank the many people who have had a part in that success. Approximately 60 people braved the cold, wet weather to share a delicious meal of Middle Eastern food and enjoy a preview of our next show.



*Phil Richardson and Jill Wiggins*

Our church's long-range plan includes the establishment of First UU as an arts church. Paradox Players is delighted to play an integral role in that effort through the three shows produced every year, as well as Reader's Theater, a monthly opportunity for people who enjoy reading and discussing plays to do so with no rehearsal or memorizing lines. This year Paradox Players is providing over \$5,000 of income to the church through our ticket sales. We're able to do this because First UU generously

gives us space for our performances.

The First UU community supports our efforts in two other essential ways. Close to 100 volunteers provide a wide variety of support to Paradox Players during the course of a season, making it second only to First UU's social justice ministry in the number of people involved in its mission. Paradox Players has an organizational chart that lists 40 different opportunities to help with productions. If you want to help produce the shows you could assist with reading scripts, directing, building stage sets, gathering props, designing and making costumes, and working with lights and sound. You can even audition for parts. You can help with public relations and outreach, graphic design, planning and hosting opening night galas and cast parties, and recruiting nonprofit groups to host benefit performances. There are opportunities to assist with the box office and ticket sales, even maintaining a database, and handling concessions and other front of house activities that theaters require.

Many First UU members have been volunteering for years but we always welcome new folks. Get more information about Paradox Players and volunteer opportunities through the "Get Involved" section of our website, [www.paradoxplayers.org](http://www.paradoxplayers.org). You will find that Paradox Players

volunteers are a great group to spend time with!

First UU members also support Paradox Players by attending our performances. Last season's attendance totaled 1,800. Our show with the largest audience in Paradox history was "Six Dance Lessons" in February 2014. It drew over 700 people. We consider the congregation to be our primary audience, and most of our season subscribers are church members. Our mission is to produce plays and sponsor readings that lift the spirit and provoke thought. And we try to select plays that help us realize the First UU mission to "gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice."



*Jim and Sherry Coombes, and Gary Payne*

If you have not attended a Paradox Players show, now is your chance. More information about our next show is on page 6. Thanks to everyone who is a member of First UU for your support.

## SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

### Rally for immigration reform

**Wednesday, February 11  
11 a.m.-1 p.m.**

#### Texas Capitol steps

Join UUs as we partner with Reform Immigration Texas Alliance and Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition for a rally on the Capitol steps. They will meet with legislators throughout the morning before the rally in support of protecting in-state tuition for immigrant students, demanding accountability on border enforcement, and advancing the fight for drivers' licenses.

Let's show up in solidarity to rally for the inherent worth and dignity of our immigrant community both living in the Austin area and others who will travel from around Texas. For more info, contact Peggy at [socialaction@austinuu.org](mailto:socialaction@austinuu.org), or visit with fellow UU social activists in the gallery after Sunday worship services.

### February Art Exhibition

Fiber artist Joanna Johnson will be exhibiting in the church gallery for the month of February. A reception for the artist will be held at the end of the exhibit on Saturday, Feb. 28 from 6-8 p.m. You are cordially invited to attend.

## “No Sanctuary” screening shows the plight of immigrant families in detention centers

**Friday, February 27  
Howson Hall  
7 p.m.**

“No Sanctuary: Big Business and Family Detention” is a new documentary which chronicles the return of immigrant family detention in the United States. The Social Action Committee will screen the film on Feb. 27.

This Texas-made film follows our government's response to refugees and migrants: the creation and expansion of new private, for-profit prisons for women and children in remote, isolated areas of the southwest, including both Karnes City and Dilley. Reversing the progress of the immigrant rights movement and his own previous decisions, President Obama has surpassed the Bush administration in expanding the use of detention centers for refugee families.

This history is portrayed and told

by the people who live it. Their stories shine light on the growing grassroots movement fighting to close these family prisons and welcoming our neighbors with compassion. View the preview here: <http://youtu.be/Hgvi0GhrAtY>

After the 40-minute documentary, filmmaker Matthew Gossage and Grassroots Leadership Project Director Cristina Parker will offer a Q&A and discussions about next steps.

Donations to see the film will go to Grassroots Leadership, a nonprofit group fighting for-profit immigrant detention and coordinating the First UU visitation program to visit political asylum-seeking women in the nearby Hutto Detention facility.

Plan to join us for the screening, popcorn, and tea. For more info, contact Peggy at [socialaction@austinuu.org](mailto:socialaction@austinuu.org).

### Great news for the church!

First UU has been recognized as Outstanding Partner of the Year with the Travis County Voter Registrar's Office, for sponsoring and hosting the Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training every Saturday from March 2013 through October 2014. Approximately 2,000 people were deputized in our church.

In addition, our own Mary Patrick received the title of Volunteer of the Year from the Registrar's Office! Con-

gratulations to her and to all that made VDR trainings possible.



*Bruce Elfant presents the church's award to Rev. Mari Caballero and Peggy Morton.*



**ACTION FOR JUSTICE****Following immigration policy in 2015 with a special guest speaker**

**Monday, February 16**  
**Rm. 13**  
**7-8:30 p.m.**

Natalia sat across the room and logged on to her University of Texas financial aid portal. “Ms. Sikes!” she called, “I got a scholarship! And a living assistance grant! What does that mean?”

I crossed the room and bent toward the computer screen. Natalia, a Texas resident since she and her family emigrated from Mexico when she was three years old, would be able to attend UT as an in-state student with enough aid to make it financially feasible. We spent the rest of the after-school period chatting

about housing options and crunching tuition numbers based on credit hours. Three years later, she has stayed on track to graduate with a degree in advertising.

Immigration is a defining feature of Texas history and our political battles. The flood of unaccompanied minors from Mexico and Central America across the Texas border this past summer demanded the attention of many in the U.S. to examine our history, international policies, and our response to those seeking sanctuary. While immigration policy is a federal issue, states have always found ways to enact xenophobic, racist, exclusionary, and exploitative policies against immigrants within

their borders. As we enter the 2015 Texas Legislative session, the case is no different.

Action for Justice will track policies in the Texas Legislature regarding immigration, a major issue from our summer listening campaign. At our meeting on February 16, guest speaker Alejandro Caceres, Executive Director of Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition, will educate us on what to expect during the legislative session and how we can stand in solidarity with immigrants and undocumented residents of Texas like Natalia. Please contact Chloe at [justice@austinuu.org](mailto:justice@austinuu.org) for more details.

**MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING****Planned Parenthood**

At Sunday services on February 8, congregants will have an opportunity to support our local Planned Parenthood health centers with our monthly special offering.

Funding for the historically unwavering health care provider remains a crucial issue in 2015, as Texas legislators continue to find new ways to divert state funds from the organization. According to an article released Jan. 28 by the Austin

American-Statesman, “A [Texas Senate] budget proposal released this week says money for a breast and cervical cancer screening program for low-income women must first go to public entities that provide those types of health assessments. The first-draft budget, filed on Jan. 27, calls for a tiered funding methodology for the Breast and Cervical Cancer Services that “prioritizes distribution and reallocation” of funds to state,

county and local community health clinics, as well as federally qualified health centers and Baylor College of Medicine clinics, over “non-public entities” like Planned Parenthood.”

Planned Parenthood estimates that at least 3,000 women will immediately lose access to breast and cervical cancer screenings throughout the state. Let’s step in where our representatives are faltering and show our support for women’s health.

## LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## Lifespan RE highlights

by Rev. Marisol Caballero, Assistant Minister



**Can't make it to F.R.E.D. nights on Wednesdays? Try Sunday Seminars! Feb. 1, Howson Hall, 1-2:30 p.m.**

Sunday Seminars take place on the first Sunday each month. This multi-track adult Religious Ed. experience has options in areas such as leadership development, spiritual practices, and UU identity development. No prior registration required. A simple lunch will be available in Howson Hall from noon-1 p.m. for \$5 (available to-go for Forum attendees) and childcare will be provided. Please check each monthly newsletter for detailed information on Sunday Seminars!

**Spiritual Practices Track: "A Practice of Gratitude," facilitated by Carolyn Gremminger and Chris Jimmerson**

Join the current First UU president Carolyn Gremminger along with former First UU president, current Assistant Minister, and soon-to-be ordained Chris Jimmerson in developing your very own spiritual practice of gratitude. Carolyn and Chris have both developed practices that have brought deeper meaning to their busy lives. This workshop will invite attendees to do the same by trying on gratitude practices for themselves.

**UU Identity Development Track: "Long Strange Trip" film screening and discussion, facilitated by Luther Elmore**

"Long Strange Trip" is a six-part video series by Ron Cordes that explores the history of Unitarian and Universalist thought and practice from the early, liberal strands in faith at the beginning of the Christian era to what we know today as Unitarian Universalism. ([uua.org](http://uua.org))

**Faith Formation Track: "Neuroscience for Your Daily Life," facilitated by Bruce Naylor**

Much progress has been made in understanding how brains work thanks to a worldwide community of 100,000 neuroscience researchers. As a consequence, a

major paradigm shift is underway in our understanding of human nature. This five-session course will give a very broad, accessible tour of neuroscience with a focus on improving your understanding of yourself and others from a very different perspective.

**Healing Waters: A Multicultural Approach to Decolonizing the Climate Change Movement Eco-Justice Conference in New Orleans, March 13-15**

What is the connection between racism, classism, and environmental devastation? How are the environments of poor people—and people of color in particular—affected by systemic racial oppression? What is the role of communities of faith in the face of environmental devastation? This Eco-Justice Gathering addresses how the intersections of race, class, gender, and immigration status are shaping the growing climate change movement. Using an intentional multi-cultural approach, this conference offers opportunities for learning and networking with local NOLA community organizers, indigenous peoples, religious professionals, and environmental activists. Hosted at the Center for Ethical Living and Social Justice Renewal in New Orleans, LA.

**F.R.E.D. Nights Every Wednesday, dinner 6-7 p.m. (\$6)**

Join us for F.R.E.D. (Fellowship, Religious Education, and Dinner) every Wednesday.

**"What We Choose: Ethics for Unitarian Universalists," facilitated by Dr. Andy Gerhart Alternating Wednesdays 7-9 p.m. \$15 registration fee**

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? ([uuu.org](http://uuu.org)) Childcare provided.

**“Reclaiming Prophetic Witness,” Book Reading  
Alternating Wednesdays (last meeting Feb. 4)  
7-8:30 p.m.**

Do you believe there is a vital public role for religious people to play in the public square? Do you believe that this role belongs exclusively to religious conservatives? How might religious liberals embrace that role? How might we use our own religious language to make prophetic witness? Or should we?

Each year since 2010 the UUA has selected a Common Read. A Common Read invites participants to read and discuss the same book in a given period of time. A committee selects the UU Common Read based on nominations from UUs across the country.

The Common Read for 2015 is “Reclaiming Prophetic Witness,” by Paul Rasor. You are invited to join in the discussion of this book on F.R.E.D. nights, facilitated by Susan Thomson. As Texas gears up for another legislative session, this is a perfect opportunity to give us the framework for exploring together how we might embrace our mission and our end related to practicing our liberal religious values in the public arena. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at our bookstore.

**Second Tuesday Enneagram Group  
Feb. 10, 7-9 p.m.**

Co-facilitated by Rob Feeney, Kathryn Ehlert, and Carolyn Gremminger, the Enneagram is a system for understanding personality types. Many have found it a useful tool for self-inquiry, relationship-building, and spiritual exploration. We meet the second Tuesday of each month to provide information about the Enneagram and to share our experiences using it to transform our lives. The study group is informal and you are welcome to attend as your schedule and inclination allow. Each session we will provide a brief overview of the Enneagram and address questions from those new to the system. Members of the group who have studied the Enneagram will share more information and experiences with it, then there will be time for more sharing and open discussion. All are invited to attend.

**Annual Valentine-Making Party  
Feb. 15, Howson Hall**

Time to get your craft on! This annual multigenerational event is a ton of fun, and you don't have to be an artist either! Howson Hall will be a card-making factory during coffee hour, with every kind of art supply you can imagine. Create beautiful, unique cards to give to your loved ones, or drop them in the basket which we will take to the patients at Dell Children's Hospital. Join us in extending the love a day later and spreading it to kids who could use some cheering up. We will have sweet treats as well as our usual coffee hour fare. See you there!

**First Ever People of Color, Latina/o  
Gathering at First UU!  
Feb. 17, 6-7:30 p.m.**

If you identify as a person of color, Latina/o, bi-cultural, or multi-cultural (non-white) you are invited to join this fledgling group of UUs to support one another in a predominantly white denomination! This historic first meeting will be to meet one another, as oftentimes it may feel like we are the only or one of the few in the room, but it will also be to brainstorm and get a sense of what the group will desire our vision/purpose(s) will be. Many such groups meet in every corner of the Unitarian Universalist map, but this will be the first of its kind in Central Texas! If you are a white-identified person and would like to demonstrate your support of this group and of anti-racism and multiculturalism in general, please refrain from attending this meeting, but rather email Rev. Mari at: [marisol.caballero@austinuu.org](mailto:marisol.caballero@austinuu.org) for several ideas on ways you can be an ally!

**Our Whole Lives (OWL)  
7-9 and 10-12 grade**

We will be proudly offering OWL (Our Whole Lives), a comprehensive and progressive sex education curriculum, to children in grades 7-9 and 10-12 this semester. The classes will meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m., beginning March 4 and ending June 4, as well as two or three lock-ins (TBA). More information on registration and classes will be available by emailing [marisol.caballero@austinuu.org](mailto:marisol.caballero@austinuu.org) and by attending the mandatory parent orientation on Feb. 25, 7 p.m. Registration forms are on the RE table in the gallery. Registration fee is \$30, which will cover the cost of food for the lock-ins. Scholarships available. ■

## GROUNDS COMMITTEE

### Spring Equinox Auction Sign-Up

Spring is coming—and so is the First UU Spring Equinox Auction! Exciting events and sought-after services will be auctioned to the highest bidder. Here's how it will work:

During the month of February, groups and individuals will plan the experiences they wish to sponsor. Some examples: musical events, dinners, game nights, vacation stays, classes and tours. Or you may offer a service of some kind: massage, organizing, or home fix-it, to name a few.

Sign up to offer events/services with auction organizers online or on Sundays starting February 1 in the church gallery. More info at [www.equinoxauction.org](http://www.equinoxauction.org).

Bidding will be held online or in person March 8-22.

### Legalize Human meetings

Legalize Human monthly meetings will now take place at Genuine Joe's on 2001 West Anderson Lane, from 6-7:30 p.m. The next meeting is Thursday, Feb. 5. Contact Cavan Ó Raghallaigh: [human@](mailto:human@)

# Here comes the sun!

by Carol Edwards

Members of the First UU Grounds Committee enjoyed the sun while working in the gardens on January 17. It was the first warm and sunny day after 11 days of cold and wet weather. The original January 10 work day was cancelled due to wet, freezing conditions. Workers included Lynn Adams, Dale and Pat Bulla, Luther Elmore, Joseph Hunt, and myself.

Lynn worked in the sanctuary garden, adding new plants and rescuing a volunteer oak that would grow too big for the area. Other workers trimmed frost-bitten perennials all across the back behind the playground, the memorial garden, and along the south back side of the church. Dale trimmed and cut back some overgrown perennials and shrubs with his efficient little saw. Pat gathered clippings while Luther and Joseph trimmed, raked, and hauled leaves. I think their leaf pile was as large as the big brush pile. I sat this one out on the sidelines cheerleading and running the wheelbarrow to dump the trimming due to bad seasonal allergies.

In checking the areas needing to be worked, I noted that the landscaping and lawn around the patio on the south side were neatly mowed, trimmed, edged and raked. This is thanks to the church's commercial lawn service, Chris Carter and her Clean Air Lawn Care Service crew. And more thanks go to Rose Ann Reeser who comes on her own schedule to water and offer tender loving care to the potted plants on the patio.

So next time you are at the church, take time to enjoy the landscaping, especially with spring on the way. We were the first church in Austin to go green by planting native shrubs, and now many churches, commercial, and government properties have followed our lead.

You too can join in the fun and come out for a Saturday work day. The next one is scheduled for February 14 at 9 a.m. Yes, that's Valentine's Day, but the plants don't know that. Watch for announcements in the church bulletin or contact me at [grounds@austinuu.org](mailto:grounds@austinuu.org).



*Grounds Day with the pulled trimmings "post mortem," with Lynn Adams, Luther Elmore, and Dale and Pat Bulla.*

## HEALTHY RELATIONS MINISTRY

**Advice from Covenant Corner**

Dear Covenant:

Last Sunday I know I should've said something to shift the tone of a conversation, but I just felt awkward so I said nothing.

I was part of a small group discussing the complexities of going green. Someone said, "Oh come on, do you really think it makes any difference if we all drive hybrid cars? Don't you know how bad the carbon footprint is on one Prius battery? Prius drivers just want to feel superior."

What started out being an interesting and reasonable exchange of ideas turned into something hurtful. I actually felt kind of sick! I wanted to stop it but I couldn't find the

right words, so I just left.

– *At A Loss For Words*

Dear At A Loss:

You have the right instincts! Trying to stop hurtful interactions is a vital part of our covenant. Sometimes simply voicing how we're feeling is a good way to start. You could say, "I'm feeling really awkward right now. I'm sure you didn't mean that to sound harsh or condescending. It made my stomach hurt a little bit, though."

Or you could try, "I get really uncomfortable when anybody says 'Don't you know,' because it sounds like a kind of attack. Can we practice disagreeing with curiosity

and respect as we've promised in our covenant?" Or, "It sounds like you're passing judgment on a whole group of individuals, and I'm sure you're more reasonable than that." It may feel awkward in the moment when you speak up, but know that you're helping yourself and your friends grow.

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

Sincerely,

*Healthy Relations Covenant*

**Caring Ministry takes on new chair**

My name is Wendy Kuo and I'm the new chair for the Caring Ministry at First UU. When I was pregnant with my daughter 10 years ago, a friend from church approached me and asked if people at church can help me by bringing meals. I politely declined and told her that my husband and I will be just fine! It turned out that I had complications with my delivery, and my daughter Mei Yin was in the intensive care for 10 days. My first C-section got infected, and after my second surgery, I was immobile for about a month. I was lucky that my friend from church signed me up to receive "Mommy Meals" even after I foolishly declined

her kind offer. The meals became a lifesaver for my husband and me, and we are still very grateful by everyone's kindness. Lesson learned: everyone needs help sometime in their life.

The Caring Ministry at First UU Austin is here to help you with the following four areas:

- Transportation: doctor's appointments, attending Sunday service, etc.
- Meals: for families with newborns and families with illness
- Hospital visits
- Memorial services: providing food for the reception.

In order to serve our large congrega-

tion, we need a lot of volunteers. Please let me know if you are interested in helping in one of these areas. Contact me at (512) 372-9813 or [wendyykuo@gmail.com](mailto:wendyykuo@gmail.com).

I'd like to say thank you to the following people for their great work: Natalie Freeburg for taking Mr. and Mrs. Happel to October's senior lunch, and also giving rides to Stephanie Canada to attend Sunday services; Joseph Hunt, John Keohane, and Mary Patrick for visiting Al Sanders in the hospital; and Rose Ann Reeser, Lynda West, Kathryn Govier, and Natalie Freeburg for providing meals to Barbara and George Denny every week.

**Eclectic Folk Jam***Friday, February 13**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). Love songs are welcomed to celebrate Valentine’s Day.

**UU/Quaker Singalong***Saturday, February 28**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).

**SUNDAY WORSHIP****SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM****FEBRUARY 1****Blessing and Being Blessed: Animal Blessing Service**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

The ancient Celtic festival of Brigid celebrated the fertility of the earth and its animals. We celebrate our animal companions today in this intergenerational service. Bring your good tempered and well-behaved animals, and if you love an animal that might be overwhelmed by being at church in person, please bring a picture. The First UU of Austin Intergenerational Choir and Band will serenade all of the lovely pets.

**FEBRUARY 8****Want What You Have**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

The Tenth Commandment has to do with greed and desire. How do we know what is enough? Huge engines of commerce in our culture are engaged in making us want things we don’t have. How do we develop the soul force to live with a sense of “enough-ness?”

**FEBRUARY 15****The Book of Love**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Let’s talk about love on this Valentine’s weekend. How can we learn to love one another and this planet on which we live? How can we get better at receiving love? The Adult Choir will perform songs of Stephin Merritt and The Magnetic Fields.

**FEBRUARY 22****Even Among Us/  
Expect the Unexpected**

GUEST WORSHIP LEADERS

**Guest first service: “Even Among Us”**

We don’t always think we’re anyone special, or even that we know anyone too special, but friends, nothing could be farther from the truth.

**Guest second service: “Expect the Unexpected”** Inspired by a traditional Zen story and the musings of a San Antonio Baptist preacher, worship will focus on the transformation available to us when we welcome the unexpected.

Jordan Price will be in to share his music

# THE FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

## FEBRUARY 1

### **The Texas Legislature is Back: Preview and Outlook**

WITH ROSS RAMSEY

The Texas Legislature is back for a 140-day regular session that began January 13, but the real work of the session is just getting started. Between now and adjournment on June 1, a two-year state budget and thousands of other bills will be introduced, debated, and acted upon or left to die by the 31 members of the Texas Senate and 150-member Texas House. With a new cast of statewide elected leaders in place, including the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and state comptroller, two hallmarks of this session are uncertainty and inexperience, except in the office of veteran House Speaker Joe Straus.

Here to provide expert insight regarding the process and the politics of this 84th session of the state legislature is Ross Ramsey, executive editor and co-founder of The Texas Tribune. Before joining the Tribune, Ross was editor and co-owner of Texas Weekly for 15 years. Before that, he reported for the Houston Chronicle from its Austin bureau and for the Dallas Times Herald.

## FEBRUARY 8

### **Envisioning America's Future Requires an Unflinching View of the Past**

WITH CHRIS TOMLINSON

Chris Tomlinson, author of the New York Times bestseller "Tomlinson Hill," talks about his research into his family's slaveholding past and role in racial oppression, while examining the direct impact on the descendants of the former slaves. He will talk about the myths taught by southerners and how they lead to today's racial misunderstandings and conflicts like those seen in Ferguson, Mo. and New York. But he also finds hope in the millennial generation, which has the lowest rate of racism of any American generation tested.

Chris Tomlinson is an author, filmmaker and journalist living in Austin, Texas. He writes a twice-weekly column for the Houston Chronicle and previously was the super-

visory correspondent for The Associated Press in Austin, responsible for political and state government reporting from 2011-2014.

His book "Tomlinson Hill" chronicles the history of two Tomlinson families, one black and one white, who trace their history to a Central Texas slave plantation. He is also the producer of "Tomlinson Hill: Are We Equal Yet," an award-winning documentary film that examines how race still shapes the community where his family's slave plantation was located.

## FEBRUARY 15

### **The Office of the Police Monitor: How We Serve the Larger Community**

WITH MARGOT FRASIER

Nationally there is much public attention being paid to law enforcement and the relationship between police and the public. Current questions focus on whether police are responding to all of our citizenry effectively and with respect and restraint. How often and in what contexts is there a perception of excessive use of force? What recourse do citizens or communities have when they believe they have been improperly treated by police?

Some cities like Austin have developed an office which provides some oversight of police activities, which gives the citizenry a chance to discuss their concerns about police conduct with a public official. Margo Frasier is the Police Monitor for the City of Austin. She will discuss her roles and responsibilities as Police Monitor and her efforts to ensure police accountability to the public and good police/community relations.

Margo Frasier brings over 35 years of experience in criminal justice work to the City of Austin's Office of the Police Monitor. From 1997 through 2004, Ms. Frasier served as Sheriff of Travis County, Texas and she is the only woman to hold this office. She had started as a Sheriff's Deputy more than two decades earlier. Frasier earned praise for her leadership in implementing community policing and improving the jail system.

*see final forum notice on page 16*

**First Unitarian  
Universalist  
Church of Austin**

(512) 452-6168

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

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Universalist  
Church of Austin**

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## THE FORUM, *continued*

### **FEBRUARY 22** **The Detention and Deportation of Asylum- seeking Women and Children in Texas**

WITH CRISTINA PARKER

Cristina Parker is the immigration projects director at Grassroots Leadership in Austin. She works with communities in Texas and organizers across the country in combined efforts to end the detention and deportation of asylum-seeking women and children inside privately owned for-profit prisons. Prior

to joining Grassroots Leadership, she worked with the Border Network for Human Rights and the Reform Immigration for Texas Alliance on projects that included documenting human rights abuses in border communities and fighting against Arizona-copycat legislation in Texas, among others.

Originally from El Paso, Cristina attended the University of Missouri where she earned degrees in journalism and political science. Cristina will be joined by Paul Pfeifer, co-chair of the visitation program at the Karnes Detention Center. ■