



FIRST UU NEWS

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

A New Year's building update

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



What has been done

We dreamed of the spaces we wanted for ourselves, for our children, and for the people who are future members of this church. We had deep talks about whether to buy in another location or stay here at the end of Grover Avenue. Deciding to stay, we began and are continuing to work hard to raise the money through our six-year capital campaign. Even though we didn't hit our dream goal, it was a triumph nevertheless, with pledges totaling more than five times our annual giving. That is as much as the boldest consultants will project for a capital campaign.

We put together a building team from names given by the congregation and from members who have experience with building projects, from design through permitting through construction. After interviewing a group of architectural firms, the team chose to work with McKinney/York (www.mckinneyyork.com). This firm was budget conscious, they listened well, they spoke both in concepts and practicalities, and they knew

Unitarian Universalism and its proud architectural history.

As part of their talk about practicalities, they let us know that, with a building of this vintage, we were bound to run into some hitherto unseen problems. We were dismayed but not surprised, then, when the engineers combed through our site and our building last month to make an in-depth analysis of what they had to work with and found that the roof on the RE wing rests on walls that had never been meant to be load-bearing walls. The stress of that extra weight over many years is buckling those walls, which must be shored up. This cost will take 120,000 dollars of our budget. One possible solution would be to build a structural frame just inside our concrete block walls that will support the roof and face it with sheetrock, which will provide a new interior finish for the RE rooms. This and other elements are crucial for the safety of adults and children in the building, and for code compliance.

All in all, the practical "must-do" elements like shoring up the RE wing, replacing water pipes which are

too narrow, sprinklering the sanctuary, making the bathrooms ADA compliant, changing the way the air in the sanctuary is vented, doing asbestos abatement, strengthening fire walls, and other such unglamorous but necessary work will take nearly half a million of our budget, leaving us about 2.7 million dollars to work with for the rest of the project.

What will be done

What can we get done for that? What "scope of work" can we reasonably expect? That's what we are trying to figure out. Meeting as many of your desires from our Town Hall Meetings last year is our task, and the good news is that we will be able to address many of the priorities within the budget you have given us. There will be good new ADA compliant bathrooms. We know that having an upgraded, workable kitchen was at the top of everyone's list. Also high on the list was expanding the sanctuary to enable church growth. A new entryway and expanded gallery area will ease the flow on Sunday mornings. The building team and the architects' team are now hard at work

continued on page 3

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Managing life in a topsy-turvy world

by **Angela Smith**



As we enter this new year, the world around us seems all topsy-turvy. Truth is, the world has always been in some state of chaos. We just didn't have so many daily reminders. The news we used to get from the home-delivered newspaper, Walter Cronkite, and the Huntley-Brinkley Report just a few decades ago now comes from thousands of news outlets—ranging from Fox News and CNN, to the BBC and Al Jazeera, with 24-hour commentary on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, personal blogs, and other social media. The news and opinions keep coming; the flow of information and misinformation is non-stop. And rather than calming us, it feeds our frenzy. For those of us who consider ourselves news junkies, it's not always a happy situation.

I don't usually make New Year's resolutions; it's too easy to break them. But this year, I've decided (in addition to keeping my Cheeto fast until we can recognize our staff with a salary increase—or, at the very least, a generous bonus during the year) that I'm not going to let this topsy-turvy world get to me. I loved the “gospel of reversal” sermon Meg preached last month to accompany the outstanding performance of Bach's “Magnificat” by the

First UU of Austin Choir directed by our talented Brent Baldwin. Like Meg, I too long for a world where not so much focus is placed on the best and the worst, but fairer treatment of the middle and mediocre. Since practically everyone I know including myself fits in that category, I could easily live in such a world.

This year, I'm going to put into practice my own little “reversal” strategy. Every time I see or hear something negative, I'm going to think of something good. And I'm going to start with the good things I see as a member of this wonderful church. I'm going to think about Wayne Bockman and his generous challenge grant of \$5,000 to help us raise \$50,000 to meet our budget, and the generosity of our church members who met that challenge. I'm going to think of the inspiration I receive every Sunday from the sermons I hear, not only from Meg but Mari, Chris and our intern Susan. There's no other church—UU or otherwise, in my opinion—that has such an abundance of talent in the pulpit. I'm going to think of our hardworking support staff—Office Administrator Andrea Sosa, Communications Coordinator Vickie Valadez, and Membership Coordinator Shannon Posern—and how

they make me smile, seeing them in action in the room next door when I volunteer in the Welcome Center.

The next time I hear a report about Donald Trump rising in the polls or news breaks about another senseless shooting, I'm going to think of Jamie Schroeder, trying to make sense of our books; Laine Young, our RE Program Assistant, and our Childcare Coordinator Karyn Machler. I'm going to think of the wonderful food we eat, thanks to the culinary skill of our Kitchen Manager Kami Cornell. I'm going to think of the great music we have every Sunday, thanks to Brent and the rest of his talented musical team: Christopher Larsen, Caroline Moore, Kati Cox, Bryan Uecker, Annabeth Novitzki, Andrea Larsen, Lisa Solomon, Austin Haller and Kathryn Govier. I'm going to think of the family that maintains our facility: husband and wife Barb Goonan and Ashraf Ahmed and their two daughters, Rehab Aly and Shaimaa Aly. They vacuum our floors, clean our restrooms and create a pleasant environment where we can gather.

I'm going to think of all those volunteers and members who every day carry out our mission both inside and outside the walls at 4700

“Topsy-turvy” from page 2

Grover, to nourish souls, transform lives and do justice.

Most of all, I’m going to think of that spark of the divine in each of us. In my heart, I know all those sparks are bound to eventually ignite in something good. So bring it on, topsy-turvy world. I’m ready for you! ■

“Building update” from page 1

to allocate our available resources in the very best way so as to accomplish as much of these priorities as we can, creating a more intentional welcome for the people who come through our doors.

In the last meeting with the architects, we were shown various exciting plans, most of which would have required us to stretch above the budget. We mixed and matched various elements, cut others, stoically accepted the news about the obstacles to be overcome, and asked the architects to go back to their drawing board to make a new plan, pared down to what we could afford. My expectation is that, when we meet with the congregation at the end of January (watch the announcements for the date) we will have diagrams of a plan in which you will see beauty, practicality and, above all, welcome. At that point, the architects’ team will invite questions and comments. After that, they will make a dimensional design, and will ask again for a meeting with the congregation later in the spring before proceeding with the final design and construction documents.

Any building project takes time, adjustments, negotiation, and management of expectations. You must articulate not only what you want, but why you want it. In a congregational building project, you must not only want for yourself, you must want for the people you don’t even know yet, you must want on behalf of the future. It’s a spiritually deepening and challenging exercise.

When the last congregation I served as settled minister built its new sanctuary, I warned them that we would have conflicts. The Episcopal Church in town nearly split over how far toward the altar the carpet should come and what portion around the altar should be slate floor. Another church I attended in college was having a discussion about whether to install a brass cross at the front of the sanctuary or a rough-hewn wooden one. One Sunday morning people showed up to see that some anonymous person had installed a rough wooden cross the night before, and no one even knew who it was. And no one ever had the nerve to uninstall it. Feelings about church buildings run high. It’s natural, since this is the container for our worship, our child rearing, our life event ceremonies, fellowship dinners, times of being soaked in beauty by the music, and planning our social justice outreach. It’s okay to disagree with one another here. All the church asks of us is that we disagree with curiosity and respect, as the covenant states. The guide for all of our decision-making is our mission, values and our ends. Those are on the website at www.austinuu.org. ■

New Member Recognition

**Sunday, Jan. 24
Sanctuary, during
worship services**

Signed the membership book this year, but still haven’t participated in a New Member Recognition ceremony yet? Be introduced to and received by the congregation!

Participation is simple and optional. You’ll be asked to join Rev. Meg at the front of the church, briefly introduce yourselves to the congregation, and a short litany will be read. (Bring a copy of the bulletin up with you so you can read the litany.)

If you’d like to participate, just show up! Wear your “new member” ribbon (extras may be found at the visitor/membership table).

Getting to Know UU Class

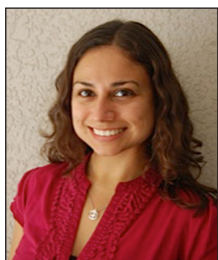
**Sunday, Feb. 7
Room 15
12:15–1:15 p.m.**

This class is a basic introduction to UU history, as well as a history of First UU Austin. You will also have opportunities to ask questions and share faith histories with other attendees. Childcare is provided. Contact: Shannon Posern, membership@austinuu.org.

LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Lifespan RE highlights

by Rev. Marisol Caballero, Assistant Minister



Be a 2016 Surprise Pal!

Consider becoming a Surprise Pal this year! Surprise Pals is an annual project that provides opportunities for the development of intergenerational connections. Here's how it works: interested adult church members submit to a background

check and are paired with a child in our congregation to exchange letters and small, meaningful gifts over the course of several weeks. The adult "surprise pal" and the parents of the child are aware of the pairing, but the identity of their "surprise pal" is not revealed to the kid until a party that ends the project and allows for face-to-face conversation and laughs! This project introduces the children of our congregation to trusted adults within their church community whom they might not otherwise meet. Register by Jan. 6. The project will run from Jan. 10 to Feb. 21 this year. Participants must commit to attend the reveal party on Feb. 21. To participate, contact laine.young@austinuu.org or pick up a registration form on the Lifespan RE table in the gallery.

F.RE.D. Night Happenings

No reservation required to the hottest Wednesday night spot in town! All are welcome to join us for an always-delicious dinner at 6 p.m. (\$6/person, kids under 12 eat free), followed by mind-blowing classes and workshops! This semester we're offering the following:

NEW! Parenting Book Club

Wednesdays beginning Jan. 13

When you think of your kids, do you wish for more joy and less trouble? Do you want to join a book club where you don't have to read the book? Then join the First UU

Parenting Book Club! This is a companion class to the amazing kids' art class taught by Kiya. Both classes run from 6:30–8:00. Book Club parents will take turns helping with the kids in the art class.

“Living the Welcoming Congregation: Continuing the Welcoming Congregation Journey,” 7–9 p.m. Alternating Wednesdays (Dec. 2 & 16)

\$15 registration fee (scholarships available)

This year marks the 20th anniversary of First UU being recognized by the UUA as having completed the necessary steps to become an official “Welcoming Congregation” to LGBTQ-identifying people of good will! To honor this wonderful milestone and renew this commitment, we're participating in the refresher course, “Living the Welcoming Congregation,” toward obtaining our certificate confirming we're committed to the ongoing journey of acceptance. A lot has happened in the LGBTQ movement in the past 20 years! Please join in this joyous struggle, meet other allies and queer members, and help First UU reach this goal.

“Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History,” 7–9 p.m. Alternating Wednesdays (Dec. 9)

\$15 registration fee (scholarships available)

Grounded in the belief that even “failures” in our history can be instructive, this program presents the ongoing struggle of our tradition to live up to its ever-evolving ideals of social transformation. Themes include abolition, peace-making, civil rights, free speech, utopianism, counter-culture, the women's movements of both 19th and 20th centuries, and more.

continued on next page

First Sunday Seminars, Jan. 3

First Sunday Seminars take place on the first Sunday each month. This multi-track, adult RE experience has options in areas such as leadership development, spiritual practices, UU identity development, and spiritual practices. 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!

Leadership Development Track: “Leadership as an Expression of Faith” facilitated by Sandra Ries

Our Unitarian Universalist faith is rooted in a tradition of not only notable clergy, but also in dedicated and skillful lay leadership that have left a lasting impression on our movement and our world. In fact, ours is a faith that calls us not to a prescribed set of beliefs, but to putting into action our deeply-held principles. This takes effective leadership skills that we are not born with, but that are intentionally developed. Come join this conversation, whatever your level of leadership experience!

Spiritual Practices Track: “Anti-Racism for Beginners” facilitated by Julie Gillis, anti-racist activist and co-facilitator of White Allies for Racial Equity

Curious about why we use terms like “anti-racist,” “ally,” and “white privilege?” Ever think anti-racism work feels like it does more to perpetuate racism than to eradicate it? These are common concerns for those new to this 21st century civil rights movement. Come and get a multimedia, just-scratching-the-surface intro to terms and best practices of anti-racism work!

Faith Formation: “Our Values & Immigration” facilitated by various First UU leaders including Susan Thomson

A group of UUs interested in the intersection of immigration and our church values will engage in an unstructured study as a spiritual exercise. We welcome others to join us in an open dialogue during monthly First Sunday Seminars from January–April. See orders of service for details.

Science and Religion Seminar Series with Bruce Naylor, every 2nd Sunday, 1–2:30 p.m.

Science and religion are considered the two great schemas for understanding existence. We will be exploring how science provides a “naturalistic” understanding of the universe, and how religion can be recast from the naturalistic perspective. We begin with the social brain, exploring how being a social animal shaped the evolution of our brains, and how religion evolved as part of this process.

RE Teacher Happy Hour! Thursday, Jan. 21

Have you volunteered in an RE Sunday School or youth group classroom this school year? If so, please join us for appetizers and drinks at Doc’s Bar & Grill (1106 W. 38th St) from 6–8 p.m. You deserve it! Childcare to be provided at the church.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) 7th–9th & 10th–12th grade

We will be proudly offering OWL (Our Whole Lives), a comprehensive and progressive sex education curriculum, to junior high and high schoolers this semester. The classes will meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. beginning Jan 13 and continuing through May, including 2–3 lock-ins (TBA). More information on registration and classes are available by emailing laine.young@austinuu.org, and by attending the mandatory parent orientation on Jan 6 at 7 p.m. Registration forms are on the RE table in the gallery. Registration fee is \$40, which will cover the cost of food for the lock-ins. Scholarships available.

People Of Color Field Trip & Brunch

We host informative discussion, exciting field trips, and perceptive social support for people that identify as POCs (person of color, Latina/o, bi-cultural, or multi-cultural). Check out our exciting events for January!

continued on page 7

GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Mindfulness Meditation Group: Labyrinth Walk

Monday, Jan. 25
Howson Hall
6:30 p.m.

This event will take place of the usual meditation in the sanctuary. We will set up a 30-35' diameter canvas labyrinth on which we'll sit in meditation for a while, then walk along the path. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information: meditation@austinuu.org.

Spring Into Action 2016 Planning Meeting

Sunday, January 10
Rm. 15
12:15–2:30 p.m.

Action for Justice and Inside Amigos are co-sponsoring this year's Spring into Action, our churchwide social action project. The theme will be "Sanctuary," and we will reflect on why sanctuary is needed in our society and what it would mean for First UU to be a sanctuary church in the future. Please join us after second service to brainstorm ideas for educational, advocacy, and volunteer activities that resonate with our theme.

Grounds volunteers learn to use the latest gardening tools

by Carol Edwards, Grounds Chair

In spite of tropical mist and the threat of rain, seven valiant grounds volunteers came to work on the south side of the church on December 12, *el Dia de Guadalupe*. These volunteers included Dale Bulla, Pat Bulla, Carol Edwards, Luther Elmore, Rob Feeney, Elizabeth Gray, and Carl Willmann. We were joined by Chris Carter, owner of Clean Air Lawn Service.

We spent two hours in teams of two cutting overgrown plants off the sidewalks, trimming perennials and shrubs, weeding beds, and removing hundreds and hundreds of small tree saplings from flowerbeds and island corners. Chris brought her "professional tool-toys" to assist us.

Chris' new tools included a Pullerbear, a weed and sapling wrench alternative, and two pair of "Lawn Jaws" for us to try. Interestingly, I saw both tools reviewed on KLRU's Central Texas

Gardener the following day, and now I consider them "must-haves" for lawn and bed maintenance.

Basically, the Pullerbear is a clamp that goes around a small tree or shrub with a long handle that literally wrenches the plant out of the ground by its roots. The Lawn Jaws are large needle-nose pliers with serrated teeth that allow you to grab a weed or sapling at ground level and pull it out of the ground, rather than having to cut it off at ground level and hope it does not grow back too soon. (It does help if the ground is damp, as it was in December, but I was impressed with the tools.)

If you do your own yard work, look up these tools on the internet and learn how they work. Or come join grounds volunteers and we will demonstrate! We normally work the second Saturday of most months, depending on the weather. Mark your calendars for 2016!

GREEN SANCTUARY

First UU makes a stand at Climate March

A posse of our church members marched with a thousand others through downtown Austin on Sunday, Nov. 30. We met other UUs from Houston, San Antonio and Dallas at the march. These advocates for a livable planet marched as witnesses to the global advocacy to enact major behavior changes and stop filling our atmosphere with tons of carbon dioxide, methane and other poisons.



Photo credit: Beki & Richard Halpin

Scientists tell us that burning fossil fuels has forced us to reach 400 ppm of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. This acts as a blanket to keep the toxins and hot air in our atmosphere. The result is many people suffer through increased incidence of floods, fires, ice melts, rising sea levels, coral reef destruction, oceans acidification killing millions of fish, nations flooded out of existence, cities eliminated, and more. The global meeting of more than 170 nations in Paris, France from Aug. 1–14 was a planetary stand to save our Earth from self-destruction.

UUs all over the earth are participating in this critical effort. For more information and how you can help: www.uua.org/environment/climate. Email the Green Sanctuary Committee: green@austinuu.org, or call Beki or Richard at (512) 288-4080.

Alphabet Soup Social Club

First Sunday of the month, 12 p.m.

This group is for anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexual, pansexual, or asexual. The goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for us to gather in community and nourish our souls. If you're a heterosexual ally we welcome your support but ask you refrain from attending these meetings.

We meet on the first Sunday for brunch after second service at a rotating location. Check the weekly bulletin for location details each month. We also meet for ad hoc events throughout the month. For more info contact Tomas Medina at alphabetsoup@austinuu.org, or follow us on Facebook.

Lifespan RE events continued (from page 5)

Jan. 14: POC Field trip to George Washington Carver Museum (1165 Angelina St), 5:30–7 p.m.

Please note this meeting is on Thursday, not our regularly scheduled Sunday. "The galleries feature a core exhibit on Juneteenth, a permanent exhibit on Austin African-American families, an Artists' Gallery, and a children's exhibit on African-American scientists and inventors." (www.carvermuseum.org)

Jan. 24: POC Brunch at Threadgill's South (301 W. Riverside Dr), 12:30–1:30 p.m.

Join us for southern comfort food and the music of gospel group, Bells of Joy. ■

January Art Exhibition

Reception: Sat. Jan. 9 Gallery 6-8 p.m.

Featuring the work of local artist Elijah Dow Merritt. Elijah is currently a senior at Huntington-Surrey High School, set to graduate May 2016. He plans to attend St. Edward's University, double majoring in Photography and Sociology.

YOUNG RELIGIOUS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

First UU youth appeal to Austin mayor for Indigenous People's Day

preface by Scott Butki

This holiday season, I want to give thanks to a special inspiring member, a student participating in our high school group. MacKenzie Moers is often inspiring; she's good evidence that the younger generation has an amazing set of morals and values, that many are ready "to transform lives and do justice." A few weeks ago MacKenzie, who goes by they/them pronouns, read aloud to the high school group a letter written with the help of Abby, a friend and fellow youth. The students and advisers were very impressed. The class requested they bring a copy of it to the next Sunday's class, with the plan of delivering it to the Austin mayor. Someone suggested we also take a photo of our class to put a face to the appeal (see page 12).

I told the ministers what was happening and they, also impressed with the actions and the letter's eloquence, signed it as well. MacKenzie is in the far right of the image, holding the letter. Keep up the great work, MacKenzie.

Dear Mister Mayor, Mr. Marc Ott, and City Council,

Here at the youth group for the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, we have a strong passion for advocacy. When we see or experience something that we feel isn't right, we work as a group to try and provide a change for the better. Which is why today, we write you to

talk about Columbus Day, and why we think it should be changed to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

The story of Christopher Columbus is not one to be celebrated, or put under any positive light. The story of Christopher Columbus is dark, twisted, and horrifying.

He was never the person who originally discovered America. What he discovered was a land that was already home to millions of Native Americans. He had then decided to not only take the land as his own, but lead a path full of some incredibly horrifying actions.

He and his crew had brought diseases that infected the majority of people they encountered. About thirty different recorded diseases were brought to America by Columbus and his men. The Native Americans did not have the proper defenses in their immune system to fight these off. Many people died due to these illnesses.

They had raped a large amount of women and children from varying indigenous tribes. Some of these people were also later sold as sex slaves to his men. There have been accounts of some of those sold being as young as nine years old.

He had initiated a genocide against the Native Americans, killing tens of thousands of innocent people under his command. It also became like a game for he and his crew in some ways. They would test their

swords on innocent people, making contests out of their deaths by betting to see if they could slice bodies in half or decapitate heads in a single blow.

He was also very deceitful, using the Native American's ignorance of European culture and weapons as a way to manipulate and capture them, leading the way to slavery in the New World. This was all noted in his journal, which reads: "They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... They would make fine servants... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."

His actions were heinous and horrifying. If such a thing were to happen today, he would be condemned and vilified. Now, though, because he was the first person to create the link between the Old World and the New World, we decided to honor him and teach students about how he is to be respected, despite his crimes and despicable actions.

More and more people are learning the truth about what Columbus really did during his voyages. These same people are growing angry, horrified, and disgusted. The fact that we have a set day every year to

continued on next page

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

The votes are in!

At an election held on Sunday, Dec. 13, First UU members selected 10 of our 2016 monthly special offering recipients. The two remaining slots will go to the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry and to an organization selected by the Spring Into Action team, which next year will focus on the theme of “Sanctuary” and will be co-sponsored by Action for Justice and Inside Amigos.

The organizations that will continue to be funded this year are Drive A Senior, UBarU, Inside Books Project, Austin Child Guidance Center, People’s Community Clinic, Safe Place, and Planned Parenthood.

Three new organizations will receive a portion of the special offering in 2016. These organizations include:

(1) Interfaith Action of Central Texas, which strives to cultivate peace and respect through three programs. This year so far, Hands on Housing has repaired homes of 463 impoverished homeowners; The Red Bench has engaged hundreds of individuals in civil discourse; and iACT for Refugees has enrolled 766 students in ESL classes and provided learning opportunities for 103 children from 20 countries.

(2) Friends of McCallum, which provides support for school kids who are simply trying to be in school, but who need some essentials to make this happen. The short list of items they provide includes bus passes, grocery cards and school supplies.

(3) Sustainable Food Center, which cultivates a healthy Central

Texas community by strengthening the local food system and improving access to nutritious, affordable food. Through gardening resources and classes, cooking and nutrition education, and connecting farmers to consumers, they work for food justice, hunger relief, and sustainable agriculture.

Planned Parenthood was the organization that received the most support from First UU members this time. It received 123 votes out of 133 ballots (92%). It also had the largest number of both first and second place votes, although both SafePlace and People’s Community Clinic also had very strong support. First UU members are clearly standing up for affordable healthcare, reproductive justice, and supporting survivors of abuse! ■

YRUU letter continued

celebrate a man who destroyed the lives of millions is something that more and more people are wanting to abolish. It is something that has our youth group feeling like we need to step up and help make this change. We as a group want to ask you to please consider abolishing Columbus Day, and hopefully replace it with Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Not only will we stop honoring a man who does not deserve it, but we will be giving our respect to the people who have

had, and still have atrocious things done against them. These people deserve better than what they have gotten. This won’t give them all that they need and deserve, but it is a step in the right direction.

We also will not be the first town to do this, if you so decide to make the decision for change. Places like Multnomah County, Oregon; St. Paul, Minnesota; Olympia, Washington; Traverse City, Michigan; Albuquerque and Sandoval County, New

Mexico have all made the decision to put Indigenous Peoples’ Day over Columbus Day. It is becoming more of a widely accepted idea that we feel like Austin should follow along with.

So, I ask that you please think deeply about this, and consider what is best for the many, many people in this town. Besides, a small step forward is far better than not moving at all.

Sincerely,
First UU of Austin Youth Group ■

HEALTHY RELATIONS MINISTRY

Austin Presence Group**November 5 & 19****Room 13B****6:30–8 p.m.**

Each month we will discuss a chapter from “The Power of Now.” Then we may tune in to an Eckhart Tolle video. A \$5 donation is requested in order to support the church. Visit us at www.meetup.com/AustinPresence.

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.

Path to Membership class update

We have decided to cancel the Path to Membership class for today. The next class will be on Saturday, April 23. We apologize if this is an inconvenience; to schedule an earlier time to discuss membership, contact Shannon Posern at shannon.posern@austinuu.org.

Advice from Covenant Corner

Dear Covenant Corner,

Last year my friend and I agreed to plan a church event together. I ended up incredibly frustrated. It was like pulling teeth to get anything done in a timely manner, and we ended up doing a lot of things at the last minute. The whole process was very stressful for me, even though the event went off without a hitch. Now my friend wants to plan another event together. He’s a wonderful person. How do I tell him that I’d rather stick needles in my eye than work with him again?

– *About To Be Friendless*

Dear Friendless,

Since you didn’t give us a name, we’re going to call your friend John Doe or JD for short. It sounds like you and JD have very different styles which leads to different expectations and assumptions. Style is neither right nor wrong, but if there is a mismatch of styles, then working together can be very painful. It sounds like you prefer things to be done early and according to a timeline. If JD prefers to do things as he is inspired to do them, then this is obviously a clash of preferences. If you enjoy your friend and are up for a challenge, it is possible to work together. We recommend that you sit down with your friend and discuss

what planning looks like to each of you. Perhaps each of you could share an example of what the perfect planning would look like.

After this discussion, the two of you may decide may decide that working together is not good for your friendship. This option allows you to keep your friendship and your sanity. You may decide to split up the work such that your individual pieces are independent. This option allows each of you to happily work in your preferred style. Or you may come up with something else completely wonderful that works for both of you.

There’s a saying that expectations are premeditated resentments. One good way to avoid hard feelings and a lot of stress is to talk about how you will work together. This is also true for anyone who is working together for the first time.

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.

Sincerely,

Healthy Relations Covenant

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING



Inside Books Project

Inside Books Project is the only books-to-prisoners program in Texas, where at last count some 144,000 people are incarcerated. This all-volunteer 501(c)3 organization has sent more than a quarter million free books to Texas prisoners since its founding in 1998. We're so grateful to the members of First UU Church of Austin for the support you voted to provide last year, and your renewal of our participation in the Monthly Special Offering.

Texas holds around 11 percent of all U.S. prisoners, and Inside Books Project—the only books-to-prisoners project in the state—sends around 50,000 books a year, most of which are donated by our community. Again, we must express our thanks for the book donations that keep pouring in from this church. It has made a great difference in keeping our shelves full.

This past year of 2015 has been our busiest year yet; thousands of new volunteers have come through our doors to answer book requests from people in Texas prisons. Our volunteers fill orders from the Inside Books library of donated books and magazines, including a personal note with each package. The books are often the only written materials prisoners receive from anyone; in fact, many prisoners say our letters are the only mail they get.

Recently we were pleased to receive this testimonial from one of our clients: "Your project is working and is huge in

terms of reducing recidivism. The very spark that your project and its volunteers provide us is the start of a flame so bright in this darkness...without any of you, this place would be a hell that most (instead of some) would take with them when they leave. Not everyone is guilty of their crimes, some of us plead to save our wives and children the public anguish and hardship, and most try their hardest to stay positive and use every available resource possible to better themselves and go home." – Scott P., Texas inmate.

Monthly Special Offerings are done every second Sunday of the month at worship services. All groups supported by MSOs receive a check at the end of the year, with the total of the 12 monthly donations divided equally.

Have you run out of books to donate to Inside Books Project? Donate the rest of your stuff to Treasure City Thrift, a worker-run nonprofit store. Treasure City Thrift was founded to raise money for Inside Books! They also support 20 other local groups working for grass-roots change, such as Bikes Across Borders, Black Mesa Indigenous Support, Casa Marianella/Posada Esperanza, and Action for Animals. But Inside Books is their first priority! So if you have anything that you would donate to a thrift store like Goodwill, consider taking it to Treasury City Thrift at 2142 E. 7th Street—the big pink building. They are not a 501(c)3, so there are no donation receipts. But they are a worker cooperative, creating living-wage jobs in a horizontally-structured collective. www.treasurecitythrift.org

Annual Giving Statements

Thank you for your generosity over the past year. Your church office will spend the month of January closing up the books and accounts for 2015, including verifying the completeness and accuracy of the records. Once that is finished, we will mail statements to everyone of their giving during 2015 (January through December). Your giving statement will go in the mail no later than January 31.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Leadership: how we do what we say we will do

Michelle Obama has said, “Service is a limitless opportunity, it is the reason why we breathe.” Service as a leader on the First UU board or in a committee is how we do what we say we’ll do: nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice. In February during Sunday services, we’ll hear stories from four individuals who have served in leadership positions. They will tell us how their lives were impacted by their service

with First UU, and how the act of leading enables 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 invite 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.

Sweets & Treats
volunteer appreciation night

We noticed. You tried to hide it, but we saw what you did. You’ve been helping out around here, and it’s now time to suffer the consequences: death by chocolate!

January 22nd, 2016
7 to 9 pm in Howson Hall

RSVP to fellowship@austinuu.org or 512-825-0345

childcare available

Design by frank.com

First UU youth protest Columbus Day

Members of the First UU youth group show their stance in support of the creation of Indigenous Peoples’ Day. See page 8 to read the letter written by one young member to the Austin mayor. *Photo courtesy of Scott Butki*



Are you ready for SWUUSI?

Mark your calendars for July 24–29 at the Southwest UU Summer Institute at Fort Gibson Lake, OK. This year’s theme speaker Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh will discuss “Just Good Food” with artist in residence Chef

Jesse Bloom. There’s activities on the lake, golf course, and trails too. Come for the education, faith development, entertainment, recreation, and fun with fellow UUs from infants to octogenarians. Video at <http://bit.ly/swuusi>.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Let's keep in touch!

by Shannon Posern, Membership Coordinator

Howdy visitors, members, and friends! The start of the 2016 is the perfect time to get reacquainted with your friendly volunteers at the visitor/membership table on Sunday mornings. Have you moved or changed your email? Expecting a future noble laureate? We would love to hear about it and can help you update your information with the church database. The information in our database is how our staff and leaders are able to keep in touch. If you would rather

update your information with me during the week, you can send an email to membership@austinuu.org, or call the office at 512-452-6168 ext. 313.

Visitors, don't forget to complete a visitor card found at the Visitor/Membership table or in the back of the pew. Your completed card allows us to add you to our newsletter distribution list and send you updates on important things happening at First UU Austin. Wishing you a wonderful new year!

Young Adults Group events

Join the young adults (ages 18–35) for the next upcoming meetings. Email youngadults@austinuu.org for more details and info on the group. We'll also be organizing monthly brunches after second service, so email us or watch the orders of service for updates! All meetings are typically from 7–9 p.m. with some adjustments based on event time for outings.

Thurs, Jan. 7: Movie night at the church with discussion, Rm 17.

Wed, Jan. 20: Potluck and discussion of civil rights and race (in honor of MLK Day), Rm 17.

Check next month's newsletter for future events!

DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Heart of Texas Cluster Leadership Series, Feb. 6

A one-day workshop on topics from Dwight Brown Leadership Experience. Southern Region Congregational Life Staff Natalie Briscoe will present on governance, power and authority, growth, change, church size theory. Hosted by the First UU Church of San Antonio, from 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Includes lunch. Link to registration at <http://bit.ly/HoTLS>.

Southwest UU Women's (SWUW) Conference Feb 26-28

Gather with your UU sisters in Lawton, OK, for this annual conference sponsored by SWUW. Enjoy the keynote and musical talent we've as-

sembled, and explore your own talents through excellent quality workshops and worship experiences. More information at www.swuuw.org.

Save the Date!

- **April 15–17:** Heart of Texas Men's Retreat; UBarU Camp & Retreat Center, Kerrville, TX
- **April 29–May 1:** Deep in the Heart Women's Retreat; UBarU Camp & Retreat Center, Kerrville, TX.

Carpool Opportunities

Looking to carpool to a UU event outside Austin? Email Margaret Borden at denom@austinuu.org and she'll attempt to pair you with someone to share the ride.

See SWUUSI info on pg. 12!

Eclectic Folk Jam

Friday, January 8
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 sing-along@austinuu.org.

UU/Quaker Singalong

Saturday, January 23
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.

WORSHIP SERVICES

SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM

JANUARY 3

Burning Bowl

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

For the past several years we’ve begun the year with a service where we think about elements in our lives which are doing us a disservice: resentments, old ways of looking at things, people who are not good for us, etc. We write those things on paper and burn them together, scattering the ashes to the wind.

JANUARY 10

What’s the Difference?

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

This is the first in a sermon series on differences between one historical, political, or spiritual perspective and another. In this installment, we will look at the difference between Sunni and Shiite Islam. How did the division occur? What effects does it have?

JANUARY 16

We Gather: Another Kind of Worship

(4:30 p.m.) The new third service is in its own format, different from Sunday mornings. Pizza, salad, and drinks will follow! Please email childcare@austinuu.org to reserve childcare; however, children are very welcome throughout the entire service. We will have a carpeted area and coloring materials in Howson Hall.

JANUARY 17

Compassion

REV. CHRIS JIMMERSON

“Compassion—To treat ourselves and others with love.” In this next in a series of sermons on our church’s religious values, Rev. Chris will explore what our religious value of compassion might look like both inside our church walls and beyond them.

JANUARY 24

Forgiveness

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Our covenant says when we fall short of that to which we aspire, we should forgive ourselves and each other and move on. What is involved in that? How do we begin to forgive ourselves? Does it mean that we forget what happened?

JANUARY 31

Animal Blessing Service

REV. MARISOL CABALLERO

All creatures young, old, great and small, furry and scaly are invited to our annual intergenerational service honoring our beloved animal companions. If your pet is not able to come join us in the sanctuary or has passed away, you are invited to bring a photograph of them. We will have treats for the well-behaved and clean-up supplies for owners of the “still-learning-what-not-to-do-in-church” critters!

PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

JANUARY 3

Opportunities to Combat Climate Change

WITH CHRIS SEARLES

Chris will talk about how each of us can significantly contribute to solving both climate change and the species extinction crisis by protecting bio-critical ecosystems. Searles will highlight some of the many benefits of protecting earth's extremely threatened biological integrity. Join us in learning how you can help the world's most impactful environmental solutions succeed. Together, the future can be so bright!

Chris Searles, a native Austinite, founded BioIntegrity in 2014. The company's mission is to help today's most powerful, global, environmental solutions succeed as fast as possible. Chris is founder of the green business GoodCommonSense and the outdoor green living festival Sustainable Shopper's Ball, and a founding board member of Austin's Interfaith Environmental Network.

JANUARY 10

Building Blocks for a Healthy, Sustainable & Affordable Austin

WITH LESLIE POOL

Council member Leslie Pool, who represents District 7 and chairs the city's Open Space, Environment & Sustainability Committee, has woven together several policies to create a strong environmental and economic future for Austin. She holds a common sense, constituent-formed vision of a healthy, sustainable and affordable Austin. She will have just returned from the global climate change conference in Paris.

Pool was sworn into Austin City Council on Jan. 6, 2015. Prior to becoming the elected representative for District 7, Pool served in the Travis County Constable's Office, volunteered on the board of Liveable City, and

was a co-founder of the Bull Creek Road Coalition.

JANUARY 17

Tough on Crime is turning to Smart on Crime in Texas

WITH MATT SIMPSON

Matt will discuss why everyone should care about prisons in the U.S. and particularly in Texas, why Texas should raise the age of adult criminal responsibility from 17 to 18, why extreme criminal penalties do not make us safer, and why diverse voices from across the political landscape are calling for reforms.

Matt is the Senior Policy Strategist at the ACLU of Texas. He advocates at the Texas legislature for criminal justice and juvenile justice reforms. He also works with a host of coalition partners to ensure the rights of immigrants. Along with legislative advocacy, Matt works with organizers and local members on various local campaigns, such as Austin-area community groups and Austin Police Department as they begin using body cameras.

JANUARY 24

Legal and Financial Planning for Later Life: Often-Missed Opportunities

WITH CLYDE FARRELL

Clyde Farrell is a 67-year-old Austin attorney and financial planner. He will reflect on underutilized financial and legal opportunities in later life. He will describe strategies he recommends regularly to people who are planning for long-term care, helping others with financial and medical decisions, and death. He has found that even people highly accomplished in their own fields are missing these valuable opportunities. He will also provide an overview of the legal documents

continued on page 16

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

(512) 452-6168

www.austinuu.org

First UU Ministers

Rev. Meg Barnhouse
Rev. Marisol Caballero
Rev. Chris Jimmerson

Director of Music
Brent Baldwin

Office Administrator
Andrea B. Sosa

Membership Coordinator
Shannon Posern

Communications Coordinator
Victoria M. Valadez

Bookkeeper
Jamie Schroeder

Board President
Angela Smith

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**

4700 Grover Ave.
Austin, TX 78756

THE FORUM, *continued*

everyone needs to “get your affairs in order.”

Farrell is a certified elder law attorney, a certified financial planner, and a founder and past president of the Texas Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys. He serves as a volunteer attorney and consultant with Family Eldercare in Austin and is a past president of that organization.

JANUARY 31 Frontiers of Physics

WITH DR. STEVEN WEINBERG

Dr. Weinberg will talk about reliable scientific knowledge and his research

on the frontiers of physics.

Weinberg holds the Josey Regental Chair in Science at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is a member of the Physics and Astronomy Departments. His research on elementary particles and cosmology has been honored with numerous prizes and awards, including in 1979 the Nobel Prize in Physics and in 1991 the National Medal of Science. In 2004 he received the Benjamin Franklin Medal of the American Philosophical Society, with a citation that said he is “considered by many to be the preeminent theoretical physicist alive in the world today.” ■