



FIRST UU NEWS

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

Updates from Rev. Meg & Rev. Chris



To the kind and beloved congregation of First UU:

Our first experiment with getting rid of the infection in my hip prosthesis did

not work. They have done another surgery, removing everything and putting in spacers covered with antibiotic-infused cement. After eight weeks the infection should be

gone, and they will put in the final new prosthesis. This is going to be a long road, and I think it will be best if I go on and take my sabbatical right now so I can focus on healing.

I'm glad that these months of sabbatical were coming up, and that I can use them in this way to get strong and healthy again to come

back to work in September. You are in strong and capable hands with Chris Jimmerson, and he has lined up lots of good guest speakers for you.

I will be posting on Facebook, and I will look forward to seeing you in September. Take care of each other, I miss you already.



As Meg noted in her article, she is taking her sabbatical now rather than later this year, so that she can fully heal

and return to us strong and healthy at the start of the new church year. I want to reiterate how much your prayers, cards, Facebook comments and messages and other communications of love and support have raised Meg and Kiya's spirits. Please continue to keep them in your thoughts

and hearts in the weeks to come. I have also been so moved by the expressions of support and concern so many of you have offered to me.

One of the things I have come to love and respect about Meg is how she consistently holds the welfare of this church, its mission and its people in her awareness. The greatest thing we can do for Meg while she heals is to continue the terrific work this congregation has been doing, both within the walls of our church building and outside in our larger community and world. We will all

need each other to do that. I will need all of you in the weeks to come.

I know Meg's love will be with us this summer. I know her spirit will dwell among us as we live out the mission and ministries of this church. I know this religious community will carry her loving presence and her dynamic ministry forward over the weeks to come, and will welcome her back with great joy upon her return.

In loving gratitude,
Rev. Chris ■

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

An introduction

by **Jairy Grisaffe**



Greetings, my fellow congregants. As your new board president, I would like to use my first article in the monthly newsletter to introduce myself.

I am a native Texan and grew up in Houston, TX. I'm married to an amazing lady named Suzanne Daniels. We have a charming two-year-old daughter named Mena, and three pet chickens. I work as a technical support manager for a Dallas-based software company named Allegro Development. We live in the Brentwood neighborhood, just north of the church. We also own and run Brentwood Social House on Koenig Lane. Suzanne is a member of Impact Austin and does marketing and graphic design for them. In my own time, I enjoy long-distance running and live music. I attended college at Baylor University, where I earned a BBA in information systems and accounting in 2000. I am the youngest of six children. I grew up Catholic and attended Catholic school for most of schooling.

I became a UU in 2005 after learning about it over drinks with a close friend. At the time, I was drifting away from Catholicism and didn't really have a clear sense of my own spirituality. I started attending at First Unitarian Church of Dallas after listening to a few sermons online that resonated with me. I thought I was coming to learn more about myself, which I was, but I did not realize that I was looking for community. I spent my time there as an RE teacher, OWL facilitator, youth advisor, and a leader of what was a rather intentionally unorganized young adult group. I made a lot of friends and found a lot of inspiration there that I still carry with me today.

I arrived in Austin in 2011, shortly after Suzanne moved here. I started attending First UU in the fall of that year. I've found so many things to love about this church. The people here have a deep love and respect for our community and tradition. My ministry here has been centered

around the lead advisor role for the senior high youth group. Their love, wisdom, and spirit for life makes me proud that I chose this ministry. I often say that I learn as much as I teach when I'm with them. I joined the board of trustees two years ago, which has been wonderfully rewarding as well. It has reminded me that passionate participation allows us to create and sustain great things. I've made many friends, teachers, and heroes in this church. I'm proud to call it my church home.

Amongst my core values is that of connectedness through service. I feel strongly that when you involve yourself in something, you feel sense of oneness with it. I try to practice in all part of my life. As I continue to serve you and connect with you all this year, I am genuinely interested in what sense of connection each of you have with our community. Tell me your story of how you found our community, and what keeps you returning. ■

DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

General Assembly New Orleans, June 21–25

General Assembly is the big annual event for our Unitarian Universalist Association. Attendees worship, witness, learn, connect and make policy for our association. This year General Assembly is right next door in New Orleans, and has been designated a “Justice GA.” Registration is now open: www.uua.org/ga.

So far over 30 members of our church plan to attend GA! If you have any questions about the event or if you’re planning to go, please email David Overton at denom@austinuu.org. He’s keeping a list of attendees so that we can keep in touch while we’re there.

UUA College of Social Justice: “Grow Racial Justice” Workshop, June 17–20

Grow Racial Justice 2017 will be held in New Orleans, immediately before General Assembly. It will equip UU young adults with the skills, spiritual grounding, and community to engage in racial justice work within and beyond our UU faith. www.uucs.org/grow-racial-justice.

UBarU Events UBarU Camp and Retreat Center Kerrville, Texas

UBarU is a UU camp and retreat center in the beautiful Hill Country, just 120 miles west of Austin. In 2015, UBarU was designated an International Dark Sky Park, perfect for stargazing. All the following events can be found at www.ubaru.org, under ‘Events.’

- **Meaning Makers, June 7–11.** Meaning Makers is a year-long spiritual development program for UU young adults (ages 18–24). Through in-person retreats, virtual small group ministry and mentorship, emerging adults will explore the central questions “Who am I and how can I live my UU faith in the world?” www.uua.org/re/youngadults/meaning-makers.
- **Summer Camps for Youth.** Weeklong camps provide fun in a UU setting, and include swimming, hiking, star-gazing, team-building and learning more about our faith.

Dates	Age Group	Grade (as of 10/1/17)
Jun 11–17	Sojourner	grades 3–5
Jun 25–Jul 1	Olympia	grades 6 & 7
July 2–8	Seeger	grades 8 & 9
July 9–15	Reeb	grade 10 through 2017 HS graduates

Chalice Lighters

UBarU has just been selected as a Chalice Lighter program recipient, to support their ADA Accessibility Improvement Project. Learn about their project and the Chalice Lighters program on pg. 10.

UU Summer Vacation at the Point, July 23–28

Imagine five days of UU covenant and community in a resort-like setting on the shores of Fort Gibson Lake, OK. The Point offers personal growth, faith renewal, learning opportunities, spiritual practices, community worship, music, excellent cuisine, sustainable practices, social gatherings (concerts, movie night, bingo, talent show), outdoor activities, programming for all ages and interests, and an engaging theme speaker. Each day begins with worship and ends with a fun activity, but how you spend your day is completely up to you! More info and registration at www.thepointuu.org.

Carpool Opportunities

Want to carpool to an event outside Austin? Email Denominational Connections at denom@austinuu.org and we’ll try to put you together with someone to share the ride.

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Lifespan highlights

by **Laine Young, Interim Director of Lifespan Faith Development**



As I am writing this newsletter article, the Sunday School spring semester is wrapping up for the year and we've been getting ready for an amazingly fun summer here at First UU! Part of me is in disbelief that we are reaching the halfway mark for 2017. We have done some amazing things in the Lifespan Faith Development department this year! We've participated in the church clean-up day, had some all-ages movie nights, started a vegetable garden, had fantastically fun Easter canned food hunts, improved our Sunday School sign-in system to help ensure the safety of our lil' UUs, had an inspiring youth service...the list could go on and on. I cannot wait to see what else we accomplish together this year!

In fellowship,
Laine Young

No First Sunday Seminars in June

We will not have First Sunday Seminars this month as we begin summer break. Seminars resume in September.

Interested in teaching a First Sunday Seminar in the fall? Please send your class proposal to laine.young@austinuu.org.

Splash Day! Sunday, June 4

Another school year is almost over which means it's time for us to break out the pools and water balloons for our annual Splash Day, which happens during both RE hours. Fun for all ages! Bring your kid to church in their swimsuits, shorts, flip-flops, sunscreen, etc. and don't forget to pack a towel and a change of clothes for after our Splash Day fun!

Fall Children and Youth Enrollment Begins!

Parents of children and teens and choir families: keep your eyes fixed on your (snail) mailboxes! We will be sending out enrollment forms for the 2017-18 Faith Development school year soon! Please make sure that the church has your correct mailing address in our database. Check myFirstUU for your church records, or email myfirstuu@austinuu.org for assistance.

Summer Children & Youth Programming Starts June 11!

Pre-K-1st Grade: "World of Wonder," Rm. 23

Wonder. What is it? Where do we find it? How do we keep it? Children are born with an ability to feel wonder, and our world is full of amazing plants, animals, spaces, processes, textures, and patterns that can awaken it. But to nurture and preserve a sense of wonder, children need time to explore, observe, engage, and rest in that world. This program delves deep into our UU seventh principle. It instills respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, and appreciation of its beauty, excitement, and mystery.

2nd-5th Grade: "Jedi Academy (May the Force Be with You)" Rm. 17

Our UU Padawans will learn about our seven principles from Jedi Masters this summer! Each class introduces a new lightsaber color and one of our seven principles, along with Star Wars fun along the way and lightsaber training at the end of the summer.

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Junior High Youth Group: “Middle School MythBusters!” Rm. 13

The junior high youth group will be engaging in various science experiments this summer. Experiments will include aerodynamics, creating slime, making soda geysers, and more! The junior high youth group meets during second service only, from 10:45 a.m.–noon.

High School Youth Group, Rm. 11

This summer, the high school youth group will have fellowship, small group worship, and field trips with the middle school youth group. The purpose of each is to build strong fellowship and spiritual deepening within the group and a bond between the two youth groups. The high youth group meets during second service only, starting at 10:45 a.m.

Ramadan Fast-Breaking Iftar Dinner June 12, 7:30 p.m.

Please note the update in meeting time. The Dialogue Institute of the Southwest will prepare and bring an iftar dinner to share with the congregation. Ramadan this year starts around May 26 and ends around June 24. Fast-breaking time is at sunset, which is around 8:30 p.m. The program will begin around 7–7:30 p.m. so participants have a chance to get to know each other and have conversation before dinner is served. RSVP at the Lifespan Faith Development table in the gallery or by emailing laine.young@austinuu.org. ■

Words of wisdom from our youth

This month we are featuring works from our youth members that provided homilies/readings for the Youth Sunday service on May 7. The theme of their service was growth.

“Change is the Only Constant” by Julia Heilrayne

Change is all around us, all the time. It is what we live and breathe. As a science nerd, I love the saying “change is the only constant” because well, that’s the truth. Change is scary. I’ll admit that, but without it, progress and growth would be impossible. Change and growth are the driving forces in life—pushing us forward to the next discovery, the crucial part of history, the next step in our own lives. Without change, people would never grow, plants would never blossom, and none of us would be where we are today.

In my 15 years, change has been one of the best and worst things to happen to me. It has saved my life, and made it infinitely harder. Change has let me breathe again, while at the same time, it has taken my breath

away and refused to give it back. But most of all, I have learned to love and appreciate the constant state of change in the world because without it, I have no idea where or who I would be today.

When I was in sixth grade, change took over my life. Just after the second semester had started, my parents told me I was switching schools. This news was welcomed with tears, excitement, and relief but most of all, fear. I had been having problems at school for a little while, fighting back against a system that no longer worked for me, and fighting back against a teacher who no longer taught me. Even though I was glad to get away from that school and get another go at this whole learning thing, I had never known any different than my little tiny private school and that scared me more than I can explain. So in February of sixth grade, I was abruptly

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Join multiple church groups at March for Equality!

**Sunday, June 11
11:30 a.m.**

The Alphabet Soup group, People of Color group, and Social Action Council will march alongside other members of Central Texas UU churches in the March for Equality on Sunday, June 11. We'll gather at the corner of 12th & San Jacinto at 11:30 for a rally on the south steps of the Capitol at noon. The Austin march for LGBTQ rights coincides with the national March for Equality on the same date in Washington DC. For more info contact Tomas Medina: alphabet_soup@austinuu.org.

Senior Luncheon

**Wednesday, June 14
Howson Hall
12 p.m.**

This program will feature George & Marcia Edwards. They recently returned from a trip to the Galapagos with the Sierra Club. They took lots of interesting photos that they'll be sharing with us. We're going on summer break, so please join us for the last Senior Lunch until September.

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

"Change is the Only Constant," continued

pulled from the school that I had attended for eight and a half years, ripping me apart from my friends and much of my identity at the time.

To me, switching schools mid-year felt like being thrown into the Atlantic Ocean in the middle of a storm. I was alone, scared, and more vulnerable than I have ever been. As I was tossed around in the stormy waters of public school, otherwise known as STAAR tests and cafeterias, I struggled to swim, or even keep my head above the water. For those of you who don't know me, I like to win. I like to be the best at everything I do. So as I watched the other kids, most of whom had been in public school for their entire lives, navigate this world with ease, I felt like a failure. I saw the other students around me, excelling at school and at sports, swimming through life gracefully, as I struggled to find my next class.

Eventually though, I memorized my schedule and I stopped getting lost on my way to classes. I found my group of friends, and I stopped feeling lonely all the time. But best of all, my mind moved on from my old school. Although I will never forget the experiences I had there, both good and bad, I don't think about it as often as I used to. In sixth grade, I realized that my new school, friends, and teachers, had been my saving grace and exactly what I needed. It wasn't until seventh grade when I accepted the change that had turned my life upside down and shaken it around a few times, and at that point, I started to really love what had become of all the shaking.

My new school gave me confidence I never knew I had. My friends taught me how to laugh like I hadn't laughed in a long time. And my teachers taught me how to breathe, and how to live again.

If you ask anyone who knew me when I was a student at my old school and who knows me now, they will undoubtedly agree when I say that I am a completely different person. Although switching schools was one of the most painful things I've ever been through, if I was in the same situation now, I wouldn't do anything differently. Public school gave me my life back, and led me to my best friends, my mentors and my teachers. My experiences forced me to fall back to the amazing support system I have in the UU world. My closest friends, some of who sit behind me and some of who live 4 or 5 hours away, exist in my life only because of this church and my other UU communities.

Today, I am a freshman at Austin High School. Today I am part of the Academy for Global Studies, and today I am one of the top students in the Biomedical Science program. Today I am 100% positive that I want to go into the medical field and today, I am 100% positive that I want to work with children as part of my job. But I would not be any or know any of this today, had it not been for the immense change that swept through my life yesterday.

Change has been and will continue to be the only constant in my life, and in yours. It is the force that keeps us going, and refuses to forget anyone. Change is the reason we grow, adapt, and adjust to our world in the best possible way. Drastic, painful change is the reason that most of my closest friends are my closest friends. Change has forced me to grow into the person I am today, and I could not be happier.

Although it can be scary, change is necessary. It causes growth, and allows us to live. So I ask you, embrace change, and learn to love it for all it has to offer.

Words of wisdom from our youth

“The Kinds of People” by Kate Hirschfeld

Let's go back.
To when the days were counted not in numbers
but by discoveries.
Small fingers outstretched to the sky, trying to get
a grasp on this world,
one experience at a time.
Asking questions without answers
Your favorite word was always “why.”
“Why”
Punctuated with intensely curious eyes,
Your head cocked slightly to the side,
Expecting a response even when there wasn't one to give.
Minds full of fairy dust
Wide eyes of wanderlust
Never knowing what life had in store for us.

Back to when you had perpetually paint-stained hands,
Dirt under fingernails,
Hair tangled by the wind,
Mud stains on your new dress.
Don't tell mom but
you always liked it better like that anyway.
Said it reminded you of chocolate milk.
And everyone knows, there's nothing on this earth
better than chocolate milk.

Back to when we gazed at the stars so long our eyes
themselves began to twinkle. We took to staring contests
during the day to share our galaxies.
We woke up early to watch the sun
paint the sky like a canvas.
Pink stained clouds never ceased to take our breath
away.

Call us crazy,
but thought it beat Cartoon Network any day.
We stayed up past our bedtimes
to wave the moon goodnight.
We searched the sky for the Big Dipper and Orion's Belt.
They were the only constellations we knew,
But the way our eyes lit up when we saw them,
Made them the only ones we needed.

Back to when wonder was our only motive.
We dived in head first not because we had courage,
But because we didn't know to be scared yet.

Back to when we rolled the windows down just to taste
the wind without fear of ruining our hair.
And daydreaming was a common pastime
not a waste of it.
When we were more than just people,
We were heroes and pirates and wizards and royalty.
We soared through stormclouds
and danced with dandelions.
Our heartbeat was the only music we ever needed.
And every raindrop was proof that magic really did
exist.
Bedtime stories didn't seem so far off.

What happened between then and now?
How did magic become merely a device
for Disney to make a profit.
And four-leaf clovers became so rare
we stopped even bothering to look.
We stay up late
but keep the curtains closed from the cosmos.
They say money can't buy happiness
but it's starting to replace it.
We shy away from opportunity
because we finally learned what fear was.
Our dresses remain clean
and we don't drink chocolate milk
We close our fists and turn our eyes from the skies.
We don't have time for staring contests so our galaxies
flicker and dim.
Your favorite word became “Because.”

Except, for a few.
Some people never stopped daydreaming
They still wish on dandelions though some may call
them childish.
And wander forests in their free time because their
curiosity surpasses their fears.
They love for the sake of loving, their joy does not need
justification.
Most of all,
they still ask questions.

Words of wisdom from our youth

“Change: Never Wanted, Always Needed,” by Abby Poirer

Life is all about change—it’s commonplace and a vital part of the way we live. Change is scary, many people dislike it, but the thing is, if none of us ever changed, if none of us ever grew, we wouldn’t be where we are today. I wouldn’t be where I am today. You wouldn’t be where you are today.

Without change, without growth, I would be stuck. Stuck in a mindset that rendered me incapable of learning. Stuck between a rock and a hard place simply because I refused to find another way. I don’t want to be stuck—I want to do things, discover things, change things. Even though it’s scary.

When I was between the ages of 11 and 14 I stared down the barrel of many a change. In the fifth grade my parents told me they were going to take me out of public school and enroll me in online school with some others for my sixth grade year. Part of me was excited, part of me was sad, and the other part of me, the biggest part of me, was terrified of everything that was about to change.

I was only 11, I didn’t have a say, and I didn’t really try to argue too much about it. I bought my uniform, I learned how to use the program, and I walked into my new “school” with a bunch of other kids my age that were even more scared than I was. I quickly became close to all of them and we remain friends to this day (one of them is even on the verge of graduating now), but still,

it was terrifying to lose everything I was accustomed to in the public school system.

After two years of using on-line school, after I’d mastered the software and the format, after I’d made lifelong friends, after I loved where I was at this point in time, we disbanded. I had to start over again. I had to change everything. Again. I bought the new uniform I needed for this new school, went to my orientation, then walked in and became friends with the first girl I noticed smile at me. She welcomed me to her group, and the amount of relief that I felt when they later called me their friend made everything okay. It made all the changes I’d endured okay. Sadly, she and I stopped being friends after about six months, which still hurts me to this day, but without that horrible, awful change, I wouldn’t have gotten even closer with another girl, who became my best friend, to whom I also remain very close.

As scary as it was, as much as it hurt, it was definitely worth it. I’d never had a friendship abruptly end before, and then all of a sudden I had. She and I slowly became friendly again but we never got back to being actual friends, never got back to being close. On the last day of school, an enormous group of us wanted to take what we called our “family photo” and the girl I was no longer friends with was a part of it. We all huddled together, snapped the picture, and then, going our separate ways, we all started heading to our cars to go home for the summer.

But then I heard my name called in a voice that hadn’t been spoken to me in months. I turned around and there she was: hopeful. Welcoming. Changed. She opened her arms for a hug and we both pulled each other in oh-so-tightly as if to make up for all the lost time. But what has stuck with me ever since is what she whispered in my ear between each of our sobs: “thank you.” I couldn’t believe what I’d heard, I said “for what?” Her response? “For everything.”

Even though we weren’t friends anymore, even though we still aren’t, even though it took every bit of courage she could muster to say those two words “thank you,” even though neither of us could ever admit, until now, that our experience allowed us to grow. Not only apart, but within ourselves. The old her never would have been able to utter those words, but she wasn’t “the old her” anymore, she was the bigger person. She allowed the experience to change her, as did I.

In the beginning, this whole issue kind of drowned me. It hurt so bad and I was gasping for air but there was nothing. So badly I wanted to make up, but I wanted to maintain my pride and keep saying I was right even more. I kept gasping, hoping to rescue this friendship, this person, but eventually, as you do, I ran out of air. A part of me died, I was devastated that we had both given up on each other, on ourselves. But this allowed me to approach my new school, yes another one, with no guilt, nothing holding me back, and nothing to weigh me down.

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*“Never Wanted, Always Needed,”
continued*

There’s a stigma around growing up, around aging, becoming an adolescent, then later an adult, even just maturing, because it means you’re not a kid, it means you are about to enter the world with all your rights and all your freedoms and the world is now yours to experience and no one can control you and it’s scary. But the thing I’ve learned as I’ve grown up, all these 16 years: growing up is freeing. Sure it’s scary, change is scary, new is scary, different is scary, the unknown is scary, everything in the world is scary. But growth as people is the only thing that can

save us from a numbingly monotonous life where the only real growth is your height. I’m not scared. I’m not scared to be a better person. I’m not scared to become more understanding. I’m not scared to grow. I’m only scared to stay the same forever. I want to grow. I want to change. Every day is a learning opportunity, how could I fear that?

Growth is what the world is made of. We can all grow, because we are the world. The young, the old, the everywhere-in-betweens, we can all grow. It’s what makes the world go round.

“Growing Up a Human is a Lot Like a Tomato Plant I Once Had,” by Everly Rae Milstead

A few years ago, my family decided to have our very own garden in our backyard. We grew things like squash and tomatoes and peppers. We would harvest them and I would proudly bring my harvested tomatoes to school and give them to my teachers. I would go on long speeches about how much we had to do to get this one handful of tomatoes. It was my own take on trying to be the teacher’s pet.

Now we fast forward a few years and our little home garden is pretty much a heap of dirt that has grass growing on it. I plan to eventually get myself out there again and get my garden back up and running, keyword being eventually. Now the real reason for why I am telling you a story about a little home garden, besides that it goes so comedically well with the theme of this service, is that I

hadn’t realized how much my life related to this tiny garden. Just like this garden falling apart, my life fell apart. Along with dealing with the normal hormonal roller coaster that is teenage-hood, I also had my family life completely turned over in front of me. There were so many nights that I cried myself to sleep wondering what I had done or what my family members had done to deserve any of what was going on. I watched a sibling who was the strongest person I knew fall defeated to none other than themselves. I watched my mom have to handle things that no mother deserves to go through. I watched my happy, sunflower-y self become wilted and sad. My seventeen-year-old self was an abandoned garden.

But the thing is, throughout the years this garden was left unattended, a tomato plant was able to persevere through it. This tomato plant made it through the Austin droughts and the floods and the

White Allies for Racial Equity

**Sunday, June 18
Rm. 13
12:30–2 p.m.**

Many of you have read about the current conversation among UUs regarding racial disparities in hiring for upper management within the Unitarian Universalist Association. This has led to a larger conversation around white supremacy culture. We will explore this and how white cultural norms are so often the assumed standard way of being and doing within our institutions.

The White Allies is a group of self-identified white Austin area UUs and friends. Through training and self-examination, we educate ourselves about racism and whiteness to be good allies in anti-racism work in our church and community.

For more info or to be added to our email list, contact Scott at sbutki@gmail.com.

Young Adults Group

Sunday, June 25
After second service

The Young Adults group will be meeting for our monthly brunch and fellowship. Come join us! Look for us in the hallway outside of the sanctuary and we'll walk together to a local restaurant.

“A Tomato Plant I Once Had,”
continued

freezes and heat waves that sometimes happened in the same week, because we live in Austin and that's what Austin does. This little tomato plant once produced juicy tomatoes during the early summers and now it produces a metaphor for my life. Like this tomato plant, I dealt with my own winter freeze. My winter freeze took shape as depression and feeling lonely and cold. This tomato and I went through our roots, what kept us stable, getting frozen and our happy bright leaves falling off. Like this tomato plant, I went through a drought. My drought was the feeling like I just may not make it to the finish line or the next cycle of seasons. The little tomato plant wasn't able to see whether or not it would make it just like I did. Life is rough, but like this little tomato plant, I have shown the grit to get through it no matter the circumstance.

I feel as if everyone is a plant in their own way. My mother has been a giant

tree with roots that go so deep into the Earth that I know I am safe to lean on her. My siblings and I grew apart as we grew up, just as plants need space in order to live. We all made it, just as that tomato plant did.

While my life is still going on, I have realized that I don't have to grow on my own. Just like plants have bees, ladybugs, and spiders, and many other critters to help them grow, I have friends, mentors, and this church to help me on my pathway of life. I have skills like making sure I get myself in a safe place before my life enters a hard freeze, just like we put hooped covers over plants to protect them from the cold. Life is going to keep going, whether I like it or not, and plants are still going to need to be tended to, just as my life will need assistance at times. As I plant more tomato plants, I will always think of that tiny tomato plant that seemingly made it through everything I could imagine. I will think of it the next time my life hits another drought or flood. ■



A quick update on Spring Into Action 2017

We had a great and successful time in April with Spring Into Action 2017! Be expecting a recap of the month's events in the next issue. And big thanks to everyone that volunteered, participated, and sprung into action!



Alejandro Caceres, Priscilla Hale, and Paula X. Rojas speaking for the Forum, as part of the Spring Into Action events. Image via Youtube

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Good news from the capital campaign, and the stewardship campaign is gearing up!

STUNNING GOOD NEWS

You will remember that the six-year capital campaign launched in 2014 to expand our buildings to fit our growing mission. You will recall that in 2014 our congregation pledged more than \$3 million to the capital campaign.

We have just completed our follow-up CC funding drive of new member families, those who have joined in the past two years and have been members for six months and more.

The goal was for our new 55 families to pledge

\$100,000

WE EXCEEDED OUR GOAL:

our new members pledged more than

\$110,000!

Our church family owes greatest thanks to the people most intimately involved:

- Our new families who made their pledge;
- Our canvass team, who met with our new families;
- Capital Campaign Co-Chairs Brendan Sterne and Ann Edwards; and,
- Rev. Meg and Rev. Chris, and to our staff Victoria Valadez, Katherine Patton, and Shannon Posern.

In celebrating our success, Rev. Chris spoke of how the people of Austin are flocking to our doors to seek us out, but that many feel uncomfortable because of the overcrowding of our sanctuary. Put another way, our church’s successful capital campaign will allow our physical space to reflect who we are—a congregation welcoming all who seek our liberal way of religion.

NEXT ON THE MENU

The annual stewardship ministry canvass begins now. Stewardship Ministry Chair Bill Edwards reminds everybody that the bedrock of

successful fundraising is the dream, and the personal relationship between the canvasser and the donor. He stood in front of the congregation last fall and spoke of the 2017 stewardship drive.

“This is a canvass based on commitment, as well as on dreams. More than 50 of us, many more than ever before, signed up as canvass visitors. They are the ones—you canvassers are the ones—who did make the phone calls, and did send the e-mails, and did meet face-to-face to talk about our church.

“And we—this congregation’s members and friends—are also the ones, we who did answer the phone calls and did reply to the e-mails, and did meet face-to-face to talk about our church. And the talk was not about the money—the talk was about the dreams. The money follows the dreams. And we dream big.”

This year we will be delighted to welcome the first 100 members and friends to join us on the canvass visitors team. And then the next 100...

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING



Texas UU Justice Ministry

Photos & article by Wendy Erisman

Every other year, Texans wonder what new horrors will emerge from our state legislature, and 2017 was no exception. During the recent session, our state legislators proposed bills that would limit women's reproductive choices, criminalize our immigrant communities, and make bathroom visits a nightmare for transgender individuals. These bills are in direct opposition to many of our UU values, but how can we make our voices heard at the legislature?

The Texas UU Justice Ministry (TXUUJM) provides that voice at the Capitol for UU Texans. Representing 34 UU congregations from across the state, TXUUJM educates and organizes member congregations and partners with sympathetic organizations in order to advocate effectively for public policies that reflect UU values. On Sunday, June 11, TXUUJM will be the recipient of the monthly special offering. Your generous donations are greatly appreciated and will help demonstrate our congregation's commitment to bend Texas toward justice. For more information on how to become involved with TXUUJM, stop by the Social Action table in the gallery after worship services, or visit TXUUJM's Facebook page, or www.txuujm.org.

Here are some TXUUJM highlights from the 2017 legislative session:

On Feb. 15, more than 230 UUs from across the state, including busloads from Dallas and Houston, met in Austin for TXUUJM's UU Lobby Day. Participants spoke to legislators, registered their opposition to invasive anti-choice bills, broke bread together, and felt the warmth of a common UU faith. Everyone in the State Capitol that day knew that the UUs were in the house, especially after hearing a rousing performance by the North Texas UU Congregations' Common Ground Street Choir in the open-air rotunda.



On May 8, six UU ministers joined over 50 clergy on the steps leading to the House chamber to state their love and support for LGBTQ Texans. TXUUJM executive director Rev. Chuck Freeman was one of six ministers invited to meet in person with Rep. Ron Simmons, author of HB 2899, which would prevent city and school district policies that protect transgender individuals from using the bathroom most appropriate for their

gender identity. The ministers delivered a letter to him signed by over 200 Texas clergy members opposing the bill.



On May 1, Rev. Freeman joined activists organized by ICE Out of Austin, Austin Sanctuary Network, Grassroots Leadership, and RAICES in occupying the entrance to the State Insurance Building where Gov. Abbott's office is located in protest of SB4, the "sanctuary cities" bill. Around 20 of the protesters were arrested for trespassing, including Rev. Freeman, who said, "It is vital that we as people of privilege are willing to put our bodies on the line. No oppressed people have ever secured their rights without this sacred community covenant." ■



UBARU NEWS



UBarU honored with Chalice Lighters call!

The UUA Chalice Lighters Program is a nearly 30-year-old program by which individuals and congregations help their neighbors cross significant thresholds, in keeping with our historic polity admonition to provide “succor” to our congregational neighbors. Givers do this by making small donations to “Chalice Calls” during the year. (You can become a Chalice Lighter by joining the email list at www.uua.org/southern/chalice-lighters, and clicking on the box on the right-hand side of the page.)

The Chalice Lighter call for our Southwest geographical area has been awarded to UBarU Camp and Retreat Center in Mountain Home, TX. UBarU seeks Chalice Lighter funding support for an accessibility improvement project. These improvements will more easily allow persons of limited mobility to the most prominent and rewarding locations on the UBarU property. We appreciate your generous contribution to help this cause! See www.ubaru.org for project details and donation information. Thank you very much!

Getting to Know UU

Sunday, June 11
Rm. 15A
12:15–1:30 p.m.

This informal class is a good way to learn more about UUism and this church. Contact: Shannon Posern, membership@austinuu.org.

“Path to Membership” class

Saturday, July 29
9 a.m.–12 p.m.
Howson Hall

Breakfast and childcare are provided for this quarterly class designed for those interested in becoming members. Learn about the responsibilities of membership; learn about UU history and the history of this church; share faith stories with other prospective members (optional); hear about ways to connect in the church; and sign the membership book and fill out new member paperwork, if you feel ready!

Please RSVP to membership@austinuu.org as soon as possible or with Shannon at the visitor table, so we can get an accurate head count for food and childcare.

Feel the love (and coffee buzz) for Pride Month on June 25!

In honor of Pride month and the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing marriage equality in all 50 states, we are serving hand-brewed espressos and lattes from a popup bar in Howson Hall after services on June 25. Coffee offerings by Figure 8 Coffee in East Austin. Please join us to celebrate love!



Photo: Figure 8 Coffee Purveyors

Eclectic Folk Jam**Friday, June 9****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.

UU/Quaker Singalong**Saturday, June 24****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.

SUNDAY SERVICES**SANCTUARY 9:15 AM AND 10:45 AM****JUNE 4****Dude, You’re Stressing Me Out**

REV. CHRIS JIMMERSON

No matter what our political leanings, the current state of our affairs in our country can seem stressful and overwhelming these days. Likewise, we are in challenging times and encountering much change with Unitarian Universalism and within our church. We will take a look out how stress can show up in our lives and how we can take steps to manage it. Nakia, the original Top 8 semifinalist from NBC’s “The Voice,” will join the First UU Intergenerational Choir.

JUNE 11**Roots Hold Me Close**

REV. NELL NEWTON

How did you get into this mess? Whatever your particular mess might be and we all have at least one. Somehow the solid earth of predictable certainty gave way and you slid. Or, maybe you were pushed or drawn or lured—or, hopefully, you were loved into this tumbling, ever-changing moment. Amid this season of graduations, departures, and adventures, we’ll reflect on the work of our community as growers of both roots and wing. Music to be provided by a jazz trio, comprised of Peter Pope, Phil Spencer and Samuel Graf.

JUNE 18**The Power of Storytelling**

REV. CHRIS JIMMERSON

Telling stories is central to how human beings make meaning and view our world. How do the stories we learn and tell ourselves affect our lives and our society? Kiya Heartwood will join us for musical offerings.

JUNE 25**Grace, Covenant, and the Beloved Community**PASTOR ANDREW YOUNG &
INTERIM LFD DIRECTOR
LAINE YOUNG

UUs and other religious progressives often talk about replacing discrimination and bigotry with unity and compassion. But actually creating such a community is more difficult than just talking about it. What can we do in our own lives to be the change we want to see in society? Musical guest will be organist Austin Haller.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

JUNE 4

Recap of the 2017 Texas Legislative Session

WITH DONNA HOWARD

Veteran state lawmaker and longtime First UU member Donna Howard will review the work of the Texas Legislature's 140-day regular session ending May 29. Since first winning her seat in the Texas House in a 2006 special election, Democrat Howard has emerged as a respected thought leader on budget, education, and healthcare issues in the House. She is a member of the House Appropriations Committee and serves on the key subcommittee that oversees education spending. She is also a member of the Higher Education Committee and serves as vice chair of the Calendars Committee, which determines whether and when bills come up for a vote of the full House.

Donna is a nurse by profession, having earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in health education at UT. She worked as a critical care nurse at Brackenridge and Seton Hospitals and served as Austin's first hospital-based coordinator of patient education. She is a past president of the Texas Nurses Association (District 5) and was a health education instructor at UT.

JUNE 11

From Park Lady to Council Member: Alison Alter on Austin

WITH ALISON ALTER

Council Member Alison Alter's unique perspective as a relatively new resident of the city, combined with her background in public policy, allows her to take a fresh approach to our city's long-standing challenges. In this presentation, Council Member Alter will discuss her first few months on the council and the promise of the 10-1 Council to better serve the city. She will share her priorities over the coming year as CodeNEXT goes

through its myriad stages, the council chooses a new city manager, and the city attempts to navigate the challenging road ahead—from the impacts that traffic and development have on the climate, to where Austin stands in today's politics.

Alter is a small business owner, a former professor, a community connector, and an environmental advocate. She is honored to represent District 10 and the City of Austin.

Alter has over 20 years of experience working in nonprofits, higher education and through public-private partnerships. She earned her PhD in political economy and government at Harvard University, and her BA in public policy from Stanford University. In 2013 she launched her own philanthropic advising business, Alter Advising, helping individuals, families, and foundations to increase the effectiveness of their giving and to transform their philanthropic experiences.

JUNE 18

New and Old Environmental Issues in Texas

WITH LUKE METZGER

Luke Metzger is founding director of Environment Texas, a statewide, citizen-funded advocacy group for clean air, clean water, and open spaces. He has been involved in dozens of citizen-related environmental campaigns and regularly testifies before the Texas Legislature on environmental issues. His interviews and articles have appeared in the New York Times, USA Today, on MSNBC, and elsewhere.

"Capitol Inside" named him one of the "Top Lobbyists for Causes," and he has received the President's Award from the Texas Recreation and Parks Society for his work to protect Texas parks. Currently he serves as a Commissioner on the Austin Resource Management Commission. He will discuss the growing environmental dangers in Texas, the recent actions of the Texas Legislature, and what the future looks like.

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**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Austin**
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www.austinuu.org

First UU Ministers
Rev. Meg Barnhouse
Rev. Chris Jimmerson

Director of Music
Brent Baldwin

Interim Director of Lifespan
Faith Development
Laine Young

Congregational Administrator
Shannon Posern

Communications Coordinator
Victoria M. Valadez

Financial Administrator
Katherine Patton

Board President
Jairy Grisaffe

THE FORUM, *continued*

JUNE 25

How to End Homelessness in Austin

WITH ANN HOWARD

Ann Howard is the first executive director of the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) in Austin, a position she has held since 2011. She has advocated for affordable housing in Austin in an effort to address homelessness. To that end, she has

secured grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the state to address the issue. Under her tenure the budget of ECHO has increased to over \$1,000,000 per year. She holds a bachelor's degree from UT Austin, a Master of Public Affairs degree from the LBJ School of Public Affairs, and a JD from the UT School of Law. She will discuss the continuing problem of homelessness in Austin and programs to address it. ■



**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Austin**

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