



FIRST UU NEWS

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

What is going on with...

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



Here are some answers to your frequently asked questions.

My Sabbatical

UU ministers get one month of sabbatical for every year served at one church. You have to take it between your fourth and seventh year. This is my sixth year here. It's an inconvenient time to take it, but that is almost always true. I'm going to set up a pattern of taking four months every four years, so I'm not taking six, I'm taking four. I'll be out July–October. Chris, our seminarians and ordained friends will be covering the pulpit and pastoral care. I have a book to finish and Spanish to learn, so I'll be getting lessons in Spanish and I'll be writing. Kiya and I hope to go to Seville for September. Other than that, we'll be on tour or around Austin.

Search for new LFD Director

We've decided to postpone the search for a new director of Lifespan Faith Development. We found that the candidates usually move in the summer, starting in August.

This would bring the new person on board while I was gone, which would not be fair. Laine, who is doing a wonderful job as acting DLFD, has agreed to stay through next year.

Women's Alliance returns

We are going to reactivate the Women's Alliance! Mary Overton has been the energy behind this. It will be a potluck meeting every second Tuesday, starting on January 10, when our speaker will be Donna Howard. Look for the brief article on this on pg. 12.

Building process update

Our building process is in the stage of permitting and final design. We've run into a requirement for more sprinklers in the building than we'd originally thought, which puts a strain on the budget. Thankfully, our members are keeping up with their capital campaign pledges, and more new members are making the commitment to being part of this expanded welcome, so we should be all right.

More info on staff changes

We have been streamlining our staff structure, and have combined the bookkeeper position and the office administrator position into one three-fourths time position, which will be called Finance Administrator. (Learn more about Katherine Patton, our new team member, on pg. 7. She will start at First UU this month.)

We've expanded Shannon Posern's hours by 10 to make her position three-fourths time as well. Shannon's new title is Congregational Administrator.

Thanks, Fellowship Committee!

The Fellowship Team came in under budget, and donated the overage to the Guest At Your Table collection. Kudos to them for a wonderful Thanksgiving feast.

All Church Council meeting

The All Church Council, with representatives from all committees/ministry teams/choir, will meet at 1:15 on Sunday, January 15. Bring

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Path to Membership

**Saturday, Jan. 28
Howson Hall
9 a.m.–12 p.m.**

If you're ready to consider membership, we encourage you to attend a "Path to Membership" class. You can meet other prospective members, learn about UU history and principles, the church's diverse programs, and the benefits and responsibilities of membership. The class is offered quarterly.

Contact: Shannon Posern,
membership@austinuu.org.

Getting to Know UU

**Sunday, February 12
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.

Am I your keeper?

by Marsha Sharp



Recently, I was able to observe firsthand the collision of two very different belief systems.

Each week I volunteer at a medical facility where cancer patients receive chemotherapy. I don't do anything medical; I try to make the patients as comfortable as possible during their ordeal, give a listening ear when needed. As I approached one woman, she appeared to be in obvious distress—tense, tears welling in her eyes. I asked if she needed to talk; that was all it took and an outpouring of grief, anger, and helplessness emerged.

She hadn't seen her young grandchildren in several weeks, and she didn't anticipate seeing them over the holidays. Her daughter-in-law has refused to immunize her young elementary-age children against anything in spite of the grandmother's compromised immune system due to cancer, chemotherapy, and radiation. She has had her doctor explain all this and the risks of immunization to her daughter-in-law to no avail. Although the children appear well and active, she doesn't know what they may have been exposed to in school and in the neighborhood. Should she take the chance and visit them? Should she compromise her life to see them?

As she continued to talk, I began to think of all the other people like this: people with autoimmune diseases, other chemo and radiation patients, all who may be exposed to diseases through no fault of their own. A common cold, the flu, measles, chicken pox, or mumps can be disastrous to someone with a compromised immune system.

As a young child, I grew up with a friend who survived polio. She could walk, but not without very heavy metal braces on both legs. She couldn't run, she couldn't even climb the steps to the top of the slide. But she was the happiest kid around. She was alive. I remember not going swimming during the summer for fear of contracting polio, and I remember the line of people snaking out of the school cafeteria waiting for that sugar cube that would immunize all of us against polio. I still have the scar from my small pox vaccination.

If I have a cold and go shopping or come to church, who am I potentially exposing? Not everyone wears a badge of illness like a bald head or the inability to walk or stand. Not all illnesses are obvious to us.

What has happened? How responsible are we toward helping protect the larger society and world? ■

"What is going on?" continued

a laptop so you can see what's going on with our new system for volunteers recruitment! Shannon Posern along with the Transformation Through Service Team will lead. Lunch is provided from 12-1 p.m.

Questions?

If you have questions about what's happening at First UU, please don't hesitate to ask Rev. Meg: meg.barnhouse@austinuu.org, or Rev. Chris: chris.jimmerson@austinuu.org. We enjoy helping people figure things out! ■

TEXAS UU JUSTICE MINISTRY

Advocate our values at the Capitol with other Texas UUs

**Wednesday, Feb. 15
8:30 a.m.**

Join UUs from across the state on Wednesday, Feb. 15, as we convene at the Capitol for our annual Texas UU Justice Ministry Legislative Action Day to promote UU values with legislators during the 2017 session. Register now at www.txuujm.org/LAD and volunteers will schedule appointments with legislators ahead of time.

We'll start our day at the Capitol at 8:30 a.m. with Representative Donna Howard, a First UU Austin member, who will tell us about the latest inside news regarding key issues of economic justice, immigration reform and reproductive justice.

Next, church member Karen Neeley, who's worked as a lobbyist for community banks for 27 years, will share a refresher on how to conduct advocacy meetings with our legislators through

role-playing. Plus, we'll receive one-page, informative flyers to leave with legislators, which describe both our Unitarian Universalist denomination and our main issues.

From 11 a.m.–3 p.m. we'll visit legislators from our districts in small groups, and from 3:30–4:30 p.m. we'll reconvene as a big group to debrief our day before heading home.

Those planning to arrive Tuesday Feb. 14 will have the option of a special 7 p.m. tour of the Capitol by Karen Neeley, who will show us the shortcuts, back stairways and other secret spaces most people never discover, along with a few juicy stories.

If you want to volunteer for hospitality rather than join the advocacy work, we also welcome you. To learn more, visit us at the Social Action table in the gallery after one of the Sunday worship services or email Peggy Morton at insideamigos@austinuu.org.

Start 2017 with something new—join the Forum Video Team!

No experience? No problem! We need more camera people for the forum. It's easy to learn to run one of the cameras, and fun too. You don't need to film every week, and the video gang is easygoing and convivial. If you are interested, contact Tom Martin (tom.martin.ipad@gmail.com) or stop by the forum and chat with the video team.

Show hospitality to Texas UUs for TXUUJM

Tuesday, Feb. 14

If you have an extra room and wouldn't mind offering a bed to a UU coming for the Texas UU Justice Ministry Legislative Action Day, please talk to us! We could also use help with hospitality at the Capitol the day after. You'd be hosting active social justice leaders from UU congregations around Texas. Some may want to stay the night before or after Legislative Action Day. To offer a room, help with hospitality or get more info, email Peggy Morton: morton.peg@gmail.com.

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Your faith development questions answered

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



*In this New Year, let us be amazed.
Let us search for new life and hope in our midst.
Let us nurture creativity in every form.
Let us be reminded that new insights of the universe are always being made.
In this New Year, let us be amazed.*

– Rev. Aaron Stockwell

I don't know about you, but I can't believe how quickly 2016 seemed to go by! I hope that each of you had a happy, restful holiday season. I thought that I would start off the new year by answering some of the frequently asked questions I get about the Lifespan Faith Development program:

When do I bring back my “Guest at Your Table” box?

Guest at Your Table boxes can be returned to the LFD Dept. on January 15. We will collect the money throughout January and then send the money to the UU Service Committee (UUSC). If you opt to write a check instead of donating change, please make the check out to “UUSC”.

Last year we raised \$555.68 for the UUSC through the Guest at Your Table program—will we beat that total this year? Check the February newsletter to find out!

What is happening with Our Whole Lives (OWL) at First UU?

One of the goals for this church is to become a Lifespan OWL congregation. This means that we need to add the K-1, 4-6, young adult, and adult OWL classes into the rotation, which means that the OWL

class structure needs to be restructured. This will also make teaching the OWL classes easier for our amazing volunteer OWL facilitator team! This spring we will be offering the 10-12 class—classes start January 11!—and in the fall we will be offering the 4-6 class. The 4-6 OWL class will happen spring 2018. We will also be using the OWL page of the church website to keep people informed about upcoming classes: www.austinuu.org/wp2013/?p=18174. See more on next page.

What is happening to your former office?

Excellent question! Several things are happening to that space (located at the end of the gallery, next to the kitchen). Our volunteer LFD Librarian, Devon Austin, has been hard at work cataloging and organizing our LFD library. We will even have an online LFD library catalog available on Goodreads soon! I have been working to transform this space into the LFD Office, which will be a multi-use space for LFD volunteers to work, with supplies available to work on projects, a table and chairs available for meeting space, and some comfy chairs for kiddos, too!

Have a question about the LFD program that hasn't been answered? Please don't hesitate to ask me.

In fellowship,
Laine

Be a 2017 Surprise Pal

Please 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

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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 an end-of-project party that 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.

Registration ends on January 8! The project will run from Jan. 15–Feb. 26 this year. Participants must commit to attend the reveal party on Sunday, Feb. 26. To participate, contact laine.young@austinuu.org or pick up a registration form on the Lifespan Faith Development table in the gallery.

No First Sunday Seminars for Jan.

There will be no First Sunday Seminars in January since the first Sunday is New Year’s Day. First Sunday Seminars is a multi-track, adult religious education experience that has options in areas such as leadership development, spiritual identity, UU identity development, and spiritual practices.

F.R.E.D. Night

F.R.E.D. (Fellowship, Religious Education and Dinner) is our all-ages Wednesday night programming. We serve a simple, delicious \$6 dinner (kids eat free!) at 6 p.m. that always includes vegetarian options, followed by a variety of adult and children’s programming and small group ministries from 7–9 p.m. Childcare available.

“The Wi\$dom Path” with Karen Neeley

Jan. 11 & 25

The Wi\$dom Path is a 12-workshop program where participants understand how money can be a more effective force for living lives of meaning and value, and for creating positive change. \$20 enrollment fee, scholarships available. Each workshop can be attended without attending any others: newcomers are welcome!

“Parents as Resident Theologians” with Laine Young, Jan. 18

“Parents as Resident Theologians” is a 6-workshop course

that encourages the exploration of one’s own religious pilgrimage. As we becomes more confident about what we believe and for what we are searching, we become more creative in our dialogues with our children and youth. Newcomers welcome!

“Game Night,” with Shannon Posern, Jan. 18

Join Joe Milam-Kast and Shannon Posern for fun and games in Howson Hall after F.R.E.D. Dinner. All ages are welcome!

“Examining Whiteness” Jan. 18 & 25

Starting Jan. 18, we will offer an 8-week group on a weekly basis for white folks based on the UUA program “Examining Whiteness: An Anti-Racism Curriculum.” Per the website for the class: “One of the ways that racism affects us is by shaping our identity (and this is true for whites and People of Color). These materials are prepared particularly for white people interested in transforming their whiteness, through understanding the complex history of white supremacy of over four hundred years in the US, and the impact it has on us as individuals and society as a whole. Providing an anti-racism curriculum for white people allows deeper understanding of issues that are essential to furthering a white anti-racist identity.”

Classroom Helper Training January 21, 9:30–11 a.m.

Join us for fun, fellowship, and breakfast while we go over the basics of being a classroom helper in the classrooms on Sunday mornings. This event is open to those who will be a helper this year, as well as those who would like to learn more about it! RSVP to laine.young@austinuu.org. Childcare will be provided.

OWL Classes Starting January 11

We will be proudly offering OWL (Our Whole Lives), a comprehensive and progressive sex education curriculum, to 10–12th graders in the spring semester. The classes will meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. beginning January 11 and continuing through May, including a lock-in February 3–4.

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PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CLINIC

People of Color Group

This group is for anyone who identifies as a person of color, Latinx, bi/multi-racial. We provide a supportive and fun club for POC UUs. White allies are encouraged to join the White Allies for Racial Justice group.

We meet on the second Sunday each month for a lunch after second service. Join us on Sunday, January 8; location will be posted on Facebook and in the weekly bulletin. For more information, contact peopleofcolor@austinuu.org.

Calling all UU artists!

**Reception: Sat. Jan. 14
Gallery
6-8 p.m.**

The Alternative Space Gallery will be hosting a members show for January. Please drop off 1–3 works, labeled and ready to hang during the first week of this month. Include your name, size and medium type, as well as price; or label “not for sale.” They will be installed Friday, Jan. 6. Contact: Jamie Price, gallery@austinuu.org or (512) 293-4417.

We are doing a flip-flop!

In 2017 the People's Community Clinic (PCC) collating groups are going to flip the meeting sites for regular meeting days. That means on the first Monday of each month we will meet at PCC's newest site at 1101 Camino La Costa (where we have been going on the second Tuesday). Then on the second Tuesday of each month, we will meet at the original site at 2909 N. IH-35 (where we have been going on the first Monday). So you see it will be same days, same times, but a flip of the sites.

Please note: PCC will be closed on January 2, the first Monday in January. So the flip in locations will begin on January 10, the second Tuesday of the month, when we will collate at the original site.

You might ask why? Well, it happens that at the Camino La Costa location

the workroom that we need is available on the first Monday of each month, but not on other dates. This change will make our work easier and more efficient for everyone. So...we simply flip the sites.

Our PCC Children's Book Drive was recently blessed by another wonderful donation of 284 books. We are so thankful to Laura Maverick for thinking of the clinic and donating these books to their reading program.

If you would like more information about the mission and volunteer needs of People's Community Clinic, check it out on their website: www.austinpcc.org.

For information about First UU volunteer efforts with PCC, or to donate your gently used children's books, please send an email to pcc@austinuu.org.

WHITE ALLIES FOR RACIAL EQUITY

Coming up at our next meeting

**Sunday, Jan. 15
Rm. 13
12:30–2 p.m.**

For its January meeting the White Allies of Racial Equity will be discussing a few topics: the prejudices faced by Muslims, especially post-election, as well as identifying and debunking the many myths and urban legends about Muslims; stories of ordinary folks rally-

ing to stop hateful behavior, and other actions we can take in Austin; and the group's covenant and purpose.

We welcome self-identified white UUs and friends. Through training and self-examination, the White Allies group educates ourselves about racism and whiteness in order to be good allies as we do anti-racism work in our church and our communities.

LFD news continued

OWL registration forms are on the LFD table in the gallery. In order for youth to participate in the class, there is a mandatory parent orientation on Jan. 4 at 7 p.m. or Jan. 8 at 12:30 p.m. The registration fee for the OWL class is \$40 and scholarships are available. You can get more information on registration and classes by emailing laine.young@austinuu.org.

Harvest the Power—“Self” theme starts in February

First UU is proud to offer the opportunity to explore your UU self, benefit our church, and support your favorite cause all at the same time. Harvest the Power provides leadership skill development that goes hand-in-hand with faith development and addresses the reality that today's leaders operate at a time of rapid cultural change, both in and

outside our congregations. Leaders need a broad range of skills, both technical and visionary. This program offers opportunities for both new and experienced leaders to enrich the skills they bring to leadership and to experience their leadership journey as a UU faith journey. With your increased leadership skills, you'll be better able to support your favorite cause.

Harvest the Power will be presented as four independent units. Each month will focus on a different theme and will coordinate a project for our church. The “Self” theme runs during the month of February, on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. Future themes will be presented in April, September, and November. For more info about this upcoming class, contact Laine Young: laine.young@austinuu.org. ■

Alphabet Soup Social Club

**Sunday, January 22
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.

This month we will be meeting on at Dimassi's Mediterranean Buffet, 12636 Research Blvd. For more info contact Tomas Medina at alphabetsoup@austinuu.org, or follow us on Facebook.

Meet Katherine, our new Financial Administrator



My name is Katherine Patton, and I'm thrilled to be joining you in the new Financial Administrator role at First UU of Austin. My first career was

in advertising, and I was happy in that field for about 15 years. When I became a parent, I moved into early childhood

education as a teacher and a preschool owner. I did a stint in public education as a special education teacher of preschool-age children, and then switched to private school administration, where I have gained valuable experience in finance and management. When I'm not working, I enjoy hanging out with my teenager, walking my dog, swimming at Deep Eddy bathing beach, historical fiction, and practicing yoga.

First UU Volunteer Appreciation Party

**Saturday, January 28
Howson Hall
6:30 p.m.**

Have you helped set up or organize? Have you given your time, talents and/or efforts? We want to thank you! If you have volunteered in any way in the last year at First UU, please join us! Hosted by the Fellowship Committee.

NOTES FROM THE INTERN

Looking for a good read

by Susan Yarbrough



Whew! I'm typing this at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning, December 17, 2016, as part of my low-key celebration for having finally completed and turned in the reams of paperwork required by the UUA before I can meet with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in a few months. The aggregate of paperwork is referred to as "the packet," and it contains various evaluations of me by a clinical psychologist, my chaplaincy supervisor at Seton, Reverend Barnhouse, and the lay internship committee here at First UU that has shepherded me through the past year and a half. It also contains transcripts from every college and graduate school I attended, recommendation letters from five people, my descriptions of what I've done and read to start becoming competent in sixteen areas of ministry, and original essays about my life history, the theological basis of my call to UU ministry, how my philosophy of religious education plays out in ministry to children and youth, how my analysis of racism, oppression, and multiculturalism is reflected in my ministry, and how I see myself serving Unitarian Universalism in the near future.

I whined and moaned to a lot to friends about the paperwork until

one of them reminded me that I had handled much more of it when I worked in the legal profession. So then I whined and moaned about the many trips to Chicago in cold weather—and the upcoming trip to Boston in late March—until another friend reminded me of how nostalgically I always speak of the ten years I lived and worked in New York City, and the three years I lived and worked in Amherst, Massachusetts. Yes, indeed. They were very cold.

So you'd think that with the packet done and graduation just five months and four days away, I'd be fresh out of whines and moans, and you'd be almost right. But here's my last one: for the past three years, I haven't had enough time to do all the pleasure reading that I did during the nine years between when I retired in 2005 and when I started seminary in 2014.

I learned to read when I was about four—the direct result of a bedtime ritual when I would visit my East Texas grandmother. She would prop me up in her four-poster bed, descend to the kitchen in her nightgown and bathrobe, and return with a small cut-glass plate on which she had carefully arranged a sliced peach or pear, a sliced apple, and a peeled orange or tangerine. After we

snuggled up together with the fruit plate securely nested in the folds of the bedspread, Nan would open her large Bible, turn to one of the color illustrations, and start slowly reading the accompanying story to me while she pointed to every word. I think the very first words I learned to recognize were "In the beginning," and after that, everything seemed easy.

The school system where I was educated in Dallas placed a heavy emphasis on what was then called "language arts," and most of every day was filled with reading, writing, diagramming sentences, and vocabulary drills. I loved every minute of it, and I left high school reading a thousand words a minute with 100% comprehension. I've lost some of that speed over the years, but I've never lost my love for reading, and I will read almost anything that is well-written.

Before seminary, I read at least fifty books a year. But a full course load every semester at Meadville Lombard meant about 400 pages of reading per week, and because I was reading things that required new vocabularies specific to theology and Unitarian Universalism, I intentionally proceeded more slowly so I could gather some nuanced understandings of the material. As a

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"Good read," continued

result, I have read only one non-school book per month during these past thirty seminary months, and my Amazon wish list is now as long as a roll of wallpaper.

Not all of the seminary and UUA required reading has been tedious, and many of you have asked me to recommend some UU-related books that I've enjoyed. Because of space limitations in this column, I'm going to name just three, each of which I found to be eminently readable, accessible, and interesting:

Mark Morrison-Reed's "Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism" (2011), Paul Rasor's "Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century" (2005), and Susan J. Ritchie's "Children of the Same God: The Historical Relationship Between Unitarianism, Judaism, and Islam" (2014).

Besides loving to read, I appreciate getting book recommendations from other readers, so if you have

some for my post-graduation list, please email them to me so I can add them to the wallpaper. And if you know where I can get one of those bumper stickers that says, "So many books, so little time," please send that information along with your book list...and be sure to order one for yourself. Jews are sometimes referred to as "people of the Book." I will always think of UUs as people of many books, and it's one of the reasons I feel so at home with all of you. ■

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

Our yearly recipients have been selected!

On Dec. 18, First UU members voted on ten of our 2017 monthly special offering recipients. The other two slots will go to the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry and an organization selected as part of Spring into Action, which in 2017 will focus on the theme of "Welcoming."

Three new organizations were selected to receive a portion of our special offering funds in 2017. These organizations are:

- The American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, which works in communities, courts, and the legislature to defend and advance the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people protected by the U.S. Constitution and laws of Texas. This work is accomplished through public education, legislation (local and state), and litigation.

- Youth Rise Texas, which uses mentorship and multi-generational organizing to develop youth leadership in young people directly impacted by parental incarceration, immigrant detention, and deportation. Through education, mentorship, community organizing, and creative cultural productions, Youth Rise Texas cultivates leadership in the struggle against mass incarceration and immigrant criminalization, and by pursuing racial and economic justice.

- Grassroots Leadership, which has guided the work of the Austin Sanctuary Network as we worked to free three immigrant asylum-seekers from deportation. Grassroots Leadership training has transformed UUs who visit incarcerated immigrants, expose for-profit prison abuse, and fight to end family detention.

Grassroots Leadership also received monthly special offering funds this year as the organization selected for Spring into Action 2016 on the theme of "sanctuary."

The organizations that will continue to be funded by the special offering in 2017 are Interfaith Action of Central Texas, UBarU Retreat and Conference Center, Inside Books Project, Planned Parenthood, People's Community Clinic, Austin Child Guidance Center, and SafePlace. The organizations that received the most votes this year, as in years past, were Planned Parenthood, People's Community Clinic, and SafePlace. Planned Parenthood once was an especially popular choice, with more than half of the 106 members who voted ranking it as their first or second choice. ■

HEALTHY RELATIONS MINISTRY

Austin Presence Group

January 5 & 19

Room 13B

6:30–8 p.m.

Each month we will discuss a chapter from "A New Earth." 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.

Senior Luncheon

Wednesday, Jan. 11

Howson Hall

12 p.m.

For this program we'll be treated to a recount of the adventure Betty Wood and Leslie Ashton shared in Cuba. Soup, salad and dessert will be served for \$5. Please RSVP to Alice Cashman: (512) 837-0988.

Info from Covenant Corner

Dear Covenant,

Who are those people who sit with the minister on the dais Sunday mornings? Sometimes they say their names, sometimes they mention their church ministries, sometimes they begin a reading without introducing themselves. The bulletin says they are the lay leader. During a recent service, the minister said that week's lay leader was a minister. Are they seminary students, or interns, or what? Is there some special committee they belong to? How do they get to be the lay leader?

— Curious

Dear Curious,

We welcome your question because it is an example of the many things going on at our church that people might be curious about but do not know where to get information. We promise in our Healthy Relations Covenant to be intentionally hospitable, and knowing where to get one's questions answered certainly falls in that category! Rev. Meg is approachable and welcomes email questions on any aspect of our church, whether from a member, friend, or visitor. If she is not immediately available (e.g., on vacation or her upcoming sabbatical), Rev. Chris is also available.

Going back to your question: in both the UU faith and in many Protestant Christian denominations, a lay leader

assists the minister during the worship service. The name denotes that this person is usually a lay member of the congregation, lay and laity both meaning "the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy."

At First UU, the lay leader frequently lights and extinguishes the chalice while the minister leads the congregation in the chalice words. The lay leader also reads the call to worship and/or the meditation reading. Specific duties can change based on the individual minister's preference or sermon needs. When there is a guest speaker, the lay leader often introduces them and makes any needed church announcements.

There is no special lay leader committee and no special training required to serve as one. Those interested in performing this ministry should simply talk to Rev. Meg. She is easiest to reach by email at meg.barnhouse@austinuu.org. Rev. Chris' email is chris.jimmerson@austinuu.org.

The Healthy Relations Ministry is available to you as a resource if you need help with a difficult situation here at church. It includes Margaret Borden, Ann Edwards, and Elizabeth Kubala and can be reached at healthyrelations@austinuu.org.

Sincerely,
Healthy Relations Ministry

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING



Grassroots Leadership

Despite the challenges nonprofit Grassroots Leadership will face in the year ahead, they won substantial victories in 2016, and First UU members elected them to receive one of our monthly special offerings. We'll recognize them Sunday, Jan. 8.

In early December, Grassroots won a lawsuit against the state of Texas. An Austin judge issued a final judgment preventing the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services from issuing childcare licenses to the nation's largest for-profit family detention centers in Karnes & Dilley.

UUs had testified against this licensing at three hearings before Gov. Abbott granted the childcare licenses, while volunteers have seen firsthand the devastating harm caused from incarcerating babies, young children and moms.

Since last February, Grassroots has supported our work with the Austin Sanctuary Network (ASN) as Guatemalans Hilda & Ivan Ramirez took sanctuary at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. While pursuing a campaign to stop their deportation,

we've grown the network started when Sulma Franco lived in sanctuary at First UU into a coalition of multi-faith congregations and organizations in and around Austin to support those at risk of deportation.

In October, Hilda and Ivan were granted a deferred action status for one year, which will allow them to live in the U.S. free from deportation while pursuing political asylum. UUs and other ASN members signed petitions and made calls to Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) to make this happen with support from Grassroots.

Additionally, in August the Department of Justice announced its plans to end the use of private for-profit prisons. As reported by the Washington Post, federal officials concluded the for-profit "facilities are both less safe and less effective at providing correctional services than those run by the government." Investigations and data shared by Grassroots Leadership helped to expose the conditions that led to this conclusion.

In July, Texas Advocates for Jus-

tice (TAJ) created a second chapter in Austin, following the growth of the Houston chapter and is housed at the Grassroots Leadership offices. TAJ is on a mission to end mass criminalization, to break down barriers to reentry from prison and jail in Texas and to reunite formerly incarcerated individuals, their families, people of faith and allies to build safe and resilient communities.

Financial contributions and volunteers help Grassroots Leadership fight to keep the voices of immigrants and people impacted by the criminal justice system in the public domain. UUs have a chance to support them financially Sunday, Jan. 8 with the special collection during both worship services, and to visit with Executive Director Bob Libal in the gallery after the services to learn more about how volunteers work to affirm the worth and dignity of all.

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.

NEW COMMITTEE UPDATE

Green Sanctuary Movie Night

**Friday, Feb. 3
Howson Hall
7 p.m.**

Our next Green Movie Night will feature "Sand Wars." Join us for this surprising investigation into one of the most consumed natural resources on the planet. Due to the high demand for sand, the planet's reserves are being threatened. More info in the next newsletter. Admission is free, donations accepted.

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 2016, including verifying the completeness and accuracy of the records. Once that is finished, we'll mail statements to everyone of their giving during 2016 (January–December). Your giving statement will go in the mail no later than January 31.

Please join us for the first meeting of our new Women's Alliance!

First guest speaker: Representative Donna Howard

**Tuesday, January 10
Howson Hall
6-8:30 p.m.**

We're starting a Women's Alliance here at First UU. At our first meeting we'll share a potluck dinner from 6–7, and at 7 we will listen to a speaker, then have about 45 minutes for Q&A. To begin, speakers will be drawn from the rich pool of talented women here at our church. It will become a way to get to know one another a bit better, as well as to become informed about issues of interest. Childcare will be provided.

As this will be the first day of the 2017 Texas Legislative Session, we feel very fortunate to have Representative Donna Howard, a member of our church, as our first speaker. She will be speaking about upcoming issues during the session and how to advocate for issues you care about.

Representative Donna Howard has served in the Texas House of Representatives since 2006. She is a member of the House Appropriations Committee,

and sits on its Article III Subcommittee which oversees education spending in the state budget. Donna is also a longtime member of the House Higher Education Committee—on which she currently serves as vice-chair—and the House Administration Committee.

Mary Overton, one of our new members, has agreed to take the lead in facilitating the Women's Alliance. Mary is very excited to lead this group so we can get to know each other better. When we break bread together and learn together, it can be a very enriching experience for all. At the last two UU churches she attended, Women's Alliances were a great support to the congregations. She hopes this group will be a great addition to our church.

Speakers will not be limited to our members; however, we need a way to learn about our sisters' activities here in our community. If you have ideas for speakers or questions about this new group, please contact Mary at mover100@aol.com or (214) 620-1812.

DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

2017 Southwest UU Women's Conference, February 10–12

Conference in Magnolia Hotel Dallas Park Cities, Dallas, TX. Women and teens 13 and older, join us for an inspiring weekend. Speakers, music, worship, workshops, vendors, fellowship and fun! Early registration \$190 before 1/1, registration \$225 from 1/1 through 1/27.

Helen Bond will be the keynote speaker: percussionist of intricate melodies and polyrhythms of West African music, teacher, storyteller,

humanitarian, winner of 2015 Jack Benny Arts and Humanities Award. More info: www.swwuuw.org or contact Mary Overton at (214) 620-1812.

UBarU Needle Arts Retreat Feb 17–19, UBarU Retreat & Conference Center

An opportunity to enjoy your passion with two nights of cozy accommodations and five delicious meals. Early bird registration \$130. Saturday only, \$75 including lunch and dinner. More info at www.ubaru.org under Events.

Save the Date!

- **March 31–April 2:** Heart of Texas Men's Retreat, UBarU Camp & Retreat Center, Kerrville, TX.
- **April 28–30:** 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.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Leadership: How we do what we say we will do

Michelle Obama said, “Service is a limitless opportunity; it is the reason why we breathe.” Service as a church leader on the Board of Trustees or a committee is how we do what we say we will do: nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice. In the next several weeks during Sunday services, we’ll hear stories from individuals who have served our church in leadership positions, and they will tell us how their lives were impacted by their service with First UU. These stories will invite us

all to consider how the act of leading 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 our Board of Trustees and Nominating Committee. Perhaps listening to a leadership moment on a Sunday morning will resonate with you, and alert you to the opportunity for service. If you feel the pull of

leadership, or have special talents that you’d like to offer, there are many ways to lead within our community, and it’s easy to learn what that entails!

We are inviting interested church members to complete a leadership interest form, and to talk to us in the gallery between services during the month of January. Or simply send us an email: nomcom@austinuu.org. Someone will get back to you promptly. ■

Eclectic Folk Jam**Friday, January 13****Rm. 17****7–10 p.m.**

The Eclectic Folk Jam, an open jam session for singers and instrumentalists, is held on the second Friday of every month. We have “Rise Up Singing” song books, and some people like to bring copies of their favorite songs to pass out. Bring drinks and snacks to share. Contact Pete and Kim Akenhead at (512) 834-0188, or Mary Jane Ford at (512) 926-4122 or singalong@austinuu.org.

UU/Quaker Singalong**Saturday, January 28****Friends Meeting House
(3701 E. MLK Blvd.)****7:30–10:30 p.m.**

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

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

WORSHIP SERVICES**S A N C T U A R Y 9 : 1 5 A M A N D 1 0 : 4 5 A M****JANUARY 1****Burning Bowl Service**

REV. CHRIS JIMMERSON

(Please note we'll have just the one service today at 10:45 a.m.) We begin the year by thinking about elements in our lives which are doing us a disservice. We write those things on paper and burn them together, scattering the ashes to the wind. We will also lift up the values and hopes we wish to manifest in the new year.

JANUARY 8**Right Livelihood**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

This element in the Buddhist Eightfold Path asks us to experiment with examining our means of making a living. Can we make a living without harming anyone? Can we make a living without violating other people?

JANUARY 15**Trust, The Decor Committee & Citizens United**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

One of our UU principles is: “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.”

JANUARY 22**Watch Your Language!**

SUSAN YARBROUGH

We are a talking, word-intoxicated denomination, but we sometimes fail to talk when we should. This Sunday, let's think together about what it takes in courage, words, self-knowledge, and theology to speak truth to power.

JANUARY 29**Animal Blessing Service**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

You're invited to bring your well-behaved animals to church. Those who do not get along so well with others, chickens, turtles, rats or snakes may come in carriers. If you bring a horse, it will be blessed as it is tethered in the yard.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

JANUARY 1

No Forum—New Year's Day

JANUARY 8

Tibetan Buddhism & the “Bardo State”

WITH DONNA DECHEN BIRDWELL

In history and in our personal lives, we often experience transition, that sense of being caught in between, neither here nor there, of endings facing uncertain beginnings. In Tibetan Buddhism, this is called a Bardo state and is likened to being between lifetimes. The current state of our society feels a lot like a bardo! Long-term student of Buddhism Donna Birdwell will lead us in an exploration of what it means to be caught in a bardo and what Tibetan Buddhism teaches about how to deal with it.

JANUARY 15

Outlook for the 2017 Texas Legislature

WITH REP. EDDIE RODRIGUEZ

State Representative Eddie Rodriguez, an Austin Democrat entering his eighth term in the Texas House, will preview the work of the 2017 regular session of the Texas Legislature, which opens January 10. The 140-day session will end May 29, and over that span lawmakers must pass a two-year budget and consider thousands of other pieces of legislation.

Rep. Rodriguez will have his own proactive legislative agenda on a host of issues of concern to his East Austin and southeast Travis County district, including economic development and job creation, housing, education, hunger and nutrition, health and human services, and environmental concerns.

JANUARY 22

Preserving Mood Memory and Cognition with a Natural Approach

WITH SHARON HAUSMAN-COHEN, MD

This presentation will look at the role of vitamins, supplements, exercise and addressing genetics in improving mood, memory and cognition. Understanding how different supplements, diet, hormones, vitamins, and other integrative modalities affect the release of the stress hormone cortisol and the synthesis of the important memory neurotransmitters will allow a better appreciation of how they can improve mood and memory now, and cognition in the future.

Dr. Sharon Hausman-Cohen has been a family physician in Austin for 20 years. She is the founder of Balcones Woods Family Medicine and the co-founder of Resilient Health where she offers integrative medicine consults as well as ongoing concierge care.

JANUARY 29

Coming Out: Journey of a Queer Atheist Activist?

WITH NOELLE GEORGE

Noelle George, Executive Director of Foundation Beyond Belief, will talk about how she left religion, came out as atheist and queer, and left a lucrative engineering career to become an activist working at Foundation Beyond Belief, a secular humanist charity. Learn why humanists should work together to positively impact the world and how Foundation Beyond Belief is providing ways to do just that.

Foundation Beyond Belief is a humanist charity that promotes secular volunteering and responsible charitable giving. Guided by the principles of secular humanism, its mission is to unite the humanist community in volunteering and charitable efforts and advocate for compassionate action throughout the world. ■

**First Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Austin**
(512) 452-6168
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

Finance Administrator
Katherine Patton

Board President
Marsha Sharp

AUSTIN SANCTUARY NETWORK

Join us with Carrie Newcomer to support immigrants at risk

Thursday, January 26
Sanctuary
Doors: 8 p.m., Start time: 8:30

Award-winning recording artist Carrie Newcomer is called a “prairie mystic” by the Boston Globe, a “soaring songstress” by Billboard, and “a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate” by the Austin American Statesman. She’ll be performing her new album, “The Beautiful Not Yet,” and original song “Sanctuary.” Tickets are \$22.

All sales go to Austin Sanctuary Network’s lifesaving work. ASN is a multi-faith community coalition help-

ing people escape from violence in their home country. Buy tickets online: www.staopen.org/events/asn-benefit-concert.



First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin

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