



FIRST UU NEWS

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

The Wisdom Tree

As construction begins, we'll harvest plants from our meditation garden to sell to church members.

by Rev. Meg Barnhouse



Here is an idea for people who love the garden outside the candle window; but first, a story.

I dragged myself to an early morning theme talk even though it was the last day of a week at church camp and I was tired from staying up late singing with friends and dancing my fool head off. A panel of old-timers were taking about the early days of this gathering that now had grown to about a thousand Unitarian Universalists coming together every July on the campus of Virginia Tech. Here is the story that stuck in my mind.

There was a teacher who used to come to the camp every summer, a man who could become Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, or Theodore Parker. He would bring his class to sit under a large oak tree out on the quad, and the conversation would range over history, philosophy and theology. Summer after summer folks would look forward to that class, to sitting under what they came to call “the wisdom

tree,” they would look forward to having the kind of conversations where you hear and say things that surprise and delight you.

One summer night, during the church camp, a storm came through. As the people slept, winds and rain whipped the campus. Lightning flashed and struck hard. It struck close. In the morning, daylight revealed the wisdom tree scattered in splinters on the ground. As the grounds crew came to clear it away, church people came from every corner of the campus to circle round. One by one, they asked to take a piece of the tree home with them.

This story struck me deep. I think that there is wisdom available to us, and that it shows up in history, in theology, poetry, music, art, scripture, conversation, nature and ritual. Individuals have a spark of the Divine inside, an inner wisdom that, related to sanely, responsibly, and in community, will lead each person to truth and peace.

Sometimes the place you used to find wisdom gets destroyed. People fail you, a church disappoints you, new information strips away your feeling about a scripture. It's as if your wisdom tree is lying in splinters. We are tempted to take our piece of wisdom home with us and put it in a place of honor, savoring and celebrating the little piece of wisdom we have, pulling it out whenever there is a new question, a new issue, acting as if that piece of wisdom is self-sustaining, and as if it is enough, on its own, to sustain us.

Acting like this, we are forgetting the crucial next step. What is needed is to bring our piece of the wisdom tree back together with the others and stand together on the roots of our wisdom tree, on the roots of what wisdom we have. We do have it inside us, but it is not enough to hold and savor just the one piece. It needs to be added to the others. You can't walk a good spiritual path all by yourself. You have to be in relationship to a community. Your

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Mindfulness Meditation Group: Labyrinth Walk

Monday, January 22
Room 15
6:30–7:30 p.m.

The Mindfulness Meditation group will be hosting a labyrinth walk for the new year. Everyone who wants to participate is welcome to attend.

Getting to Know UU

Sunday, December 10
Room 15
12:15–1:30 p.m.

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

Courage and Wonder in words and actions

by **Jairy Grisaffe**



This past month, many in our congregation gathered to attend workshops to share their stories of affirmation in the church and their wishes for the future. I would like to thank all of you who participated for the time and care you gave this process. I also want to say thank you to the twelve members who facilitated those sessions and the board members who helped. Their dedication to this process has been crucial to its success. I'm excited to see where all of the work we've done takes our congregation.

Our next steps will be to take all that we have shared and find the common themes that you all are telling us about our church. Our board of trustees and our ministers will be going on retreat in January to take the input from the workshops and determine what all has changed about our values, mission statement, end statements. Unity Consulting will guide this effort during our retreat (www.unityconsulting.org). Their role in this process has been integral to ensure that we accurately represent this congregation with what we come up with.

Our board holds the current set of values, end statement, and mission

statement in high regard. After all, they are a key part of what has sustained us and allowed us to grow for these last several years. But as time moves forward and the world around us changes, it is important to make sure that we as a church are doing the same. This is why we have allowed ourselves to revisit these entities every seven years, as stated in our bylaws. It is possible that our mission statement and values could remain the same, while our end statements are revised. We could also have an outcome where we modify some parts of our mission or some of our values.

Once we have what we believe are a representative set of values, end statements, and a mission statement, we will be finalizing them during February and March and presenting them to the congregation sometime in April. The process by which we will do that is still in the works, but expect something ceremonial, as this is a big step towards the future of our congregation.

I am thankful that our congregation has entrusted our board of trustees to lead this process, and I am confident that we will deliver something extraordinary. ■

“Wisdom Tree,” continued

wisdom needs to have fresh life breathed into it by touching it, again and again to its Source, by bringing it together with the piece of wisdom others carry with them. Then if lightning strikes, if all the places you used to go are ruined, just hold up your piece and we’ll find each other.

Many among us like the garden very much, in the same way that the UUs at that summer camp loved the wisdom tree. Even though there will be another garden outside the new candle window, it might be a good thing to have some plants from this garden to take with us to our home gardens. For this reason, before the construction reaches our current meditation garden, the plan is for

one or two people to dig up the plants and for those who would like to have them buy them to take home. This will raise money we’d like to give to Alirio, our sanctuary guest, to pay his phone bill. His phone acts as a translator for him and also is the conduit by which he keeps in touch with friends and family while he lives here.

The first thing that will happen in our construction is the laying of a larger water pipe between 49th street and our building. After that pipe is laid, the rest of the construction will commence. Watch the newsletter and announcements for news about the garden plant sale. ■

White Allies for Racial Equity

**Sunday, December 17
Room 13
12–1:30 p.m.**

Many of us will be spending time with family over the holidays. How do we talk to our blatantly racist uncle or our unknowingly racist mother? We’ll set up scenarios and role play to see what works and what doesn’t.

The UU White Allies for Racial Equity is a group of self-identified white Austin area UUs and friends.

Through training and self-examination, we educate ourselves about racism and whiteness in order to be good allies as we go out and do anti-racism work in our church and our communities. For more info or to be added to our email list, contact Scott: sbutki@gmail.com.

LIFESPAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Lifespan FD highlights

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



It's hard to believe that 2017 is almost over, isn't it? I don't know about you, but this year has had a very "busy" feel to it for me. With the upcoming holidays, which usually increases the busy for everyone, I want to take a moment to remind you that one of the most important things you can do right now is make sure you are taking care of yourself. From our First Sunday Seminars to our Christmas pageant, there will be plenty of activities here at First UU Austin to help you nourish your soul this holiday season!

In fellowship,
Laine Young

Be a 2018 Surprise Pal!

Surprise Pals is an annual project that provides opportunities for the development of intergenerational connections. Here's how it works: interested adult church members submit to a background check and are paired with a child in our congregation to exchange letters and small, meaningful gifts over the course of several weeks. The adult "surprise pal" and the child's parents 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.

Consider becoming a Surprise Pal this year! Registration begins Dec. 3 and will end Jan. 7. The project will run from Jan. 21–March 4 this year. *All participants must commit to attend the reveal party on Sunday, March 4.* To participate, pick up a registration

form on the Lifespan Faith Development table outside the sanctuary.

First Sunday Seminars, December 3

First Sunday Seminars take place on the first Sunday of the month. This multi-track, adult religious education experience has options in areas such as leadership development, spiritual identity, UU identity development, and spiritual practices. No prior registration is required for any of the First Sunday Seminars, and childcare is available. A simple lunch is provided in Howson Hall from 12–1 p.m. for \$5 (available to-go for Forum attendees). Seminars take place from 1–2:30 p.m.

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

UU Identity Track: "Celebrating Christmas as a Unitarian Universalist," facilitated by Laine & Kaitlyn Young

Join us as we discuss ways to celebrate the winter holidays while keeping our UU values and principles in mind. You will also have the chance to create some holiday gifts to give to family, friends, and loved ones. The gift creation stations will include custom 1" buttons, custom cards, DIY UU Advent calendars, and a Christmas Creations Makerspace. All ages are welcome!

Faith Formation Track: "Science & Religion Seminar: The Emergence of Religion"

This session will be the third and final session exploring the implications of Jared Diamond's seminal work, "Guns, Germs and Steel." The focus will be on the independent emergence on geographically separate

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landmasses of essentially the same social structure: the hierarchical organization of gods, rulers, priests, etc., that provided the foundations for religion. We will speculate what innate aspects of humans reacting to the universe led to extraordinarily similar paths of societal development, and what implications this could have for us today who seek a science compatible religious/spiritual foundation.

Annual Christmas Pageant, Dec. 24

Don your best bathrobe, don't forget to bring your Guest at Your Table boxes with you, and come to church ready to take the journey to Bethlehem at both our 9:15 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday services this Christmas Eve! For those who have never experienced a First UU Christmas Pageant before, you are in for a real treat with this most treasured tradition! All (especially children) are encouraged to participate with no prior rehearsal. Costumes will be laid out in the foyer to choose from, and our narrator will invite all of our nativity characters up on cue! In this half-scripted, half-improvised, but always sincere pageant, the whole congregation comes to imagine the story of Christmas. There will also be cookies, cocoa, and ornament making in Howson Hall after each service. This is a worship service not to miss!

OWL Classes Starting January 11 (7th–9th grade)

Parent orientations: Jan. 7, 1 p.m. & Jan. 10, 6:30 p.m.

We will be proudly offering OWL (Our Whole Lives), a comprehensive and progressive sex education curriculum, to 7th–9th graders in the spring semester. The classes will meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. beginning January 17 and continuing through May 23, including two lock-ins.

OWL registration forms are on the LFD table outside the sanctuary. In order for youth to participate in the class, there is a mandatory parent orientation on Jan. 7 at 1 p.m. or Jan. 10 at 6:30 p.m. The registration fee for the OWL class is \$60 and scholarships are available. You can get more information on registration and classes by emailing laine.young@austinuu.org.

Mark Your Calendars! F.RE.D. Returns January (Sort of)

We will be doing a 6-week run of a new idea for F.RE.D. Night, now called Midweek Connect, starting January 17 and ending on February 14. Here's what you can expect at Midweek Connect.

- **5:30 p.m. Dinner!** Vegetarian as well as kid-friendly options. Dinner is \$6/person and kids eat for free!
- **6 p.m. Vespers!** Midweek Connect Vespers is for all ages!
- **6:30 p.m. Classes!** There'll be both adult and children education options, including classes such as:

Low Pressure Life, facilitated by Jeanette Hargraves

Tired of being stressed out? Learn how to reduce anxiety through awareness about how you influence others and how they influence you. This is a six-week program based on systems theory. Participants will work through an online class at home (with two hours per week of homework) and then reflect in our gatherings. Led by Jeanette Hargreaves, creator of Low Pressure Life (www.thelowpressurelife.com). Sign up for this class at the Lifespan Faith Development table outside the sanctuary.

Wonderful Wednesdays!

Wonderful Wednesdays! is a program for kids from K–4th grade. Along with learning about our UU values and principles, each Wednesday has a focus of arts & crafts, learning more about a famous Unitarian Universalist, social action, or gardening.

Save the Date! Hogwarts Winter Celebration, January 21, 1 p.m.

Come celebrate Hogwarts style with our First UU Austin camp Hogwarts Winter Celebration! We will have magical crafts and treats, including butterbeer. We'll also have information on what the camp is all about. All are welcome! For more info, email campuu@austinuu.org.

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INSIDE AMIGOS**New Member Recognition**

Sunday, December 10
Sanctuary, during worship services

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

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

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

New Member Potluck

Saturday, December 9
Howson Hall
6-8 p.m.

Be welcomed into the First UU community! Visit with other new members, ministers, members of the board, and other church members. Current church members are invited as well to give our new members a warm reception!

Celebrate International Day of Migrants

Monday, December 18
Howson Hall
6-8 p.m.

In 2000 the United Nations declared Dec. 18 International Migrants Day, a worldwide holiday. As skillfully noted by the UN: throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life.

Come out with us to celebrate courage and diversity by hearing migrants' personal stories. Our Central Texas-based speakers hail from Central America, Iran and Mexico. We'll also have food, as well as music by guitarist Ángel Ibañez, an immigrant from Mexico City who performs throughout Austin.

Our guests will include Sulma Franco, activist and organizer with Austin Sanctuary Network, who took sanctuary at First UU in 2014 to stop her deportation and who now has a U.S. resident card; Alirio Gámez, a Salvadoran currently taking sanctuary at First UU; Chenco Alas, the executive director and founder of the Foundation for Sustainability and Peacemaking in

Mesoamerica; Banafsheh Madaninejad, a professor of religious studies at Southwestern University; Antonio Herrera, director and founder of Centro Comunitario Monseñor Romero, a nonprofit in Dallas that provides services to migrants; Edwin Murillo, a Salvadoran activist from Dallas campaigning for temporary protected status; Claudia Muños, immigration program director for Grassroots Leadership; and others.

Reserve childcare by emailing childcare@austinuu.org. Anyone wanting to volunteer may email Peggy Morton at insideamigos@austinuu.org. Sponsors in addition to our First UU Inside Amigos group include Hermanos en el Camino, the Foundation for Sustainability and Peacemaking in Mesoamerica, Austin Sanctuary Network, and Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera.

From what we know, this year will be the first time Austin-based groups will host a city-wide celebration. Please see our Facebook page for updates and to say you'll join us: <http://tinyurl.com/yc4to7rw>.

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

SAFE | stop abuse for everyone

A merger of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace

Combining forces to confront abuse

"Abused women are the canaries in the coal mines when it comes to mass shootings." – Samantha Bee

SAFE: Stop Abuse for Everyone is the organization being honored by the December offering. SAFE's mission is to lead in ending sexual assault and exploitation, child abuse, and domestic violence through prevention, intervention, and advocacy for change. SAFE is a merger of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace. The two long-respected nonprofits merged at the start of 2017.

The link between domestic violence and mass violence became horrifically clear last month in Sutherland Springs when a confirmed abuser massacred twenty-six people and broke the hearts of hundreds more. SAFE is working to close legal loopholes that allow domestic abusers to purchase or retain weapons.

SAFE also supports victims with emergency shelter, counseling, medical and legal advocacy, transitional housing and on-site schooling for grades K–12. Equally important, they are working to change societal norms and strengthen healthy relationships.

Please give generously to help SAFE realize their and our vision of a just and safe community, free from violence and abuse.

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.

"Path to Membership" class

**Saturday, January 27
9 a.m.–12 p.m.
Howson Hall**

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. Class offered quarterly. Contact: Shannon Posern, membership@austinuu.org.

Save the Date!

Congregational meeting

Sunday, December 13
Sanctuary
1:15–2:30 p.m.

LFD highlights, continued

New! Rose for Families with Babies

Have you welcomed a new little one into your home? We are starting a new program here at First UU where we put an announcement in the order of service and have a rose at the pulpit to celebrate your new arrival! Please contact Laine at laine.young@austinuu.org if you would like to arrange a Sunday for your baby to have a rose at the pulpit.



2018 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

We still need your help!

Thanks to two generous matching gift challenges, Stewardship Chair Bill Edwards has announced the 2018 pledge campaign will continue for a few additional weeks.

In a moving testimony given on the last scheduled day of the 2018 stewardship drive, Edwards reported, “The pledge total we received in last year’s stewardship drive that pays for the programs, staff and everything else that we are doing in 2017 was \$735,000. The pledge total we need to receive in this year’s stewardship drive to finance the programs, staff and everything else that we want to do in 2018 rises to \$765,000. Thirty thousand dollars more. We have received in pledges, through this morning, \$637,000.”

Edwards reminded congregants of a similar shortfall two years ago.

“Back then, Wayne Brockman, partner of our minister Chris

Jimmerson, offered a \$5,000 pledge as a challenge to new and increased pledges. A dollar-for-dollar challenge match, just like on KUT. The hope was for \$10,000 more in pledges. The metaphor was double-your-money. A better metaphor is that Wayne’s match lit a fire. His \$5,000 match inspired \$50,000 in additional pledges for our 2016 year. The crisis was averted.”

Edwards said Wayne and Chris has once again stepped forward to raise their pledge, and he and his wife Ann had also increased their pledge. “The combined increased pledges raised the total challenge to \$10,000.”

“I can assure you that Ann and I would prefer to make this pledge anonymously,” Edwards said, “but it is our intention that making our names public tells you how important our church is to its professional and lay leadership. We hope that

this challenge will do what Wayne’s challenge did two years ago: spark the desire to help our church. Show the way for others to follow. Light a fire.”

In his testimony, Edwards also celebrated and thanked those who had participated in this year’s campaign, including the more than 60 persons who were actively engaged in the drive who reached out to, connected with, and visited the families in the congregation, and the families who generously pledged their financial resources to funding the church in 2018.

Those who wish to make a pledge or increase an existing pledge can do so at the Stewardship table in the gallery each Sunday. “We will in the weeks to come, give you other opportunities to participate in our stewardship drive—to magnify our stewardship result,” Edwards said.



Music Matters

Don't miss our special musical presentation this month!

Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols"

**Sunday, December 10 during
Sunday services**

Experience Benjamin Britten's hauntingly beautiful "A Ceremony of Carols," as presented by the First UU of Austin Adult Choir, along with

guest harpist Elaine Barber under the direction of Music Director Brent Baldwin.

"A Ceremony of Carols," one of Britten's best known and most performed works, was written aboard a cargo ship as Britten and his personal and professional partner, tenor Peter Pears, made their long and

dangerous journey back to Britain from the United States during World War II. This opus, originally for 3-part boys' treble voices and harp, was first performed at Wigmore Hall in London on December 1943. This version to be sung by the choir is an arrangement by Anders Öhrwall in 1981 for four-part mixed voices.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin Adult Choir
Brent Baldwin, Music Director
Elaine Barber, harp

DECEMBER 10, 2017
(BOTH MORNING SERVICES)

HEALTHY RELATIONS MINISTRY

Austin Presence Group

December 5 & 19
Room 17
7–8 p.m.

We are currently discussing Michael Singer's "The Untethered Soul." 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.

Advice from Covenant Corner: Stay, or Stay Away?

Dear Covenant,

I'm feeling some turmoil over the coming physical changes at church, and don't know how to get through it in the best way. My biggest issue is changes to spaces that are sacred to me, like the garden outside the sanctuary windows. That space always brings me a feeling of peace and comfort when I need it most. Watching the contractors dig up shovelfuls of soil a few weeks ago felt distressing. I realize such disruption has to happen as we expand the church, but I don't like witnessing it. Should I stay away until it's all over?

— *Stay Away?*

Dear Stay,

Thank you for expressing your feelings on renovations to the church. We understand that it's hard for you to watch, and we hope to offer you some reassurances.

Please know change is hard for most of us, and you are not alone with these feelings. Thus, we think it would be helpful to remember our covenant's call for us to be present with one another through life's transitions. That means that we promise to stay connected so we can support one another through

difficult times. You might be surprised to find that sharing your feelings of discomfort can soften the disruption. And conversely, you can be a valuable support for others who are also having a hard time with the changes!

More good news is that a lot of thought has gone into making the building transitions as smooth as possible for everyone. For example, plans for the sanctuary garden, which we will dig up ourselves, include the option to take plants home for a donation to help Alirio pay his phone bill. (See Rev. Meg's article on pg. 1.) In addition, the landscape architect, with guidance from our grounds and building teams, has designed a new garden that we will see outside the new candle windows of the sanctuary. By staying connected, we will create new sacred spaces together as a community.

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

Sincerely,
Healthy Relations Ministry

DENOMINATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Southwest UU Women Conference, Feb. 23–25, 2018 Embassy Suites, Central Austin

Join UU women from around our region for fellowship, celebration and learning. Keynote speakers are State Rep. Donna Howard and UUSC Board Chair Lyssa Jenkins. Kiya Heartwood is the featured musician and Rev. Meg Barnhouse our conference minister. Registration opens in November. More information at the SWUW website: www.swuuw.org.

UUA Disaster Response: Hurricanes Irma and Harvey

The Unitarian Universalist Association has organized a program to assist UU churches affected by the recent devastating hurricanes. The UU College of Social Justice is also organizing volunteer efforts to work in affected areas. Find more info including links to other

ways to help at the UUA home page: www.uua.org. Click on the “Disaster Relief” box.

UU Service Committee Responds to Rohingya Crisis

Over 600,000 Rohingya people have fled Burma into Bangladesh to escape a campaign of ethnic cleansing being waged by the Burmese military. The UU Service Committee and its allies have been working with members of Congress on legislation introduced Nov. 2 that will pressure the military of Burma to stop their attacks and hold them accountable. Support this effort by writing your members of Congress, at www.uusc.org.

Questions and Carpooling

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

Women's Alliance

**Tuesday, December 12
Howson Hall
6 p.m.**

The topic for our next meeting is “getting to know you,” along with a holiday-themed potluck dinner. This year we've learned about many amazing women in our congregation. This month we'll dig deeper and get to know more about each of us through some facilitated exercises, discussion, interaction, and lots of laughter. Please join us.

The potluck dinner begins at 6 p.m. and activities begin at 7. For more Women's Alliance info, contact Mary Overton: womensalliance@austinuu.org.

Senior Luncheon

**Wednesday, December 13
Howson Hall
12 p.m.**

Dan Wilson and his now famous oompah polka band will be playing our favorite polka numbers. Come and enjoy the music and dance around Howson Hall. Soup, salad and dessert will be served for \$5. Please RSVP to Alice Cashman: (512) 837-0988.



Ring in the holidays with First UU!

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 • The holidays are here
 • again! Find details on
 • pg. 14 for our annual
 • Christmas Eve traditions:
 • the First UU Christmas
 • Pageant, and the Lessons
 • & Carols service. We'll
 • also have the following
 • events to get you in the
 • holiday spirit:
 •••••

Annual Christmas Choral Benefit, Drive a Senior – North Central Austin

Friday, December 1
St. Louis Catholic Church
(7601 Burnet Rd)
7:30–9:30 p.m.

The annual Christmas choral benefit provides a memorable evening of beautiful, timeless Christmas music, free to the public! Ring in the holidays with the First UU Intergenerational Choir as they join other musicians from central Austin to create this dynamic evening

of joyful music and generosity of spirit. Join us in celebrating the 25th year for this event, this year featuring special emcee Jim Spencer of KXAN. Each year, hundreds of people come to absorb the music and take part in the singalongs.

Bring your friends and family and have an evening to brighten your heart! Want to donate in advance? Visit <https://goo.gl/gi3atY> to go to Eventbrite and use your credit card. For more info, call the Drive a Senior office at (512) 453-2273 or email nc@driveasenior.org. Proceeds go to Drive a Senior – North Central Austin: providing over 4,000 rides to help seniors in our community who no longer drive.

Green Sanctuary: Holiday Re-Gifting!

Sunday, December 10
During Sunday services

The holidays are just around the corner, so the Green Sanctuary Committee is hosting our fourth annual re-gifting event! Bring old or unused items appropriate for a holiday gift to the church on December 3 or early on December 10 for the event. We will put the items out for selection after the first service. Share with others those things you do not need; others might. Recycle, reuse, RE-GIFT!

Fellowship Committee: Holiday Caroling & Festivities!

Saturday, December 16
Howson Hall
5 p.m.

Are you feeling the holiday spirit? Meet us for pizza and a cookie exchange in Howson Hall, bring some of your favorite goodies. After we've eaten, we will go caroling in the neighborhood around the church. Candles and songbooks will be provided. Please RSVP to fellowship@austinuu.org so we can plan how many pizzas to order. Please include the number of people in your group and any dietary restrictions.



SOCIAL ACTION COUNCIL

Service Saturdays Volunteer Program

“Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul” – Edward Abbey

Next event: Saturday, January 20

First UU Social Action is excited to announce our new Service Saturdays volunteer program!

One Saturday each month, individuals, couples, and families with children are invited to join with others from First UU in volunteering at a local nonprofit. Taking time to help others is a rewarding spiritual practice, and it's even more rewarding to do this work in the company of fellow UUs.

Each month we will select a different nonprofit at which to volunteer. The date, time, and any age restrictions will vary from month to month based on what works for our nonprofit partner. Information about each month's project will appear in the newsletter and order of service, as well as on the Social Action Facebook page. We ask that you sign up in advance so we can tell our nonprofit partner how many people to expect. Some volunteer

opportunities will also have limited spaces available.

Be on the lookout for the January newsletter to learn more about our first volunteer opportunity: the Austin Diaper Bank on Saturday, January 20! And in February, we will be volunteering at the Central Texas Food Bank. For more information, come by the Social Action table in the gallery after Sunday services, or contact Wendy Erisman: socialaction@austinuu.org.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CLINIC

Not four score, nor six score, but eight score of books!

The October Children's Book Drive did it again this year. We were able to donate 163 books to People's Community Clinic for children from nursery age to young adults. You all came through...AGAIN!

Our church members must believe in the words of author Christopher Paolini: "Books should go where they will be most appreciated, and not sit unread, gathering

dust on a forgotten shelf, don't you agree?" And obviously, you agree, for surely this was the sentiment of members and friends of the church who came forth and donated books to the clinic.

A very special thanks goes to Carolyn Gremminger, who donated a carton of books called "Deep River," a story her brother, Dan Gremminger, illustrated and wrote

with Bradley Harding. The story is about the enchantment and wonder of growing up in Texas near a river. Beautiful story, beautiful illustrations. Thank you, Carolyn.

I know that the children who read the books you so kindly donated will silently thank you...whoever and wherever you are! For info about the church's volunteer efforts with PCC, e-mail pcc@austinuu.org.

Eclectic Folk Jam

Friday, December 8
Rm. 17
7–10 p.m.

An open jam session for singers and instrumentalists, held on the second Friday of every month. We have “Rise Up Singing” and “Rise Again” and music stands. Bring other songs if you like, as well as 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, December 23
Friends Meeting House
(3701 E. MLK Blvd.)
7:30–10:30 p.m.

Please bring snacks and finger foods, musical instruments, and copies of songs you want to sing. Copies of “Rise Up Singing” and “Rise Again” are provided, but you may bring other songs. 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

DECEMBER 3**My Actions are My Only True Belongings**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

As the days grow darker, nature’s energy goes to the roots of growing things. The five remembrances of Buddhism direct our attention to the radical (meaning root) question of what in life has lasting value. The Youth Choir will share their beautiful music.

DECEMBER 10**Grace**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

If our actions are our only true belongings, what about the bad things we’ve done? Are we unfailingly rewarded for the good actions and punished for the bad ones in this life or a life to come? What about times when it’s hard to discern the right thing to do? The Adult Choir will be singing Britten’s “A Ceremony of Carols” featuring harpist Elaine Barber (see pg. 9).

DECEMBER 17**Jesus’ Grandmothers**

REV. MEG BARNHOUSE

Lots of us are studying our DNA these days, finding out about ancestors. Who, according to Biblical genealogy, are the forbears of Rabbi Jesus, and what are their stories? The exciting trio of Kara Bliss, Greg Bolin, and Austin Haller will present their music during services.

DECEMBER 24**Our Annual No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant!**

**(Morning services,
 9:15 & 10:45 a.m.)**

Costumes will be provided, or you may bring your own. Angels, shepherds, the star...hear the famous story and sing the beautiful carols. There will also be cookies, cocoa, and ornament making after each service.

Lessons & Carols

**(Evening services,
 5:30 & 7 p.m.)**

Readers from the congregation, passages from Christian Scripture, poetry about winter and Christmas, lovely music, and candlelight make up this worship experience. We will have holiday goodies, hot chocolate, tea and coffee before both evening services.

DECEMBER 31**Burning Bowl**

REV. CHRIS JIMMERSON

We begin the year by thinking about elements in our lives which are doing us a disservice. We whisper these things into flash paper and burn them together, scattering the ashes to the wind. We will have food and New Year’s Eve celebration after each service, during which we will also create a visual arts piece together that lifts up the values and hopes we wish to manifest in the new year.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM

SANCTUARY AT NOON AFTER SECOND SERVICE

DECEMBER 3

Fighting for Workers' Rights

WITH JOSE P. GARZA

Jose Garza heads up the Austin-based Workers Defense Project (WDP), nationally acclaimed for advancing the cause of workers' rights through innovative local, state, and national advocacy campaigns. In more than a decade of work, the WDP has fought for immigration reform, enforcement of worker safety and wage and hour laws, economic development incentives tied to decent working conditions, and more. In this time of anti-worker attacks on the federal and state levels, the WDP has spearheaded efforts to enact positive workplace policies through local governments. A prime case in point is the current push by WDP and allied groups for paid sick leave policies benefiting workers in Austin and other Texas cities.

Jose Garza took the helm at WDP in 2016 with a mandate to keep up and expand the organization's fight for workers' rights. A native of San Antonio, he came back to Texas to lead the WDP after a stint in several federal jobs related to labor in Washington, D.C. His Texas background included a first job out of law school with Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid in Del Rio.

DECEMBER 10

East Austin's Community Newspaper and the Youth Brigade

WITH TOMMY L. WYATT

Tommy L. Wyatt will discuss the role of community newspapers, his voice on "The Villager," and his work with the Youth Brigade, an organization that works with young people.

Wyatt was born in Point Blank, Texas and graduated from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School in Lubbock. He graduated from Bishop College in

Marshall, did graduate work at the University of Washington in Seattle, and served two years in the US Army. In 1973 he founded "The Villager" newspaper, which he has owned and published since then. "The Villager" is a community paper addressing the needs and issues of East Austin. Wyatt has served on many boards and commissions for the City of Austin and Travis County, including the Private Industry Council, Austin Tomorrow Planning Committee, Austin Cable Commission, and the East 11th Street Village Association.

DECEMBER 17

If We Don't, Who Will? Valve-Turners on Actions that Matter

WITH MIKE FOSTER

On October 11, 2016, five brave climate activists shook the North American energy industry when they closed safety valves on the five pipelines carrying tar sands crude oil into the United States. This was the biggest coordinated move on energy infrastructure ever taken by environmental activists. They were responding to the call for International Days of Action and Prayer for solidarity with Standing Rock. The five activists and four support people involved were charged with a combined 27 felony and 15 misdemeanor charges. The five valve-turners are standing by their actions, saying that they are not only necessary, but morally and legally justified to avoid the catastrophic harm caused to humanity by unprecedented climactic disruption.

Mike Foster is a former mental health therapist and father, who grew up in the shadow of Texan oil refineries, and quit his job in order to promote environmental activism.

DECEMBER 24 & 31

No forum for holidays ■

**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

Financial Administrator
Katherine Patton

Board President
Jairy Grisaffe

MONTHLY SPECIAL OFFERING

Vote for your favorite nonprofit!

Sunday, December 17

First UU members will have one day to vote for their top ten among the worthy nonprofits that have been nominated this year for the 2018 monthly special offerings. Voting will be in person only and will take place after both worship services at the Social Action

table in the gallery, as well as before and after the congregational meeting that afternoon. This is your chance to have a say in supporting the social justice nonprofits that mean most to you.

For more information, contact Social Action Chair Wendy Erisman at socialaction@austinuu.org.



**First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Austin**

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