PRIDE’S INTERFAITH COALITION CHALLENGES RELIGIOUS RIGHT

KENDRA SITTON | Uptown News

[Editor’s note: This is part one of a series examining the faith of LGBTQ+ people.]

As heavy May clouds swirled over a bright sky, the lead pastor of Missiongathering Church in North Park, Brandon Robertson, clicked open his email for another piece of hate mail. This one read “Sorry, Fa****, ‘Pastor’ and ‘Fa****’ don’t go together. Your false narrative and satanic influence will lead you straight to a cell in hell.”

The email was a reminder that although LGBTQ+ rights have advanced in some parts of society, among the conservative white Evangelical supporters that remain President Donald Trump’s most faithful base, many see “queer” and “Christian” as incompatible identities that cannot coexist.

According to Robertson, who identifies as queer, a decade ago the fully inclusive church he leads would have been an anomaly in San Diego, but with a handful of affirming churches in Uptown, it’s a burgeoning religious movement.

“Missiongathering five years ago would be a rare church. Today, you can walk down the street in San Diego and within a one-mile radius, there’s probably five or six Christian churches that are fully affirming and welcoming of LGBT people. Now, there are dozens more that aren’t, but things are changing and they’re changing quick.”

27-year-old Robertson said he leads would have been an anomaly in San Diego, but with a handful of affirming churches in Uptown, it’s a burgeoning religious movement.

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“In a shift featuring one of her drawings, Bonnie Woods poses with two of her pieces. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

An artist and her hares

Over a year ago, Bonnie Woods was sketching inside her Bankers Hill home when the circles and lines she was charcoalizing in as a background took shape. Specifically, the shape became the face of a hare with long legs outlined and eyes charcoalized in. Situated next to the figure of a woman that typically dominates her art pieces, a new creature came to the forefront.

“If you look at my website, it’s mostly about women because I love to draw and paint women. And then, all of a sudden, when I was charcoalizing, this hare appeared. I did this little face and thought, ‘Oh my goodness! Look, he’s so cute!’ and then they kept coming.”

Woods explained over coffee at Harley Gray in Mission Hills, where an art group she is in regularly meets.

Woods said she feels like she is channeling the creatures. They are often hopping through her mind when she wakes up and slip into her imaginings.

Since drawing that first hare, Woods has yet to stop. She has since created a series of watercolor paintings featuring the women iconic to her style sitting next to a hare. She has another 50 unfinished works in her home. The
“I just realized that it was one year ago that John and I sold the house we had lived in for 30 years in North Park. We spent months making the tough decision to sell our family home, but we knew that timing is everything and we wanted to take advantage of the strong market. Nevertheless, the thought of getting our 102 year old Craftsman bungalow ready to sell, and the entire process of packing and moving, was unbelievably daunting.

Of even greater concern to us was choosing the right realtor to sell our house for us. We needed to find someone who would take the time to get to know us — who didn’t look at our property as just another listing, but instead valued the significance of what it meant to us. We needed a realtor who wouldn’t pressure us, but had the experience, savvy, and salesmanship to push hard when marketing our house and closing the deal with a buyer.

Long story short, we found our dream realtor(s): Mary McTernan and Z McT-Contreras, of the McT Real Estate Group. From the moment they first walked through our front door, we knew they were our match made in heaven. We already knew they were prominent local real estate experts, but what we discovered was how friendly, kind, calm, thoughtful, and patient they are. They listened to us and really paid attention. They explained the process, told us what to expect, and made some great suggestions, but not once did they try to “sell” us on their services — they didn’t need to.

When we were ready to sell our house, they took care of everything; our job was done. We had multiple offers within a couple days of listing it on the market. Z and Mary handled the entire process seamlessly and, believe it or not, our sale closed in 10 days (which, I realize, is faster than most). But, honestly, we were wowed!

So, looking back now, one year later, I am so happy that we made the decision to sell when we did and even happier that we chose the right realtors; because in the process, we also made new friends. Oh, and did I mention... they love animals like we do!!!

We love Mary & Z McT!!!”

– C&J McGaughy

619.736.7003
McTRealEstateGroup.com
than that. It’s San Diego’s arbo-
retum, an urban forest with im-
mense, widespread influence. Its
diversity of tree species helps filter
air and water, control storm wa-
ter, conserve energy, and provide
animal habitat and shade. And
by reducing noise and providing
plances to recreate, it strengthens
social cohesion, spurs community
revitalization, and adds economic
value to our communities.
Also, it’s helping realize the
San Diego Climate Action Plan,
which has a lofty goal of 15% tree
canopy by 2020 and 35% by 2035
for the whole city. (Balboa Park is
at 30% but the city as a whole is
at 5-6%.)
Using the data collected from
the inventory, the objective is to
develop and implement a man-
agement and reforestation plan
for Balboa Park that includes re-
planting trees on an annual ba-
sic; increasing species diversity;
experimenting with new plant
introductions; propagating trees
and experimenting with new plant
species; and overseeing the con-
struction and stewardship of the
dedicated urban forest.

“We’re making progress,”
said Herrera-Mishler. “One of
our goals is increasing the diversity
of the trees in the park.”
Having a broad diversity of
trees is paramount for resilience
from climate change and sick-
ess. Twenty years ago, there were
148 different tree species in Balboa
Park. Today there are 448, exact-
ly 100 more. That’s astounding.

Herrera-Mishler said, “And so now,
with new technology, we are able
to track exactly what species are
doing well in San Diego with mod-
ern growing conditions. That’s
a valuable data set to share with the
rest of Southern California.”
Herrera-Mishler, who is espe-
cially interested in historic land-
sapes, said “This urban forest is
100-years-plus [old] now, with
Katie Sessions starting the pro-
cess [in] the beginning of the last
century. We now know precisely
where the heritage trees are, the
survivors that have weathered
drought and climate change and
air pollution and urbanization and
smog and all those things.”
Herrera-Mishler thinks it’s im-
portant to note that tree plantings
in the park have always been pub-
l/private partnerships. Since the
park’s very beginnings, regular
folks have planted trees at their
own expense, some successful,
some not. Today, every one of the
newly planted trees is being moni-
tored by teams of volunteers called
Tree Stewards, who are trained to
work with other conservation vol-
unteer groups to plant the trees
according to a very rigorous stan-
ard, working alongside other
groups and representatives from
Parks & Rec. Currently there are
40 Tree Stewards who monitor
trees on a real-time basis, check-
ing soil moisture at the base of a
new tree, helping to insure the sur-
vival of the trees. With more
funding, the Tree Steward pro-
gram can expand to monitor all
15,515 trees.

So far, in the 500 new trees they
have planted in the last two years, through a grant from
CalFire, there’s a 98.4% surviv-
ality rate. The success attributable
for this rate is that Parks & Rec
helped to get irrigation to the trees
and the Urban Corp works with
Tree Stewards and other volun-
teers to help with the installation
of the trees.

Said Herrera-Mishler, “The cons-
servancy is thinking about the
park as a ‘forever’ asset for the
community. It’s really cool when
your timeline is forever.”
Anyone interested in Balboa
Park’s trees and urban forest can
Google “Open Tree Map” and
download the Open Tree Map
app and choose “San Diego Tree
Tracker Map” within this app.
Those interested in becoming
Tree Stewards should visit
balboaparkconservancy.org/project/
tree-stewards/

—Dell Willeit has been a mar-
keting and public relations profes-
sion for over 30 years, with an
emphasis on conservation of the
environment. She can be reached at
dellwilleit@gmail.com.
Bonnie Woods holds the very first charcoal drawing she made featuring a hare. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

Bonnie Woods has yet to see a hare in the wild, but from her home, she can look out onto Maple Canyon and see skunks, squirrels and sometimes rabbits.

"The reason I decided to involve the Wildlife Project is because I love those little critters in the canyon and I worry about them," Woods said with a laugh. The division gives injured, orphaned and sick wild animals a second chance at life. They are released back into the wild once they are healed.

Some of Woods’ work can be viewed at Inspirations Gallery at 2730 Historic Decatur Road #204 or at the San Diego Watercolor Society inside Liberty Station. To order a book or find out more, visit bonniewoods.com.

— Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
City Heights youth unveil mural as a symbol of hope

The Mid-City CAN Youth Council revealed their mural titled “Schools Not Prisons” on Thursday, June 20. The mural featured bright flowers and a large “I Am Possible” to highlight their message that youth can achieve anything with proper investment in their education and alternatives to incarceration.

Council President, Georgette Gomez, will spoke alongside local youth about community-led efforts to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline (SPP)—the system through which students are pushed out of schools and into prisons.

According to the Mid-City Community Advocacy Network (CAN), students’ first contact with law enforcement often starts with punitive policies at school. Once students are put into contact with law enforcement for disciplinary reasons, many are then pushed out of the educational environment and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Mid-City CAN’s analysis of 2017 data from the Automated Regional Justice Information System, used by SDPD and regional law enforcement agencies, found youth of color are disproportionately impacted by the SPP. In 2017, black youth in San Diego County were arrested at a rate 3.5 times higher than white youth and Latino youth were arrested at a rate 2.6 times higher than their white peers.

Mid-City CAN’s Youth Council seeks to end youth criminalization and chose to create this mural to expand the conversation in San Diego about the need to invest in positive youth development and education.

Bankers Hill Community Group hands out annual awards

Tershia d’Elgin (middle) was honored for her work preserving Maple Canyon. (Photos by Peter Raymond)

Council member Chris Ward was on hand Monday, June 17, to present awards to the people and organizations being acknowledged for their contributions to the community. Toni Duran came as the representative for state Senator Toni Atkins. Residents, business and property owners annually nominate people and organizations they believe helped improve the Bankers Hill neighborhood throughout the year. This year’s winners are:

- Pine Tree Court was recognized for creatively providing drought tolerant landscaping.
- Inland Industries was honored for installation of drought tolerant landscaping and a doggie station.
- Ben Baltic and Doug Scott were honored for the design, fabrication, painting and installation of a gate and public art at 1929 Fourth Ave. And for their many years of outstanding service to the Bankers Hill Neighborhood and the city of San Diego.
- San Diego Pride was recognized for their extensive community involvement and generous giving.
- Tershia d’Elgin was awarded for being one of the leaders in studying, planning and taking steps to implement protective measures for Maple Canyon.

Extraordinary Desserts was recognized for their nearly 30 years of loyalty to Bankers Hill as evidenced by the relocation of their Fifth Avenue eatery one block to the west in The Louie located at 2870 Fourth Ave.

Bankers Hill Parking District subcommittee was honored for the creation of 106 new parking spaces in 2018, and their tireless efforts for a broad vision for the parking and pedestrian needs of Bankers Hill.

Hillcrest Town Council prepares to clean up after San Diego Pride

Mary M. McKenzie | Editor-Town Crier

The Hillcrest Town Council (HTC) had a lively agenda for its June 11 meeting. County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher began the meeting exploring the “new direction” being taken by the county board. As the only Democratic on the council, Fletcher’s first proposal as a supervisor resulted in a new temporary shelter Downtown, funded by Jewish Family Services for all of 2019. Fletcher also has proposed that the county examine a property at the north end of Third Avenue to be developed as a behavioral health crisis stabilization unit. The vacant property had been proposed for the development of luxury condos. Fletcher emphasized his commitment to veterans, child welfare, and to environmental justice. Among his many commitments, he serves on the California Air Resources Board. He expressed great concern that San Diego has consistently violated the Clean Air Act, which disproportionately affects lower-income communities where most big polluters are located.

Christie Hill, advocacy deputy director of the ACLU, briefed the group on several critical bills in Sacramento focused on public safety. Hill spoke first about AB 392, the California Act to Save Lives, introduced by Assembly member Shirley Weber from San Diego. This bill allows police officers to use deadly force only when no other options are available. Hill then explained a 2020 ballot measure restoring voting rights to people on parole.

June is officially Pride month. San Diego Pride programs manager, Bob Leyh, elaborated some of the logistical details of the Pride. He emphasized that this year’s festival celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion in New York, which ignited the LGBTQ movement for equal rights. The Spirit of Stonewall Rally takes place on July 12 at 6 p.m. at the Pride flag, where the Pride parade begins the next morning (July 13) at 10 a.m. For information: sdpride.org.

Community members heard public comments and were
Prevent financial elder abuse

District Attorney News
Summer Stephan

As your District Attorney, I’m committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the DA’s Office and you, the community. One way I hope to do that is through this new monthly column, where I’ll be providing information and tips on how you can stay safe. I’ll also keep you updated on current trends and topics in the criminal justice system.

Since June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month, I’d like to bring your attention to important tips we give to seniors so they don’t become the victim of financial abuse. Shame often prevents a senior from confronting the abuse and seeking help.

Any photos. Eventually the phony love interest will ask for money and describe the financial loss. It’s result in significant financial loss. It’s common for elderly victims to meet their financial loss. It’s result in significant financial loss. It’s common for elderly victims to meet their financial loss. It’s result in significant financial loss. It’s common for elderly victims to meet their financial loss.

Government agencies or utility companies do not call with threats of fines or jail.

If you receive a call demanding payment from someone claiming to be from Social Security, law enforcement, the court or the utility company, hang up. This is a common scam in which fraudsters will try to convince you to pay or risk fines or jail time.

Gift cards are for giving, not making payments.

Never purchase gift cards at the direction of someone you don’t know. Scammers obtain money from elderly victims by asking them to purchase gift cards through iTunes, Amazon, Google or from large retail stores.

Choose a caregiver with caution.

Never assume that a caregiver has been through a criminal background check even if hired through a reputable agency. Ask the agency directly or request that your caregiver submit to a background check.

Protect mail and use a shredder.

Never allow incoming or outgoing mail to sit in an unsecured mailbox where the public has access. Shred discarded mail or financial statements containing identifying information.

News that you won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes is a scam.

Don’t be fooled by a caller or email saying he won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes, but that to claim the money you need to pay taxes up front. These are scams.

Don’t give in to hard-tactic sales pressures for a loan.

If you are offered services, repairs or a solar system by a drop-in sales person, do not sign paperwork the same day. Ask for a copy and take time to review it, first. Door-to-door sales people may not disclose the associated costs or consequences of signing up for their services, products or loans. A reputable business will happily give you time to make a decision without pressure.

Don’t send money to a love interest you have not met in person.

Romance scams are prolific and result in significant financial loss. It’s common for elderly victims to meet a love interest online based on phony photos. Eventually the phony love interest will ask for money and describe an emergency situation. If you meet someone online, arrange a safe, public meeting to verify the identity of the person.
Neighborhood Improvement

ty fabulous, please contact HTC’s and to help keep our commun-

to meet at 9 a.m. at Sirens on

canyons.

DREAMERs. Tyler Birch, repre-

Volunteers are asked

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And this is happening every

expensive financial products.

This is $100 billion of clients’

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Chair William Pontius at wpontius@wgu.edu.

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Hi,
What happened to the San Diego Cable Railway in Bankers Hill?

JILL DIAMOND | June 28

While the cable cars and underground wiring they once were operated by have long disappeared from the Bankers Hill area and throughout Downtown San Diego, there is still a reminder of the San Diego Cable Railway Co. A one-level building designed by William Hebbard in 1913 stands at the corner of Spruce and Fourth streets that served as the railway’s powerhouse, according to Bruce Semelsberger, archivist and historian of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum.

“The powerhouse was made of brick and used steam power to turn the large wheels around, which the cables were wound. There were 12 cars, all had names rather than numbers,” he said.

As for the railway, he said it was incorporated in August 1889 with the goal of building a cable car line like the one in San Francisco to go up and down Bankers Hill. It started at a turntable at Sixth and L streets and went up Sixth to Spruce streets, he said.

“The cars were latched onto a steel cable with a hemp center that ran through a slot in the street and was guided by cast iron yokes,” he explained.

“People used the railway to go to and from one part of town to another: to work, to shop … It was a popular way to get around in those days and not that expensive for a roundtrip, perhaps about 5 cents.”

Semelsberger said the capital stock was $50,000 and it was financed by the California National Bank, a local bank. At Spruce Street, the line moved onto Fourth Street and latched onto a second cable up to Adams Avenue where Mission Cliff Gardens was built.

“Mission Cliff Gardens featured Japanese gardens overlooking Mission Valley where people in 1890. All in all, the cable car line went about four miles.

End of the railway

While popular in its day, the line only ran for 13 months, at which time the owners of the bank, J.W. Collins and D.D. Dure, absconded with all the money and the line was forced into bankruptcy, Semelsberger said.

“The story goes that they ran off with all the money from the bank and the company ended right then and there,” he said.

Eventually the San Diego Cable Railway Co. was purchased and converted to an electric trolley line called Citizens Traction, which was later bought by John D. Spreckels and incorporated into his San Diego Electric Railway that ran until 1949.

“It was San Diego’s original trolley system and was an extensive system,” Semelsberger said.

“I was a popular way for people to get around in San Diego from the Mexican border all the way to La Jolla.”

— Jill Diamond is a Southern California freelance writer with a penchant for interesting historical pieces. Reach her at JillDiamond History@gmail.com .

 Bonus tip: Your grandchild is not in jail in a foreign country

One of the most popular scams is the grandparent scam. This is when you get a call that your grandchild is in peril. If you receive a phone call from someone saying your grandchild needs bail money to get out of a jail in a foreign country, hang up. This is a scam. Call your loved one directly to confirm.

I’m committed to holding accountable those who would take advantage of our elders, but I also know that if we raise awareness in the community, we can prevent crime from happening in the first place. If you have been the victim of elder abuse, report it to Adult Protective Services: 800-339-4661.

— District Attorney Summer Stephan has dedicated nearly 30 years to serving justice and victims of crime as prosecutor. She is a national leader in fighting sex crimes and human trafficking and in creating smart and fair criminal justice solutions and restorative justice practices that treat the underlying causes of addiction and mental illness and that keep young people from being incarcerated.
You will like ‘As You Like It’

Banishment by a mean old usurping king results in no fewer than four marriages, general merriment and a forest wedding party complete with confetti in the Old Globe’s delightful recreation of Shakespeare’s charming pastoral comedy “As You Like It,” playing through July 21 on the theater’s Lowell Davies Festival Theatre stage.

Jessica Stone directs her fifth Globe play with wit and a steady hand, moving it to the 18th-century Enlightenment period in France, where the woods are woodier, the wine and music much better (the latter thanks to the hirsute vocal stylings of Sammer Broyhill and her guitar) and the wedding parties way more fun.

Love is the main topic here, but points are also made about injustice, forgiveness and the contrast between life invigorating nature and the phoniness of life in court.

Charming, take-charge Rosalind and her affable cousin Celia (Nikki Massoud) are both adorable and inseparable, so when usurper uncle Frederick (Cornell Womack) tosses Rosalind out of the castle, he loses his daughter Celia in the bargain, and both girls end up in the forest of Arden, where a near epidemic of romance is about to blossom.

Senior, will also take refuge in the woods. The romantic stars here are Rosalind (Meredith Garretson) and Orlando (Jon Orsini), a young gentleman who has been mistreated by his older brother Oliver (Aubrey Deeker Hernandez). They will be joined by three other couples.

But first, Rosalind thinks a little deception would be fun. She will dress en homme and call herself Ganymede; Celia will fake poverty and call herself the shepherdess Aliena (“stranger”). They will travel with court fool Touchstone (Vincent Randazzo, impossible to miss in chartreuse tights).

Meanwhile, Oliver figures he’ll make short work of Orlando by setting him up for sure defeat at the hands of court wrestler Charles (Roman Barris). But this play is full of twists, and Orlando wins, which entitles him to receive half of his inheritance.

Orlando’s trusty old family servant Adam (Joseph Kamal) warns Orlando to flee and offers all the money he’s saved. Orlando instead takes Adam along to the forest.

When Orlando spots Rosalind, er, Ganymede, he’s fascinated (not to mention suspicious about her real identity) but he plays along, showing the new “gentleman” his many notes to Rosalind on the trees until he/ she offers to cure him of this pesky Rosalind affliction.

One day, Orlando spots brother Oliver about to be devoured by a lion. Orlando saves him, just in time for Oliver to discover that Celia is pretty cute and seems interested in him. Meanwhile, Touchstone sets his sights on marrying the happy couples.

It’s almost exhausting, isn’t it? But well directed, wonderfully acted and a terrific night in the theater. Don’t miss it.

— Jean Lowerison is a long-standing member of the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle and can be reached at infodame@cox.net.

The details

“As You Like It” plays through July 21, 2019 at The Old Globe’s Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Some Mondays and Tuesday through Sunday at 8 p.m.

Tickets: 619-234-5623 or theoldglobe.org

Meredith Garretson as Ganymede, Jon Orsini as Orlando, and Nikki Massoud as Celia in “As You Like It” (Photo by Jim Cox)

Jessica Stone directs the play by William Shakespeare which is playing at The Old Globe until July 21.
A triple-themed vegan eatery is moving into the structure where Anthem restaurant previously operated before it took over the kitchen at nearby Toronado a few months ago.

The ambitious project, called The Village, will offer Mexican food, sushi and menu items from the La Mesa-based Natural Delights Juice Bar, which also serves vegan wraps.

“We’ll have three different menus all under the same roof,” said Natural Delights manager, Otis Whitehead, who has owned the eatery since 2000, for upholding it as a San Diego institution.

“We have thrived for eight decades because it adheres to several core principles: high-quality produce, first-rate customer service and an undeniable sense of community,” Atkins declared in a statement.

The pie shop originally opened in Downtown San Diego in 1938. Its late founder, George Whitehead, moved the business to Hillcrest in the 1940s. Because of continued popularity, it ended up moving to its current, larger space nearly 30 years ago, 2633 El Cajon Blvd.

The famed Chicken Pie Shop in North Park was recently named Small Business of the Year for 2019 in District 39 by California Senate President Pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins. She congratulated members of the Townsend family, who have owned the eatery since 2000, for upholding it as a San Diego institution.

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Former sous chef for Urban Plates in Los Angeles, Ernesto Moreno, will serve as executive chef at the all-organic Pachamama, due to open in Normal Heights in July by former professional tennis player and model, Victoria Vannucci of Argentina.

In keeping with the restaurant’s South American slant, the chef will replicate dishes indigenous to Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, Argentina and Chile, as well as Mexico and Cuba.

Moreno was also a kitchen manager at the Los Angeles location of Cafe Gratitude, the plant-based restaurant with a local branch in Little Italy. A native of San Diego County, his menu will feature only a small amount of animal proteins sourced from humanely raised livestock.

— Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of ‘Secret San Diego’ (ECW Press) and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.

An iconic restaurant receives public recognition. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)
Flexing to the times
True North Tavern hits a milestone anniversary

Come On Get Happy!
Dr. Ink

It seemed like only yesterday when I first ducked into True North Tavern for a couple of beers and a chargrilled burger. The establishment was fairly new at the time, and I’ve since made subsequent returns for bloody marys, craft brews and various bar grub.

In my most recent visit, not only did I learn that the commodious tavern just turned 10 years old (time flies at a frightening rate when you frequently drink around town), but that it has undergone a few changes since the adjoining Urban Solace shuttered several months ago.

The closure had a significant impact on True North because the two establishments shared a kitchen, and True North enjoyed culinary support from the Urban Solace team.

“We went from basically managing a bar to having to manage a restaurant after Urban Solace suddenly closed,” said manager David Cabal, who presided over the recent streamlining of True North’s food menu. In addition, the reconfigured kitchen is smaller.

He added that the food offerings haven’t changed too much, except for losing a salad here and a sandwich there — and that the burgers are now cooked “smash style” on a flat griddle.

What remains feels adequate considering this is first and foremost a multi flat-screen sports bar that has always attracted crowds more interested in beer and mid-level cocktails rather than copious meal choices. Thus, the happy-hour deals apply only to booze.

Well drinks, El Jimador margaritas and domestic draft beers (plus True North Blonde Ale by Mission Brewing Company) are $4 each. House wines by the glass are $5. In the face of rising rents and increased competition, these are comfortable prices.

The afternoon happy hour is a radical change of pace and atmosphere compared to True North’s evening scene, when lines form outside the door and a $10 cover charge goes into effect at 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays (sometimes earlier at lower prices for special events).

For the anniversary, Cabal says plans are still in the works for some sort of public celebration in the coming months. Keep an eye on the tavern’s Facebook page and website for updates.

RATINGS

Drinks:★★★★
The very drinkable El Jimador margarita contains an ounce and a half of the namesake tequila and a blend of lime juice and agave. Discounted beers during happy hour are limited mostly to domestic brands.

Food:★★★★
The Buffalo-style chicken wings were perfectly sauced and served extra-crispy as requested. And the loaded tater tots were topped with tasty sauces and garnishes.

Value:★★★★
Price breaks on drinks and food during happy hour range from 30-50%.

Service:★★★★
In this late-afternoon visit, the wait staff was casually mellow, but completely efficient.

Atmosphere:★★★★
Think giant sports bar, but in the middle of hipster North Park.

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Friday, June 28
50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising

Impulse LGBT+ Pride Comedy Festival
Best of San Diego
June 27-29, to highlight small businesses
and micro-enterprises that have
supported together for the passage
of the most prominent neighborhoods.
Aspiring entre-
preneurs can get to bring clothes/accessories to
swap! Located at Good To Go San
Diego Pub House Party
10 Barrel Brewing Co.'s San Di-
ago, to highlight small businesses
28-30. Workshops, shows and
4350 El Cajon Blvd.
64 “Mario Kart” on the 12-foot
games, giveaways and 20 beers
Kings as they remember the
tage basement party and convert
the downstairs patio into a vin-
ty style, 10 Barrel will transform
til close. Open to the public, this summer with a party on Sat-
50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising

San Diego Pride
Tickets for this year's San Diego Pride Festival on Ju-
ly 13-14. The festival is time to celebrate in our unique San Diego
tradition. The city’s largest
est 10 vendors offer a variety
of local products.
San Diego Gay Men’s Chorus, the
San Diego Women’s Chorus,
groups in San Diego. For their service
to equal rights for all ages. Old Town San Diego State Historic Park.
Saturday, July 6
An 1880s Independence Day Celebration
Come and celebrate a historic In-
dependence Day with staff and volunteers in Old Town San Di-
mosaic. Join us as we remember the
7 p.m. at St. Paul’s Episcopalian
Church

Saturday, July 13
Spirit of Stonewall Rally
Pride celebrations everywhere are
honoring this heritage to the eve-
ing of June 28, 1969, when patrons of the Stonewall Inn in
New York City night of civil rights uprisings led to a national call to
police harassment. That pro-
test has grown to annual events
ded to San Francisco, the
oldest LGBT+ community organ-
ization in the world. Founded
in San Francisco by renowned
activist, drag queen and per-
former José Sarria, the council
has helped shaped LGBT+ life and
social history in San Francisco
and beyond through the last
five decades. Sarria was also
the first openly gay man to run
down for political officer in the
United States in 1961. From its genesis
as a critical public space for the
community and capacity build-
ing of San Francisco LGBT+ orga-
nizations to its vital role in the advocacy
for LGBT+ human rights.

Sunday, July 14
French Fête
Bleu Bohéme, located at 4090 Adams Ave. in Kensington, will
celebrate Bastille Day and its
douzaine anniversary. 12th
anniversary, with a three-
course French feast and fea-
tured cocktails, available exclu-
sively on Sunday, July 14. Creat-
ed by owner and executive chef
Ken Irvine, the specially designed menu will begin with soupe au pistou,
summer vegetable soup with pool, created in 1789 in France and fresh basil pesto with par-
mesan. For the entree, one can
may enjoy carre d’agneau, rack
of lamb with sautéed saffron,
served with sautéed tomatoes,
and sautéed leeks in a light wine
gastrique. The meal will combine with crepes sucrées for a
crispy French dessert served
in sugary orange and Grand Marnier;
Lighten up your afternoon with
5 p.m. at Centro Cultural de la Raza.
3034 Park Blvd. 1st floor
saturday, July 6
Legislating for Our Lives
Hosted by ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties, in
currence on current legislation on
DPW approves plans to reconstruct
6-1 p.m. at Old Town Market

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As more San Diego churches affirm LGBTQ+ identities, what have long been euphemisms for LGBTQ+ exclusion are now being led by the very people neighboring churches condemn.

By San Diego Pride’s count, there are 100 open and affirming faith congregations in the region. To qualify for the lists, congregations must agree to and embody a statement calling for the equal treatment and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people at every level in their faith community as well as under the law.

Fernando Lopez, the executive director of San Diego LGBT Pride, has worked to formalize the inclusion of spiritual and religious members of the LGBTQ+ community in Pride festivities. They plan to launch a formal interfaith coalition called DevOUT in July. Robertson is a key leader in that coalition.

Lopez, who is Jewish, said in a phone interview, “I think our job here at Pride is to do our best to make a space that is as welcoming for as many people as possible who are in the LGBTQ+ community. That doesn’t just look like one thing or one viewpoint or one value or one perspective.”

Lopez’s activism began in the early 2000s with pushing for same-sex marriage in California. They participated in interfaith organizing to bring clergy in favor of same-sex marriage in California.

They participated in interfaith organizing to bring clergy in favor of same-sex marriage in California. “One of the ways that we were fighting back against those messages really centered around ensuring that we had open and affirming faith leaders, right there counteracting those sorts of religious arguments against LGBT equality,” Lopez said.

Lopez says many people neighboring churches condemn. “This is going to be a Christian right’s last stand. They lost on abortion. They lost on all their other issues, but they still have the gay community to maximize [their] fundraising efforts and rally their troops through so-called religious freedom,” Jester said in an interview at Peet’s Coffee in Hillcrest.

“In my mind, the only way to mitigate that — because you’ll never shut them down — but the way to mitigate that for our community, to make us safer and freer, is to find alliances and Christian communities and other faiths that have as loud a voice for equality and freedom as the evangelical do.”

She believes lawmakers need to hear the voices of both progressive and conservative religious leaders, instead of just one group. Jester became involved in St. Paul’s Cathedral when she moved back to San Diego in 2011. When the church in Bankers Hill was poised to become the first cathedral in the nation to completely light up in honor of Pride in 2015, Jester made sure to invite San Diego’s elected officials, including then-Councilman Todd Gloria. The event was historic because it was also the first time a church in a mainstream denomination officially recognized Pride.

“The public needs to know that gay people are people of faith and that there are faith practices that accept gay people and honor them,” 75-year-old Jester said.

Jester separates the message of God loving and accepting LGBTQ+ people from earthly churches and denominations.

At 16, Jester was married and by 17, she was widowed with a young son. Her church, Scott Memorial Baptist Church, became her support system and helped her raise money to care for her son. However, when she came out as a lesbian at age 40 in 1983 after struggling with her sexuality for years, that all changed.

FROM PAGE 1
DEVOUT

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San Diego Uptown News
June 28 - July 11, 2019
SUSAN JESTER IS IN SEMINARY TO CONTINUE HER WORK AT ST. PAUL’S CATHEDRAL. (PHOTO BY KENDRA SITTON)

When I came out, they put me out. I didn’t step foot in a church for 25 years, but I never lost my personal faith in Jesus,” she explained.

Scott Memorial Baptist Church has been renamed Shadow Mountain Community Church, but it is still under the same pastor — Reverend Dr. David Jeremiah. The El Cajon megachurch brings in 10,000 people each week to its Sunday services. Jeremiah currently leads San Diego’s Evangelical Advisory Board.

Since she was a little girl, Jester wanted to become a Christian missionary. When the church forced her out, she channelled that religious fervor into helping the LGBTQ+ community and eventually became an AIDS activist who founded the AIDS Walk in San Diego and was central in getting local politicians to respond to the crisis.

“One thing I learned during the AIDS epidemic — I was with so many folks in their dying moments — most of our community have some very, very real tropes. They either grew up in it or they have continued,” Jester said. When she returned to San Diego and found St. Paul’s, Jester remembered her commitment to becoming a minister. She got involved with the church because of her desire to let LGBTQ+ people know God loves them. “He has plans for you. You’re made in his image and however he made you is however you are. So be the best you can. And then the place where you can worship God and feel welcome and productive and have a whole community of supporters is right down the street.”

Said Robertson, secular political activism may be central to what they believe is the role of the church, but they are also working to make the evangelical church less exclusive.

“The church and Christianity has done so much harm. It’s hard for people to separate God from that. And I just want to help people see that. I believe the God that created is a God that celebrates and loves and rejoices when we live into the diversity of our identity,” Robertson said. He believes coming to accept his sexuality has betted his faith.

“I think that God is so infinite and diverse that it makes sense that humans are infinitely diverse and that it’s in our diversity and in our complexity that we must reflect God,” he said. “Now, my sexuality and my faith go hand in hand because through the diversity of sexuality and gender identity, I think we have a unique lens into the creativity of God and a God that is creative is so much more interesting than a God who wants everybody to be the same and to conform.”

It was seeing other queer Christians in a church service that first made him rethink his theology. While in college, he and fellow students went to a church just a few blocks from Moody Bible Institute. There, he saw a woman take the pulpit and preach for the first time in his life. At that point, the other students left, loudly. Despite believing a woman speaking in church was unbiblical, Robertson stayed. At the end of the service, he noticed two women holding hands while singing praise music. He said this was the first church he saw embody radical welcome for everybody and calling people deeper into who they truly are.

After he was ousted publicly in 2015, Robertson spent years meeting with prominent evangelical leaders and debating them, or as he put it being a “fly in their ointment.” Now, he has a different approach to changing the minds of conservative pastors.

“I think sharing stories and cultivating empathy is what will change conservatives’ minds on LGBTQ issues. I’ve got the chance to sit with some of the largest churches in the country and just share who I am,” he explained. “I’ve seen churches of 10,000 people where the pastor goes from anti-gay to completely affirming and trying to figure out now what they do with their thousands of 10,000 people. How do you convince 10,000 people to change their mind?”

Robertson is also convinced queer people are the future of the church.

While Pew Research Center tracked a decrease in Americans identifying as Christians between 2013 and 2015, the number of

lobbian, gay or bisexual Americans identifying as Christian actually went up from 42% to 48% in the two-year period.

One of the pastors Robertson has formed a relationship with is Miles McPherson, the pastor of the Rock Church in San Diego. The former NFL player brings in 19,000 people across five campuses in the region. Robertson pointed out a picture of McPherson he keeps in his office to remind him of why he needs to keep going.

When the mega-church pastor and Robertson met, Robertson takes all issues of homosexuality in the Bible or politics off the table. He takes all issues of homosexuality in the Bible or politics off the table. He

In addition, the keynote speech will be given by Jewish activist and Rabbirical student Steven Goldstein. Robertson wanted to bring him to San Diego so he could teach interfaith leaders about how to organize and use their platforms to counteract the bigotry and harm we experienced in the name of faith. 65% of all people experience a personal connection to faith.”

The interfaith celebration of Pride kicks off with the annual LGBTQ+ lighting of St. Paul’s Cathedral, known as Light Up the Cathedral, which will happen on Wednesday, July 10, at 7 p.m. at St. Paul’s Cathedral.

The next day, faith leaders are invited to attend a workshop on how to change the world through interfaith organizing at Ohrpictures.org. On Thursday, July 11, at 10 a.m. DevOUT is host- ing Pride’s first Interfaith Village where festivalgoers can access a chaplain for spiritual direction or counseling and find resources on affirming faith organizations. There will also be presentations, workshops, and spiritual practices held in the event space from July 13-14.

Queer faith leaders will offer a prayer and blessing ahead of the Pride Parade under the Hilcrest Pride Flag on Saturday morning. The blessing, now an annual tradi- tion, historically began with allies offering prayers but is now led by LGBTQ+ clergy.

“The 50th anniversary of Stonewall is this year and we see how much has changed in 50 years regarding sexuality and gender in American culture. It’s faster than any other social movements in American history,” Robertson said. “So we have a lot of reason to hope. Years from now, I don’t even think we can fathom how different our society can become if we keep pressing forward believing that change is possible and working for that change.”

— Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com. o
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Dining & Entertainment

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