

Unitarian Universalist Church Newsletter

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts, Surprise, AZ 85378-2581

Phone: 623.875.2550 // www.uusurpriseaz.org // Email: uucsaz2@gmail.com

The Newsletter of Unitarian Universalist Church, Surprise, AZ is published monthly except August.

Minister: Rev. Terry Sims

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

President: Sherry Robinson



40th Anniversary 1975 - 2015

Newsletter Editor: Charlie Mannino

uucsnewsletter@gmail.com

Printing: Kathryn Pabich

April 2020

From The Minister's Desk

After cancelling our worship service, religious education classes, and social hour on Sunday, March 15, 2020, I arrived at our church about 9:55 a.m. I wanted to be there in case some had not gotten word of the cancellation that went out by email on Friday morning. I was also meeting with John Cline, who very graciously volunteered to come into the church to make an audio recording of me delivering the readings and sermon to an empty sanctuary.



When I arrived that Sunday morning, there was no one else there. I was relieved because that meant that almost everyone had received our emailed notice of the cancellation. But I was also sad to walk into an empty church. It did not feel good. I missed seeing everyone and the energy that we bring and add when we gather. However, I remain convinced that not gathering together for worship was the right decision in our attempts to contain spread of the coronavirus.

The coronavirus outbreak has reminded me how astoundingly fragile we humans are. We are helpless when we are born and when death eventually comes for us. We can be brought low, even to death, by tiny organisms against which we sometimes have no, or insufficient defenses. Our whole lives we suffer with disease, pain, disability, anxiety, injustice, broken dreams and broken hearts, and the knowledge that, sooner or later, we and everyone we love must die. There are no guaranties.

And yet in the face of all our fragility, we are also amazingly resilient creatures. Within a limited physical existence, we persevere. Increasingly, we investigate and understand our universe more. We cure diseases and grow crops. We study our human history and that of our sun and its planets. We explore oceans, outer space, the human psyche and interactions. We build computers, monuments, cities. We create and revel in music, art, architecture, plays, literature. Many of us are lucky enough to build lives filled with love, purpose, accomplishment, and satisfaction.

There is a fern that sits on the coffee table in my living room. When I first bought it at the grocery store, it was lush, filled with many slender stems reaching up to sprout a rich and full, but incredibly thin, horizontal canopy of tiny, branching, delicate, bright green fern leaves. It was a beautiful living thing that inspired me and made me glad just to gaze on it.

Then I forgot to water it for three weeks. The entire plant withered. Its bright green, delicate canopy turned brown and brittle. But there was one stem left of the many that had been there originally. It was still green, still supporting one small, living branch of leaves. But I was sure that even that stem and branch would die shortly, too. I had killed a beautiful plant I had enjoyed. I was disappointed in losing the fern and in my own negligence.

Still, I cut away all of the dead foliage at the top and dead stems rising from the soil. Though I thought it was probably pointless, I watered the plant faithfully from then on. Slowly, over several weeks, the single green stem became two, then four, then eight. The canopy started to spread across the planter again. Yesterday, I noticed another green

shoot that in one day had risen from the soil, with visible buds of branches and leaves. Today, it has even more buds, and has shot above the canopy of my tiny fern forest, preparing to add a higher layer. Again, I marvel at the mystery of living things. How did the fern survive? What told it to continue to shoot out stems and leaves in a not very hospitable environment? To me, the life and especially the recovery of the fern is a miracle.



I think of humanity as being like my fern. We endure hardships that threaten to wipe us out. And then we survive, rise again, rather miraculously, to new life in which beauty and hope are restored. I am eager to gather again as a community of faith, to see each other's faces, to share our activities with each other, and to renew our wonder at life in corporate worship. As soon as it is safer to do so, I'll see you in church.

Yours in our faith,

Terry

Message from the President

Sherry Robinson, President

With so much going on around us, I hardly know where to begin.

On the positive side, we just completed our annual auction with a Trip to the Ball Park planned and implemented in stellar fashion by Janet Jeffrey and Mary Beth Chrest. A delightful evening was had by all and we even raised an estimated \$9,000 (see page 5). I can't name all those involved; however, I offer my sincere thanks for the work and support that went into making this a success.



In addition we have a Social Justice Committee, Co-chaired by Tom Reemtsma and Maggie Mahan that is actively involving us in the outside community by supporting the Homeless Youth Connection as well as joining with other churches and social agencies to find a solution for homeless adults in Surprise.

Our Sound/Audio/Visual upgrade is on-going and there will soon be a request for input from the congregation. And finally, we are heading into the last stretch of our Generous Giving Campaign. If you have not given yet – please do and give generously.

On the negative side, our politics are messy, access to adequate health care is difficult, and economically many are struggling. At a time when we need to work together, we are faced with a crisis that suggests in order to stay healthy and safe, we should practice “social distancing.” Social activities, sporting events, public meetings, religious services and businesses are being cancelled or shut down to prevent the spread of a new virus that has marched rapidly onto our shores and into our communities.

How do we handle this as a caring community? What are the opportunities for help and care even as we are told “stay home as much as possible?” While this is good advice for these times, it is not the way most prefer people to live. We gain significant support from friends and neighbors by attending church, participating in social activities and being in contact with others.

We must keep in mind the guidelines for protecting ourselves, and we must also remember to check on friends and neighbors during these uncertain times. It need not be in person – pick up a phone, send a text or an email. While we are being “socially distant,” let's also continue to be a caring congregation. Stay Healthy and stay connected!



Get to Know the Board

This article is another in a series providing information about our 2020 board members.

Ruth Halpert - Board Secretary

My name is Ruth Halpert, and I have been a member here since 2004 and an attentive friend for a year or so before that. My background is as a secretary, airline stewardess, homemaker, Mom, volunteer, and friend. I love this congregation and think of it as my extended family. My actual extended family numbers over 220! It is a privilege to serve on your Board.



Smart Sole

Submitted by Joan Carlson

What is the Smart Sole? It's a shoe insert that contains a smart phone. It is water resistant and can be trimmed so you can adjust the size to fit your shoe. You will have to remove the insert that comes with the shoe and substitute the Smart Sole in its place. The Smart Sole uses GPS and 2 G cellular technology. The device for adults costs \$299.00. There are tracking devices available for children too. The tracking service for adults costs \$25-29 dollars per month depending on what payment plan you use. Paying for 3 months at a time is the cheapest.

How it works: Every 5 minutes GPS Smart Sole uses cellular connectivity to send its location updates to the GTX Corp Monitoring System. The location data is charted on a map that caregivers can access instantly through your online account or the Smart Locator app. The monitoring System sends out alerts via email and a text message with a link to the last known location.

This product is recommended for patients with dementia, veterans and athletes with traumatic brain injury, or children with autism or developmental disabilities who tend to wander away and get lost. You don't need a prescription for this product to purchase it but you may need it, if you want to get reimbursed by your insurance company, Medicare or a government disability agency. For more information go to (<https://gpssmartsole.com>)

Also FYI: Youngtown Community Fund will loan medical equipment to people in Surprise, Peoria, Youngtown, and El Mirage. Phone number (623-977-4661) 11215 AW Nevada Avenue. Equipment is loaned out for 4 months without charge. Youngtown, AZ. 9:00- 12:00 Monday- Saturday.

Helping Hands will loan equipment to people who live in Sun City West Phone: (623-975-5449) 146 W RH Johnson Blvd. Sun City West, AZ 85375.

Please have information for the Newsletter submitted by Noon on the 15th of each month to the Editor, Charlie Mannino at uucsnewsletter@gmail.com

Pill Bottles to the Rescue

Submitted by Darnell Kirksey

Nearly 70 percent of Americans take at least one prescription drug. That's a lot of empty pill bottles, most of which end up in landfills. In developing countries, many people receive their pills wrapped in paper scraps. They have no protection from moisture or the elements.

A Cincinnati-based group is working to change this. Mathew:25: Ministries is an international humanitarian aid and disaster relief organization that accepts donations of empty plastic pill bottles. They send them to places where medical supplies are needed. If the donated bottles can't be used, they shred and recycle them. Mathew:25 accepts prescription and over-the-counter pill bottles - large and small, with and without child-resistant caps.

We at UUCSAZ can help improve medical care in developing countries and care for our environment by adding our used pill bottles to this effort.

A box will be placed in our lobby where you may deposit your empty pill bottles. They must be washed clean with labels fully removed. I will see that they are collected and shipped to Mathew:25 Ministries.

Contact Darnell Kirksey with any questions.



BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

Unless UU Surprise decides to cancel services and other gatherings, BUUK Circle will meet the second Tuesday 6:30pm-8:30pm in the choir room. Come and join us whether you've finished the book or not yet started. For further information, contact Julie Wambach azwambach@icloud.com.

April 14, 2020 - "**Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World.**" By Joshua Benjamin Freeman.

Freeman's rich and ambitious Behemoth depicts a world in retreat that still looms large in the national imagination. More than an economic history or a chronicle of architectural feats and labor movements, this is an interesting history of how factories came into being and our world was formed by this creation.

The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Very soon during April, your UU Surprise Library will convert to self-service mode for the summer months. Librarian MaryAnne will be away on travel until early October. However, please feel free to continue to browse and borrow some good summer reading from your Library.

The card catalogue and guidebook located on the check out table will help you locate your books of interest. In addition, the shelves are labeled with the topics of the books located on them. If you wish to speak with MaryAnne about any matter, please just call, text or email me at any time. I will gladly help with your needs or questions:

Phone/text: 303-589-5729

Email: balzerfreespirit@gmail.com

If you have a spare few minutes before or after service on Sundays over summer, the Library could use your help making sure the room is tidy, books are shelved and in general the room is simply maintained. Jobs entail; checking back in and shelving circulated books, once or twice during summer shelf reading to be sure the call numbers on the book spines are in order, and help overseeing and maintaining the sale cart. If you are interested in helping out for one or more of these quick jobs, please contact MaryAnne at any time.

Below is a review of one of the new books to our Library this last year. I will finish up the final three new book reviews next month.

“A Queer History of the United States,” by Michael Bronski, number 306.76BRO. “Queer history didn’t start with Stonewall. This book explores how LGBTQ people have always been a part of our national identity, contributing to the country and culture for over 400 years. Through engrossing narratives, letters, drawings, poems, and more, the book encourages us to feel pride at the accomplishments of the LGBTQ people who came before and to use history as a guide to the future” from the 4-Star Amazon review. Though this book is oriented to young people, it is an excellent general read for us all.

Here’s wishing everyone a blessed season shared with some terrific UU reading!

Musings from the Loft!

Debby Bullins, Music Director

In these days as we struggle whether to meet with friends, keep appointments, attend church, take our children to school, do our taxes, and search



for toilet paper during this crazy pandemic event we are all a part of, music again fills us with community and our love for each other. As life in the small Italian town of Siena, Italy grinds to a halt amid a nationwide lockdown to control the spread

of the coronavirus outbreak, one street was filled with song as the community banded their voices together in solidarity. People were singing out of their windows on a neighborhood street in Siena, Tuscany, with many calling it a “beautiful” act of humanity.

The song, titled ‘Canto della Verbena’ (‘And While Siena Sleeps’), is a popular folk song in the city typically sung to express local pride.



It focuses on the Piazza del Campo, the main square of the city, and is traditionally sung by members of a contrada, districts set up in the Middle Ages to supply troops. “People breaking out in song, lifting each other’s spirits during this tragedy, is an act of striking beauty,” said one person. “It’s a reminder that, especially during a tragedy, the human spirit keeps us all going in hope. We shine our best in the darkness. Thank you, Siena. You made my day.” Another said: “Reminiscent of the chants from Wuhan high-rise apartments early in the epidemic there. Stay strong Italy. Praying for you guys.” Take this lesson, smile and sing bravely. We’ll be back together soon.

On May 10 at 10:00 a.m., rise a little early, come to church and settle in for Special Music when Connie Jahrmarkt and Kent Trostel bring their talents for a mini concert at UUC Surprise. Their collaboration will raise your spirits and warm your hearts as their music embraces you.

Take Me Out to the Ball Game!

Thank-you for your support of the Annual UU Auction March 7th

Event Co-Managers Mary Beth Chrest & Janet Jeffrey

Spring Training Hit Surprise UU! Over 100 (103 adults and 5 children) joined us for an evening of fun, entertainment, lively conversation, good food, and an opportunity to support our congregation, "Team UU." Many showed their team spirit by wearing your favorite MLB team gear; everyone seemed to enjoy dressing casually. They lingered outside eating Frank's dogs and brauts in the great weather and wandering inside to bid on silent auction items, purchase 50/50 tickets, and deposit their purchased tickets for a favorite dessert at the Grand Slam Dessert Draft. Younger participants hung out in the Rookie Dugout.



The gates of the Social Hall opened at 4:00 pm, actually earlier as some arrived just after 4 pm. Thanks to our amazing volunteers who worked with their area captains from check in to check-out, and all the steps between; work that started weeks before the event and a week or so afterwards.

Most of the 150 Silent Auction items were sold. Successful bidders at the Live Auction ran to home plate with 17 events.



The net profit was over \$9,000 with the final details (costs) being calculated as the newsletter goes to press: Silent and Live auction sales over \$7,000; Dessert Draft \$386; Beverage services over \$600; 50/50 Raffle \$177 with added donation by the winner, Reggie Johnston, of her half and other cash donations of \$733.



A special thanks to all those who helped in making the event a success, especially team captains:

Advertising, Promotion and Catalog - Charlie Mannino, Liz Thomas & Janet Jeffrey
 Room Décor - Mary Beth Chrest
 Check-in - Sharon Steigman & Mary Ellen Baker
 Silent Auction - Bill Chartrand & Terry Froyd
 Live Auction - Mary Beth Chrest & Brent Garrett
 Beverages - Juliet & Gus Gustavson
 Food/Concessions - Frank & Liz Thomas
 Grand Slam Desserts - Jan Murphy & Ruth Halpert
 Rookie Dugout - Lisa Lawrence
 Room Set up and Take-down - Jim Gaunt and Jeff London
 Purchase Management and Check-out - Margaret Leahy and Janet Jeffrey
 7th Inning Stretch - John Cline
 50/50 - Jim Dobbins & Art Huber
 Photography - Charlie Mannino & John Marshall
 Office support - Kathryn Pabich



RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

Cancelled??? No problem!

Just because we can't be together doesn't mean we can't still keep learning together. Join me on



Facebook every Sunday for Virtual Sunday School! Each week I will be posting the preschool and K & Up lesson for those families that are interested. During April I will also be featuring posts on Passover, Easter, Earth Day and summer camp. To follow children's religious education

activities and lessons join us at: <https://www.facebook.com/uucsurprisefamily/> While you're there, send me some photos of how your family is living the 7 principles and keeping up spirits during these trying times.

Speaking of summer camp, I want to thank all who donated to the Summer Camp Scholarship Fund last month on "Donate the Plate Sunday". We collected \$841 which brings us to a current total of \$1,505 thanks to generous supporters. How far into the future Coronavirus will affect our country, and in what ways is currently unknown. Will RE classes

meet again before the contest is over? Will summer camps be open this summer? To that, I don't have an answer, but I will be working on a fair way to resolve our attendance contest; even if it means postponing it until next year. I will keep everyone posted.

I leave you with two of my favorite chalice lighting sayings from over the past year. Light a candle, focus on the flame, say the words and spend some time reflecting and meditating. I hope they are a comfort to you.

I am like a candle.

I am sending light out all around me.

All my words, thoughts and actions are going in many directions.

If I say something kind,
my kind words go in many directions,
and I myself go with them.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

May the light of this chalice
help us to find happiness in the darkest of times.
May the light of this chalice
remind us that our words are both capable of
inflicting pain
and remedying it; and
May the light of this chalice
help us to choose between what is easy and what
is right.

-The Dumbledore Special



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**Visit our web site for
current information**

www.uusurpriseaz.org

**Unitarian
Universalist Church
of Surprise**

A Progressive, Inclusive Faith Community

WELCOME



Support the Outlaw Dirty Money Voter Initiative

Michael C. Piper

Nine years ago, in a 5-4 vote, the United States Supreme Court issued the Citizens United decision. In Citizens United, the Court held that the free speech clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibits the government from restricting independent expenditures for communications.

This landmark decision unleashed a flood of political contributions. Prior to Citizens United, there was \$143 million in campaign spending from outside groups during the 2008 election cycle. By 2016, that spending rose to \$1.4 billion, a nine-fold increase.

Today, wealthy and powerful people pour unlimited amounts of cash into our elections while shielding their identities. They operate in secret, hiding behind legal barriers to keep us from knowing who they are.

I believe Arizonans have the right to make voting decisions based on full information, including who is spending money to influence our votes. That is why I'm gathering signatures to put an Arizona constitutional amendment on next year's general election ballot.

This non-partisan amendment effort, led by former Attorneys General Terry Goddard and Tom Horne, says Arizonans have a right to know where the money in politics comes from. It would require those who spend more than \$20,000 to influence statewide races (or \$10,000 in local races) to report the original source of their funding.

To learn more, or to back the campaign, please see the outlawdirtymoney.com website. If you would like to voice your support for putting this proposed amendment on the November 2020 election ballot, I'll have petitions available for your signature in the Social Hall before and after upcoming Sunday services.

Let's make 2020 the year when we secure our right to know who is funding political campaigns. Let's put the Outlaw Dirty Money constitutional amendment on the ballot and pass it in November 2020. With your help, we can do this.

WhaleCoast Alaska 2020

Have you ever dreamed of visiting Alaska? If so, WhaleCoast Alaska 2020 is for you! Four Alaska UU congregations invite you to experience our unique environmental/cultural/spiritual program this summer. See Alaska through the eyes of local UUs, with friendly home stays and unique tour activities. See wildlife, including moose, bears, caribou, whales, bald eagles, sea lions, etc. Visit Denali National Park. Experience Native Alaskan culture. Forget the cruise ships -- our program is truly the best way to visit Alaska! Tours led by Dave Frey, member of the Fairbanks UU congregation and Alaska travel expert. Find out more about this Alaskan trip of a lifetime. For complete info go to: www.WhaleCoastAK.org, email dfrey@whalecoastak.org or call 907-322-4966. Discount for groups of 8 or more. We would love to share our Alaska with you!



Tax Free Donations to UU from IRA. 403(b) or 401(k)

Bob Walling

This is one time it pays to be old (over 70 ½). Want to make a tax free donation to UUC and other 501(c)3 charities? You can through an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) as long as you are older than 70 ½. Your donation can replace in whole or part your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) or be in excess of it up to \$100,000 annually.

Don't have an IRA, but have a 403(b), 401(k) or other Tax Sheltered Annuity that you are taking RMDs from? You may be able to roll the gift amount into an IRA and make the Charitable QCD gift. Confused or have questions, call or talk to Bob Walling at 623.573.5942 (Bob is a former Certified Financial Planner™ and makes all of his UUC and other charitable gifts through this strategy.)



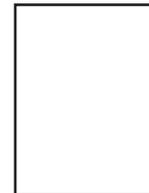
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40th Anniversary 1975 - 2015



First Class Mail

Affirmation

Love is the spirit of this church

And service is its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in freedom,

And to help one another.

Join us for Sunday service at 10:30 am

*If you are not a member but would like to receive church announcements by email,
please send your email address and full name to uucsaz2@gmail.com.*

Sermon Titles For April 2020

The Theme for this month is God/The Divine

4/5 - Rev. Terry Sims.....50 Years On: Gayness, Goodness, and God

Today in our congregation, we will celebrate Gay Pride, looking at the progress in human rights toward full inclusion and recognition for LGBTQ people since the uprisings at the Stonewall Inn. We will hear stories from some of our LGBTQ members about how life has changed for them over the past 50 years. And we will explore the connection between being oneself and finding goodness and the God within.

4/12- Rev. Terry Sims..... Divine Diffusion

Human beings have always searched for one god or many. We keep hoping to find ourselves in our gods, imagining that they have human characteristics raised to a supreme level. Maybe we would be better served by searching for what is divine in ourselves and in all that surrounds us.

4/19 - Rev. Terry Sims..... What Is a Religion Without God?

When I discovered Unitarian humanism, I thought that I had finally gotten hold of a religion I could believe in, in contrast to a God that I could not. But people have asked me, derisively, "What is a religion without God?" Have we UU humanists dispensed with God?

4/26 - Amy St. PeterJust Be

When we're splintered by distractions and torn by turmoil, it's easy to lose ourselves and our focus. The impetus to "just be" doesn't seem enough, yet at times it's all we have and everything for which we strive. If we cannot just be, we cannot be anything else. This sermon will explore the quiet moments and constructive chaos when we may just be.