

Unitarian Universalist Church Newsletter

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

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40th Anniversary 1975 - 2015

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July/August 2020

From The Minister's Desk

The question that is troubling me most right now is how long will we tolerate gross inequality in our societies? Of course, the killings of African-Americans George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by white police officers, and Ahmaud Arbery by two white residents, brought the stark inequality of structural racism to our focused attention again, nationally and internationally. White supremacy and anti-blackness are perhaps the most recent, clearest, most egregious example of inequality, grounded as they are in ancient, absurd notions about race. But there are also inequalities of power, civil rights, and opportunity that are distributed very unevenly according to wealth, income, gender, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. Why?

It is hardly surprising that the coronavirus pandemic has also hit African-Americans, indigenous people, and Latino/as hardest. That is because those groups already tended to have less access to money, insurance, and health resources. One Axios article I read struck me hard in that respect.

“From hastily-chartered superyachts to fortresslike country estates, the wealthiest Americans have found places to ride out the pandemic far away from the masses. . . . The contrast between the rich vs. poor experience of coronavirus exposes class differences — in housing, access to health care, etc. — that are less obvious in normal times. . . . Even as elected officials tell us that the novel coronavirus does not discriminate



— New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo called it “the great equalizer” — it’s still true that the moneyed classes are walling themselves off and, on the whole, suffering less. . . .

Headlines that tell the story:

- “Chic Hamptons food stores ransacked by the wealthy amid coronavirus pandemic” (NY Post)
- “Private jets ‘pour in’ to Martha’s Vineyard as rich flee coronavirus” (The Telegraph)
- “Billionaires are chartering superyachts for months at a time to ride out the coronavirus pandemic” (Business Insider)
- “The U.S. has a shortage of coronavirus tests, so the ultra-wealthy are paying concierge doctors to do their own,” (Business Insider)”

[Jennifer A. Kingston, “The Rich Pull Up the Drawbridges”, Axios, April 3, 2020, <https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-rich-drawbridges-7567f493-1bed-494e-926c-be897823a706.html>.] Meanwhile, my good friend, who is Latino, one of the working poor, and has no health insurance, just prays that no one in his family comes down with COVID-19; they cannot afford medical treatment.

I confess that when former presidential hopeful Andrew Yang proposed the idea of universal basic income (UBI), I thought it was a poorly thought-out nostrum that could never work. I am rethinking that. The vast majority of us seemed to embrace the “economic impact” or coronavirus stimulus payments many of us received during the pandemic. UBI would be a step toward equality. Self-interested as we are, we might even consider that UBI could stimulate our consumer-driven economy the way the economic impact payments did, the way social security benefits do.

When will even those of us who benefit from unequal systems have had enough? When will our disgust for our society that oppresses people without cause rise up in us enough to let us confront the basic inequalities in the systems we live with but cannot justify?

I think we are getting closer. I got closer watching the recent protests in our country and around the world against police violence toward people of color. I got closer when I saw this video of 12-year-old Keedron Bryant singing the song he wrote about what it is like to grow up as a black man in this country, "I Just Want to Live". [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU5a4pJ4enw>.] For the sake of our own human decency, how can we not put our collective arms figuratively around Keedron and everyone who is treated unequally? And then how can we not insist on real, institutional changes that will show him and others we care enough to act; that will give him, at last, a real opportunity to live the life he wants to, an opportunity equal to the one many of us get to take for granted.

It does not have to be the way it is. Inequality among us was not ordained by God or Nature, despite arguments to the contrary. "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations." "The inherent worth and dignity of every person." Inequality is antithetical to these UU Principles and others. May we also make it antithetical to what we are willing to live with.

Yours in our faith,



Message from the President

Sherry Robinson, President

Summer is upon us, and because of Covid -19, members, who normally leave for cooler locations, are remaining here. While some Churches and Religious groups have chosen to return to in-person services, we have chosen to remain cautious and will reevaluate our situation in the Fall. I believe this is the best approach given the current circumstances and the surge in state covid numbers. This means – of course – we will continue to connect virtually for most of our activities, including Worship Services.



In times like these, I am reminded of the 7th principle – "Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part" and recognize how dependent we are on each other. We are social creatures; it is natural for us to want to be with others. At the same time, we have a moral responsibility to ourselves, our families and the members of our communities to err on the side of caution and follow the guidance of health care professionals. We are doing just that and while we are unable to enjoy each other's presence, we will remain connected. These connections remind us, we are not alone.

In this very short time - the life of our Congregation has been altered significantly. We have had to make hard decisions around gathering and to understand we are all in this together. Unfortunately, this virus came as we were starting our Generous Giving Campaign and we were unable to complete the program. We do not have accurate pledge information from many of our members, making it difficult to plan for the next 6 months. This does not mean you are not giving; it means we do not have a record for the total amount of your gift.

We are grateful you have continued to support our community, and we know some have been more impacted than others. Some members returned their Pledge cards; some, who usually do, are still giving but returned no card; and some give faithfully and never return the card.. Without these cards we have no firm knowledge of total contributions.

This is an urgent plea - If you have not filled out a pledge card, even if you give on a regular basis, please do so soon. With contributions identified, it will be easier to budget for the remainder of this year to provide needed services to our members.

Please don't think of this as an obligation, but as a promise to support what we hold dear. Stay in, Stay well and Stay Connected...

Have you named our church in your will?

A simple codicil added to an existing will can provide for continuance of our liberal church ideals.

For info call: Bob Walling at 602-573-5942

Generous Giving Campaign Mid-Year Report 2020

On January 10 of this year, our congregation passed an annual budget for 2020 of \$298,146. Funds for our support come from the following five sources:

- Identified Contributions – Pledges
- Fund Raising Activities (Auction)
- Unidentified Contributions – Sunday Collection
- Interest and Dividends
- Building Use Donations – (Rentals)

In March, shortly after the start of our Generous Giving Campaign, the Coronavirus appeared, and all five of our sources were impacted either directly or indirectly. We have been unable to conduct “business or services as usual”, and we have been left with a large gap in our funding: no rentals, interest/dividends are down due to a decline in the Stock Market, no unidentified contributions because there are no Sunday collections, and we were unable to complete our Pledge Campaign.

We are grateful our members have continued to support our Community; however, many members did not complete and turn in a pledge card for the year. Currently we have no firm knowledge of what the total of our identified contributions will be, and this has made planning for the next 6 months infinitely more difficult. We applied for a PPP Loan and it has been a gift - extremely helpful but with limitations on use, amount and time.

The graph demonstrates what our goal was in January; what we need to make our budget; and what we have collected. You can clearly see the gap we face. We do not expect to reach our goal; however, to meet the needs of the Church, even under quarantine, we do need to reach that second step – “what we need.”

We know there are some who give every month and have in the past filled out a pledge card; however, somehow this year, they have neglected to do so. There are others that give faithfully every month and never fill out a card. We understand the virus has turned our year upside -down, but we still need Pledge cards to plan out the next 6 months and to balance our budget for this year.

If you have not filled out your Pledge Card yet – do so now. You can contact Kathryn, our Congregational Administrator or Sherry Robinson, President, by email or phone and they can assist you in completing the pledge information needed.



Musings from the Loft...

Debby Bullins, Music Director



2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. This summer is no different. I can think of no other year that has tested our resilience, our beliefs and called us to demand More Love, Less Hate. I have turned to one of my favorite composers, Mark A. Miller, for strength, love and compassion. His music speaks

to me, and I have used his compositions regularly in service to share that love. I would like to share Mark's most recent composition with you and tell you a little bit about him. I was introduced to his music in 2015 when Marsha McFee was the clinician and the National UUMN Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. Mr. Miller and Ms. McFee have worked together, and we sang some of his music at the conference. Miller is inspired by current events and has written pieces after many recent tragedies. In 2019, I had the extreme pleasure of spending some time with him at the AUUMM Convention in Denver where we performed some of his inspiring music.

His bio reads, "Mark believes passionately that music can change the world. He also believes in Cornell West's quote that 'Justice is what love looks like in public.' His dream is that the music he composes, performs, teaches and leads will inspire and empower people to create the beloved community."

Mark serves as Assistant Professor of Church Music at Drew Theological School and is a Lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University. He also is the Minister of Music of Christ Church in Summit, New Jersey."

His most recent composition, in collaboration with Adam Tice, is titled,

"Lament: My Heart Is Breaking."

*My heart is breaking, my fury shaking,
my soul is tired, my breath is gone.*

*I ask, "How long, Lord, this evil season?"
Unending pain and tears.*

*My heart is breaking, my fury shaking,
my soul is tired, my breath is gone.*

*I cry, "How long, Lord, this evil season?"
Unending pain and tears.*

*Use our anger to melt the swords of hate.
Use our tears to water thirsty ground.
Give us courage to love all you create.
Come to us and turn the world around,
come to us and turn your world around.*

*Our hearts are breaking, our fury shaking,
our souls are tired, our breath is gone.
We cry, "How long, Lord, this evil season?"
Unending pain and tears.*

Mr. Miller wrote this about his inspiration. "I composed this on Friday, May 29, 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd. I owe a debt to our ancestors and the unknown bards who created what we today call the Negro Spirituals. I wanted to express the outpouring of heartbreak, anger, grief, and loss so many are experiencing right now. May we know Peace with Justice."

You can hear Mr. Miller sing "Lament" here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU0K9Ulbu70>

*We can Be the Change, Be the Light, Be the Love
and know Peace and Justice.*

History of the UU Church in Surprise, AZ, 1975-2020

Dr. Bonnie Saunders

"The UU Church in Surprise was founded as the UU Church of the Sun Cities in 1975. Many members who have joined over the past 20+ years don't know anything about the history of this church. Three church histories have been written and are available in the Church Library-- one written by Doris Melleney Thompson dated 1975-1995, one written by Nancy Bechtolt dated 1995-2005, and one written by Bonnie Saunders dated 2006-2015. Because she has been asked by newer members for information about the history of the church, Bonnie will give two sermons on the 'History of the UU Church in Surprise' - see the sermon list for August 23rd and 30th."

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

Sermon Titles For July 2020

7/5 - Pat Lindgren..... The Good Things it is Kind of Hard to See Right Now

7/12 - Juliet Gustavson Liminal Space: Living Betwixt and Between
We are all in a waiting room, living betwixt and between what was and what will be. But each of us is individually determining how we wait in this liminal space.

7/19 – Rev. Dr. Cathy Corbin Mannino Jesus Wept
How to live the compassionate life and not drown in our own tears.

7/26 – Rebecca Riggs..... Finding Home
During the unsettled, in-between times of life, we long for the security of what is known and trusted. But we don't have a common creed to fall back on. . . only a common covenant. What is it we promise each other? Is this spiritual home without definite answers enough?

Sermon Titles For August 2020

8/2 - Amy St. Peter..... Healing Waters
Water gives us life, it cleanses, refreshes, and offers adventures and moments of serenity. Explore the spiritual implications of water in our desert home.

8/9 - Amy St. Peter..... Nesting Dolls
We live our life in layers, public faces protecting inner selves. Like nesting dolls, these layers each have a story and purpose. Consider your own layers and how each feeds your innermost soul.

8/16 – Rev. Dr. Cathy Corbin Mannino Of Leaders and Lemmings
Understanding (and avoiding) the call of the cult.

8/23 – Dr. Bonnie Saunders..... History of the UU Church in Surprise -- Part 1, 1975-1995
The information in this sermon comes from the excellent history of the first 20 years of this church, written in 1995 by Doris Melleney Thompson. Among the most momentous events of those 20 years were the calling of the first full-time, settled minister, the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel P. Lauriet in 1985 and the renovation of a bank building in 1990 to serve as the first church home for the UU community.

8/30 – Dr. Bonnie Saunders..... History of the UU Church in Surprise -- Part 2, 1995-2015
More momentous events occurred during this period, among the most notable of which were the calling of the Rev. Dr. Walter F. Wieder as the second full-time, settled minister in 1996; the dedication of the current church building in 1999; the beginning of Religious Education in 2000 for a growing number of children -- up to 25 on a Sunday by 2007 when RE began to flourish in earnest; and the calling of the Rev. Terry Sims as the third, full-time, settled minister in 2012.

Get to Know the Board

This article is another in a series introducing our 2020 board members.

Dr. Bill Chartrand - Trustee

Raised in the quite conservative Lutheran Free Church, and having graduated from its Augsburg College and Seminary in Minneapolis MN as a pre-seminary student majoring in English, Speech and Theater, Bill served for two years in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia with his wife, an experience that immensely impacted him. After returning from that volunteer service, he entered grad school and received his PhD in Interpersonal, Family and Intercultural Communication. He and his wife were blessed with two “home-made” sons and also adopted two mixed-racial children: a Black-white son and a Black-Korean daughter. His Peace Corps experience, intercultural grad studies, and mixed-racial family life eventually led to his confronting his own “differentness” – as one who had long repressed his attraction to other men. Disclosing this to his wife, he was encouraged to explore his “differentness.” After much struggle, he was able to integrate his affectional orientation with Biblical Old Testament laws and accepted his gayness. An amiable divorce followed. Soon after, in one year, AIDS took several close friends and 17 fellow members of the Twin Cities Gay Men Chorus, of which he was a member -- extremely devastating experiences. However, soon thereafter he met Terry Froyd, a “God-send,” with whom he has prospered in a 33-year relationship, having been married by Rev. Terry Sims five years ago. Besides serving in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia, Bill has rehabbed houses in an Australian indigenous community; assisted in researching the health of coral reefs in Micronesia; prepared and delivered meals to HIV/AIDS persons; served as a volunteer receptionist for Honor Health surgery patients; and created and led workshops for parents who plan to adopt children from Korea, Ethiopia, and Viet Nam. At UUCS, Bill currently serves on our Board as a trustee, on the Worship Committee, is a member of the Choir, and co-captain of the Silent Auction.



The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

A warm hello and peaceful greetings to all our faithful UU readers. My column this month comes to you again featuring some of the great new books we have added the last few years. If there was a time to delve into profound reading on timely topics, this is it. The wide ranging topics below offer much content for exploring spirituality in different ways. The titles should be available for download from your local library system or for a fee from online sale services.

“Cabin Fever, A Suburban Father’s Search for the Wild,” “Roadside Religion: In Search of the Sacred, the Strange and the Substance of Faith,” by Timothy Beal. In Spirit says it is “Part travel narrative, part religious study, and part search for the divine madness that is faith, Roadside Religion takes the reader on a tour of the strange and often wondrous ways people have tried to give outward form to their inner religious experiences. Religion is most interesting--and most revealing--Beal shows us, where it’s least expected.”

“Love Beyond God: Meditations,” by Adam Lawrence Dyer. A new release by Dyer, “an educator and an LGBT- and justice-reform activist... pursuing a master of divinity degree at The Pacific School of Religion”. In Spirit describes this book as containing “Powerful, poignant, and prophetic poems from one of the rising literary talents in Unitarian Universalism today. This timely collection explores faith, race, love, identity, and more, and invites us to think deeply about our place and role in contemporary society.”

In this time of deep divide and soul searching in our country, I more than ever wish you A blessed day shared with deeply meaningful UU reading!



RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE



I've spoken to many of our young families and, in spite of social distancing, fun is still being planned for the summer. The fun and adventure is just happening a little bit closer to home this year with camping, virtual summer camps and swimming. Although, summer seems to be racing by so fast it

should get a speeding ticket!

I have designed a fun activity for our families over the summer that will help to keep our families connected. We will be building a photo gallery that expresses our UU faith, beliefs and traditions. The snapshots and descriptions will be called "Gems of Goodness." Each family will be discussing a different UU topic each week or so, find or make something that represents their topic and submit a photograph of it, with a description, to be posted on the UU Surprise Family page, <https://www.facebook.com/uucsurprisefamily>

Since parents are a child's primary religious educator and the church is practicing social-distancing right now, it is the perfect time to introduce the practice of family faith formation. It gives families the opportunity to explore important faith-related topics together. It also ensures that the information is delivered as well as giving families an opportunity to discuss differences as individuals, while still forming their faith as a unit.

Be sure to log in to the family page now and again to check out our Gems of Goodness Gallery.

One more piece of good news to share is that the children collected a total of \$104 in classroom offerings. Collecting a weekly classroom offering is an important exercise which teaches our children about stewardship. Monetary support is one of the many ways to help the organizations that give our lives enrichment. For the second year we split this total in half; \$52 for the RE program and \$52 donated to a community organization. The community organization we chose to support this year is Homeless Youth Connection. The \$52 was matched by an organization called "Support My Club" and purchased a total of 408 loads of laundry detergent. Hurray!

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/gpssmartsole/>

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.



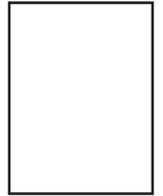
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First Class Mail

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.*

*See page 5 for July and August sermon
titles and descriptions.*

Visit our web site for current information

www.uusurpriseaz.org