

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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45th Anniversary 1975 - 2020

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October 2020

From The Minister's Desk

While on leave this summer, I traveled to some beautiful places with my sister, Ronda, and her family. As I said in a previous meditation that we recorded, while I was sitting on a boulder in a gentle creek in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, I was able to tune in to the natural world in large part because I tuned out, for a while, my connection to most of humanity and the mess we are making of our society.



But then I came back to the reality of having to live in this world with other people. As I said in my meditation, my hope was to bring back some measure of the serene peacefulness I reconnected with in Nature and integrate it into the conflict-torn, everyday world all of us are trying to live together. That is especially my hope now, one month before a highly emotionally charged and crucial quadrennial election here in the U.S.

I believe we live in a time when most of what we have historically valued in this country is at serious risk. I believe that our republic, our 244-year-old experiment with representative democracy, may not survive if we do not find a way to value and trust again our democratic institutions and ideals.

On September 9 I read a profoundly insightful and disturbing opinion piece by Shawn Rosenberg, a professor of political science and psychological science at the University of California, Irvine. Its chilling title was: "We'll find out after the 2020 presidential election if Americans were just too angry and fed up with democracy to save it". [9/9/2020,

[https://www.marketwatch.com/story/americas-elites-are-failing-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-thats-pushing-us-voters-towards-right-wing-populism-2020-09-09?mod=mw_more_headlines.](https://www.marketwatch.com/story/americas-elites-are-failing-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-thats-pushing-us-voters-towards-right-wing-populism-2020-09-09?mod=mw_more_headlines)] There Professor Rosenberg wrote, in part:

"In my view, the effects of the [COVID-19] crisis will extend well beyond the election, regardless of who wins the presidency. The pandemic is contributing to a broader structural shift in American life, one that is undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions in favor of more authoritarian and populist alternatives." . . . [T]he liberal democracy Americans know, with its abstract principles, complex institutional arrangements and conflicted, deliberative practices, is difficult for most people to understand and embrace. . . .

[In the past,] America's elites have deployed their power over political nominations to sideline figures who threaten democratic processes. They have similarly used their influence over the mass media and educational institutions to guide the national political discussion and exclude anti-democratic messages. In these ways, they have been able to shepherd a public that might otherwise naturally be receptive to undemocratic alternatives.

The problem now is that the power of this oligarchic elite is waning. In the process, individuals are now free to come to their own understanding of their situation and needs and to choose the direction they and others must follow. But . . . people typically lack the cognitive capacity to generate their own understandings and self-direct. Instead they rely on conventional beliefs and the guidance of authoritative leaders. . . .

Emancipated from the strictures of social convention and traditional authority, Americans are

free to make their own choices. In doing so, they are increasingly favoring authoritarians and populists. In this way, democracy devours itself.”

The choices that face us are clear, I think. Will we entrust our future to populists who turn to an authoritarian leader because they lack the cognitive capacity to understand and decide for themselves? Or will we instead recognize, before it is too late, that our best hope lies with democratic institutions: schools that educate, the rule of law presided over by a fairer legal process, untrammled media, a trustworthy electoral process, the free exchange of ideas in legislatures and in the public square? The strength of democracy does not lie in one strongman or strongwoman, no matter their personal virtues and failings, but in what we build and have built together.

That is, I believe, what our Fifth UU Principle means in affirming and promoting the “use of the democratic process.” People come and go, but it is enduring institutions, constantly informed and reformed by high ideals, that make democracy possible in the long run. For the time being, I’ll continue to see you virtually in church.

Yours in our faith,

Message from the President

Sherry Robinson, President

I hope this message finds you well and hanging in there! Our community is returning slowly, and Reverend Sims is back and ready to start the new Church Year. We have much to do!



The Board met recently to review our summer activities and to discuss our return to in-person gatherings. Rev Terry and I would like to know your thoughts on this. What would help you feel safe in returning to the building? The Board has established a group for information gathering. We specifically chose those members whose tasks on Sunday morning will be impacted when we return. In addition to this group, we would like to hear from you. If you have already shared your thoughts through another avenue, I thank you. If not, and you wish to – please contact David King or Patricia Balfour to do so. (Their numbers are in the directory,)

At our Board meeting, we received an update on our finances, and although we are behind in our revenue, we are maintaining and hopefully will end the year not too far in the red. We understand the difficulties and the stress put on personal finances in these times, and we appreciate your continued financial support under difficult circumstances. Our Stewardship Chair is working hard to bring this giving year to a successful end, and at the same time she and her committee are working diligently to create an annual giving plan for 2021 that will provide more information to our congregation about our finances, engage the community in the giving process, make the Pledge Drive more transparent and donations easier to manage. We have almost all the kinks worked out to add PayPal to our website for on-line donations.

Meanwhile, the Board is looking at new activities and projects for our members to become involved in, and we welcome your thoughts and ideas. In my last update for the congregation, I mentioned some ideas for us to consider. You will be hearing more about these in the coming months.

With all of the chaos in the country, the virus, the racial tension, the wildfires, and of course the upcoming election, not to mention the loss of our dearly beloved members, Lenore Gaudin and Paige Hardage, I find it difficult to concentrate on my day to day routine. I believe each of you have similar feelings and that some are suffering more than others from the isolation. As you go through your daily routine keep your friends and neighbors in mind and maybe send an extra “hello” or “how are you doing” out to them. Sometimes it only takes one friendly word to help someone get through a day. Until we are together again - *Stay Safe and Be Well.*

UU Endowment Fund

Naming the Endowment Fund of the Church as a beneficiary of your estate or a specific asset, such as an IRA or life insurance plan, provides a simple way to begin your legacy now by providing for our church work in the future. If your circumstances change, you can alter your plans at any time.

For further information call:
Bob Walling at 602-573-5942.

Living our UU Values thru Stewardship

Suzi Walling, Chair

Last winter, I was asked to Chair the Stewardship Committee. I agreed to do so for two reasons: first, because I am committed to the wellbeing of this congregation where our shared progressive values are celebrated; and second, because my professional career was dedicated to mission-based fundraising and community outreach for nonprofit organizations and I believed that expertise would be beneficial to this congregation.

And so the work began ... Sherry and I planned the campaign based on this extraordinarily difficult time we are all living through, the COVID19 Era. Our first virtual campaign strategy was to use mail to reach out to our Members and Friends. We set about creating letters and a new pledge card.

By early summer, the Stewardship Committee was recruited. Members include: Mary Anne Balzer, Steve Calkins, Janet Jeffrey (Vice Chair), Don Marine, Amy St. Peter, Suzi Walling (Chair), and Claudia Yeager-Smith. Board President Sherry Robinson and our minister Terry Sims serve on the team in an ex-officio capacity.

Our first Zoom meeting was held in early August. Initially, we focused on completing the 2020 Stewardship Pledge Campaign. First, letters were sent to all members and friends who had given to UUCS during the past two years. Later on, we reached out by sending letters via email, as a reminder to members and friends to make, or fulfill, their financial commitments.

Our campaign is predicated on receiving financial pledge commitments from all members and friends. **Why pledge?** A pledge from each of us provides the Board of Trustees with information they need to understand the financial capacity of the congregation in order to plan a realistic annual budget.

Your Stewardship Team will continue its work to raise as many pledges and gifts as possible for 2020 in support of the work of this congregation. We believe that each of us will do our part to give as generously as possible and to honor our commitments.

Without all of us who care about the principles and people of UUCS, our church is just a building; but with all of us working together to support

the church, we are a congregation of hope, loving kindness, and peace. Through Stewardship, we come together for a higher purpose and a deeper commitment.



Generous Giving as a Goal

Times are uncertain – that is a fact. We know, however, the value of our UUC community remains a constant. Even as you sift through worries over the virus, your income, families and personal savings, please know how vital your pledge is toward maintaining our congregation's work and service to you and to the community.

We are grateful for the continued financial support from our UUC members. You are letting your pledge be a way to believe in the future.

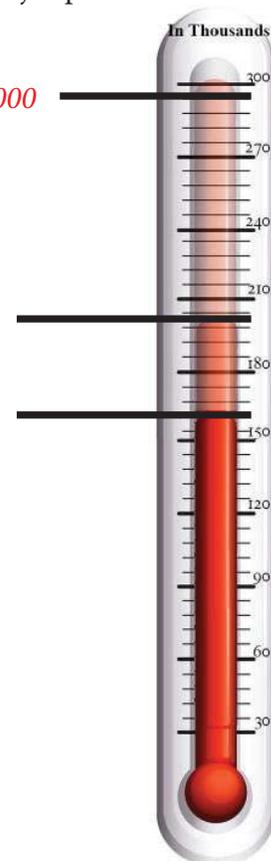
THANK YOU

The thermometer graphically displays our 2020 congregational budget, the goal of our Annual Generous Giving Campaign as part of the total budget, and the amount of donations that has been raised to date. Although donations are but one of five resources that make up our budget, as you can see, your donations are a major portion of the congregation's budget.

Our 2020 UUCS Budget: **\$285,000**

Our Generous Giving Campaign Goal: **\$198,458**

Amount of Donations Raised YTD: **\$160,091**



The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Last month I wrote that the start of the Fall season usually brings the fresh list of new book purchases for your UU Library. However, I continue to hold off purchasing any new books until reopening and in consideration of our budget.

However, the curious reader may want an early peak at some of the books on the short list for such time and as available moneys occur. Below is a list of eight books to look forward to in your UU Library. Of course, as always these days, you may wish to check your local library for a lending copy in the meantime. I will list more books and start reviews next month.

“Gideon’s Promise,” subtitled: ‘A Public Defender Movement to Transform Criminal Justice’, author Jonathan Rapping.

“Rectify,” subtitled: ‘The Power of Restorative Justice after Wrongful Conviction’, author Lara Bazelon.

“Twelve Step Unitarian Universalists,” subtitled: ‘Essays on Recovery’, edited by Ken and Cathlean

“A Life Beyond Reason,” subtitled ‘A Father’s Memoir’, author Chris Gabbard.

“Breaking and Blessings,” subtitled: ‘Meditations’, author Sean Parker Dennison.

“Conversations with the Sacred,” subtitled: ‘A Collection of Prayers, author Manish Mishra-Marzetti.

“Demystifying Shariah,” subtitled: ‘What it is, How it Works, and Why it’s Not Taking Over Our Country’, author Sumbul Ali-Karamali.

“For Small Creatures Such as We,” subtitled: ‘Rituals for Finding meaning in Our Unlikely World’, author Sasha Sagan.

Enjoy a peaceful day with a highly recommended UU book.

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

Get to Know the Board

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

Margaret Leahy - Treasurer

I am one of the rare people who can say that they were born in Arizona. However, shortly after my birth my father got a job auditing federal credit unions



and we moved to the Midwest. My two sisters were born while we were in Chicago and then the family moved to Cincinnati where I spent my grade school years. We moved to New Jersey when I was in high school. It was here that I was introduced to the Unitarian Universalist faith. I spent four years as a member of

the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship and was active in high school and college UU groups in the New Jersey area. I was even a delegate at the convention that voted to change the name of the high school youth group from LRY to YRUU. Eventually winter weather drove me back to Arizona where I finished college and have lived for more than thirty years.

I inherited my father’s love for financial processes. This has led my professional life to companies that include American Express, the City of Glendale and now Pepsi. In all of these places I have managed financial processes and built budgets for small departments to international divisions.

Outside of work, I enjoy travelling, hiking and spending time with my extended family. Most of that extended family, including my mother and sisters, are in the Greater Boston area, and I try to visit as often as possible. However, my mother is the youngest of twelve children, so I have cousins in many cities, including over twenty to keep me company here in Phoenix.

After I returned to Arizona the UU part of my life has included memberships in the Church of the Larger Fellowship and UUCP. I joined our congregation in January of 2017. I am honored to have been selected to serve as your Board Treasurer. I’ve enjoyed putting my professional skills to use to help our congregation thrive. More importantly though, I’ve enjoyed getting to meet many of you, in person or via Zoom, and I’m looking forward to the time when we are together again.

Musings from the Loft...

Debby Bullins, Music Director



Six months into the pandemic, we long for more social interaction with family and friends, a return to some sort of normal life where music and artful expression comforts us. I offer this reflection I have shared with my grandchildren in hopes that it comforts and inspires us all to be better humans.

CONTINUE: A poem

By Maya Angelou

My wish for you
Is that you continue

Continue

To be who and how you are
To astonish a mean world
With your acts of kindness

Continue

To allow humor to lighten the burden
Of your tender heart

Continue

In a society dark with cruelty
To let the people hear the grandeur
Of God in the peals of your laughter

Continue

To let your eloquence
Elevate the people to heights
They had only imagined

Continue

To remind the people that
Each is as good as the other
And that no one is beneath
Nor above you

Continue

To remember your own young years
And look with favor upon the lost
And the least and the lonely

Continue

To put the mantel of your protection
Around the bodies of
The young and defenseless

Continue

To take the hand of the despised
And diseased and walk proudly with them

In the high street

Some might see you and
Be encouraged to do likewise

Continue

To plant a public kiss of concern
On the cheek of the sick
And the aged and infirm
And count that as a
Natural action to be expected

Continue

To let gratitude be the pillow
Upon which you kneel to
Say your nightly prayer
And let faith be the bridge
You build to overcome evil
And welcome good

Continue

To ignore no vision
Which comes to enlarge your range
And increase your spirit

Continue

To dare to love deeply
And risk everything
For the good thing

Continue

To float
Happily in the sea of infinite substance
Which set aside riches for you
Before you had a name

Continue

And by doing so
You and your work
Will be able to continue
Eternally

Visit our web site for current information

www.uusurpriseaz.org

RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

Children's RE classes are back in session! Remotely, that is.



I met with parents back in mid-August, and we decided that the best format for online Sunday school was live weekly classes via ZOOM. We also agreed that the best way to keep them engaged is a curriculum that will keep them really active. So, this year children's RE will be offering the following programs:

Preschool

The Rainbow Connection

Preschool children ages 2-6 will begin to become acquainted with the 7 principles and the concepts behind them. Four sessions are devoted to each Principle, helping preschoolers to explore the values that unite us as UUs. Each lesson will use a story book to discuss and focus on those values inherent in each and is crafted around Unitarian Universalist ritual and tradition. If your preschooler loves stories, crafts and activities then they will love this class!

Grades 2nd and Up

Spirit of Adventure

Do you like challenge, adventure and movement? This year we are offering a curriculum for active, busy children that also teaches about Unitarian Universalism and building a UU identity. Each session will refer to a principle and a source in both adult and children's language while also teaching about: sports, circus arts, food science, architecture and much, much more.

What Would You Do?

During months with 5 Sundays, the 2nd grade and up classroom will engage in character building discussions by exploring situational dilemmas. The goal of these discussions is to encourage creative thinking and personal and emotional development in a safe group environment.

High School

If you are a high school-aged youth and are interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism, as well as connecting with other teens, please email: uucslisal@gmail.com Your name will

be placed on a contact list and when there are 4-5 individuals, you will be contacted about starting a twice monthly youth group. Please feel free to invite your open-minded friends! High-Schoolers are always welcome in the service.

O.W.L (Our Whole Lives)

Our Whole Lives is a series of sexuality education workshops that we offer for: grades K-2 and grades 5-7. These workshops help children to make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health, behavior and safety. TBD upon church reopening.



Birthday Greetings

Would you like a few extra birthday greetings this year?

If so, send your birthdate (year optional) to Lisa Lawrence at uucslisal@gmail.com. She and the RE children will be sending out birthday wishes as a safe, socially-distanced service project this year.



BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

BUUK Circle continues to meet on Zoom second Tuesday at 6:30PM. Join us whether you have finished the book or never even started. You will find this is a group of literate members who bring mountains of information and ideas to our discussions. Questions go to Julie Wambach azwambach@icloud.com.

October 13, 2020. "*Between the World and Me*" by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Called "a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis," Coates book was---#1 *New York Times* Bestseller • National Book Award Winner • Named One Of Time's Ten Best Nonfiction Books Of The Decade • Pulitzer Prize Finalist • National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist

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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.*

Sermon Titles For October 2020

The Theme for this month is Emotional Intelligence

10/4 - Rev. Terry Sims..... What Do My Feelings Have to Do with My Soul Anyway?

In other words, why on Earth would we talk about emotions in church? The questions suggest their own answer, don't they? If our souls encompass the whole of who we are and call us to the fullness of life, we might want to pay attention to the emotions that figure so prominently in how we live.

10/11 - Rev. Terry Sims.....Feeling Spirituality

Two centuries ago, Unitarian minister Ralph Waldo Emerson famously remarked that our chosen religion was "corpse-cold". The fact is that many of us are much more comfortable with ideas than we are with our feelings. But Emerson and others have pointed the way to a theology that recognizes what we really yearn for is a spirituality that lets us feel more alive.

10/18 - Rev. Terry Sims Living Intelligently with Our Emotions

Daniel Goleman, author of the book Emotional Intelligence, says: "If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far." This sermon will explore how understanding our emotions can help us come closer to living the lives we are longing to live.

10/25 - Alex KapitanA Radical Welcome

In 2001, our church was certified as a Welcoming Congregation. We are hoping to be recertified this year. The renewal process invites us again to consider how truly welcoming we are to all people, regardless of whether they are like us. As part of that process, this service will challenge us and remind us that we can always grow into the next stage of who we can become.