

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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December 2020

From The Minister's Desk

We have finally, mostly concluded another bruising election cycle in the U.S., to the relief of many citizens, I suspect. However, at the time of this writing, some of those who had hoped to be elected or re-elected have refused to concede their races. And the fact remains that we still live in a deeply and bitterly divided country. As Molly Ball wrote for Time Magazine, "Joe Biden won, but he must govern in Donald Trump's America." Protesters for and against Donald Trump clashed in Washington, D.C., where someone stabbed someone else. About half of us would strongly prefer not to live in the same country as the other half, and vice versa. Meanwhile, ironically, we are beginning our season of holidays, good will, and hope, we hope.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written in August, 1892 by the socialist minister Francis Bellamy (1855-1931). It was originally published in The Youth's Companion on September 8, 1892. Bellamy had hoped that the pledge would be used by citizens in any country. In its original form it read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The Pledge of Allegiance now feels like a lie, or at least a broken dream, in the United States: "One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all?" None of that is our current reality. There are now, in so many respects, not one nation, but two locked in a pitched battle with each other: Republicans versus Democrats, whites versus people of color,



straight against LGBTQ, red states versus blue states, conservatives against progressives, those who live in the cities opposed to those who live outside them, rich set against the poor, college-educated versus non college-educated. And yet we are living among each other in every state and almost every county, city, or town. How do we heal the divisions in our country? Or shall we just continue to be at each other's throats as the promise and prosperity of our nation slip away?

The inspiring ideal of "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" is what we pledge our allegiance to. Not to our present reality, not to one party, not to an individual, not to particular policies with which we might agree, not to those who agree with us. But to the Republic, made up of people who are different from each other and sometimes dislike each other. It remains an ideal we strive for. Ideals help us because they have the power to inspire us when our realities seem doomed.

The same is true for our Sixth UU Principle, with its goal "of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." That, too, remains far from our reality, but it is an ideal we UU's look to and strive for. I think it is fairly clear that not all of us in this country even agree on that principle. Yet we UU's remain committed to it because the reality is that each of us shares the world with almost 8 billion other people. The Seventh Principle recognizes the indisputable truth: we live within an interdependent web of all existence or, as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

How can we UU's help recreate, restore one nation, one world, with liberty and justice for all? By

remembering that “all” includes people we disagree with and may well dislike; by recognizing that we all have more to lose together than we have to gain separately; by working hard to speak that truth to ourselves and to everyone else; by continuing the long and frustrating struggle to find common cause with those who disagree with us.

Why must we hew to our ideals? Because the alternative is a reality in which everyone loses and in which no one wants to live. As we enter this season of winter holidays, let us resolve to hold onto our ideals as individuals, as a spiritual community, and as a nation. Let us remember that we can do our part to bring the ideals of peace, justice, and compassion to the whole world. With all of you, I will stay in the struggle within and outside ourselves to rise to our best selves. And still, virtually for the time being, I will see you in our church that reminds us “of our highest aspirations, our deepest commitments, and our most earnest intentions.”

Yours in our faith,



Virtual Co-Pilot Needed

Looking for some way to contribute to your Congregation? Our Minister, Rev. Sims, is looking for a “copilot,” someone with the skills and the knowledge to assist him in broadcasting our Virtual Worship Services live each Sunday. When we return to in person services, we will need someone to work with Rev. Sims broadcasting and recording Sunday Services. We need a person or a team of people to handle the technical aspects of broadcasting and recording services, including training in the use of a broadcast camera, our existing sound system, and internet connection and monitoring.

Do we have any one in our membership who is able to assist us with this task? Or does anyone in our membership know of someone who could support Rev. Sims in this work? If you are interested in helping or know someone who could - please contact Sherry Robinson at sarrobinson@msn.com or Rev. Sims at terrysimsuu@gmail.com. This is all so new to many of us. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Message from the President

Sherry Robinson, President

I have been so hoping we would finally be back in our building. I love that we have zoom and facetime and skype, but in-person is so much more rewarding. I continue to watch and review the numbers hoping to be able to gather in-person sometime soon. We have a ways to go. I miss you all.



The Board is continuing to conduct church business, and at the November Board meeting, we approved a complete revision of the Bylaws. A huge THANK YOU goes to Bill Chartrand for leading the way. Please check out the Board Announcement in this newsletter

Ruth Halpert, our Board Secretary is retiring this year and the Nominating Committee, led by Steve Calkins, is searching for a volunteer to fill this position. If you are interested, and I hope you are – please let Steve know. He can provide you with details of the position. Meanwhile – thank you Ruth, for your splendid work.

Our Annual Meeting has been scheduled for Friday, January 8th beginning at 7:00pm. We are working out details on how we will be holding this meeting - both virtually and in-person (if possible). I feel like we are making everything up as we go along, and I thank you for going along with us. We will try to provide an interesting and fun evening as we do our work. Specific details for attending and voting will be included in the packet to be sent out in mid-December.

We have started work with Cox to change our phone and internet system. We are also looking at acquiring equipment for providing live streaming for Sunday Services, meetings and classes as long as necessary during this pandemic and beyond. We have a very rare opportunity - we have the assistance of an expert in selecting the right equipment, installing it and then training some of us on using it. This same expert is prepared to work with us to finish the sound system project Graham Taylor began before his untimely passing. You will be hearing more about this project as we are going to need your help on making it happen. I feel like we are moving into the 21st century.

A final thank you to our members who have continued to support us emotionally and financially throughout this difficult period. We are grateful for your commitment to the Stewardship of this community.

Let us hope that by the time this newsletter is in your hands, our election results are settled. It has taken longer than expected and is not a perfect end to the process, but we are heading in the right direction. Our souls may not yet be at peace; however, hopefully they soon will be. Stay Safe, and Stay Connected.

Important Announcement From Your Board

One of the primary responsibilities of any Board is to periodically review the Bylaws, as well as the Policies and Procedures of their organization. It is recommended that Bylaws be reviewed every 5-7 years and Policies and Procedure, every year. Since our Bylaws had not been reviewed since 2013, the Board decided to begin with them, and established a Task Force of Bill Chartrand, Brooke Gaunt, Reggie Johnston and Sherry Robinson. An initial review of the documents led us to decide that the current bylaws needed to be revised not just amended. And so, the work began.

The task force has completed its work and the final draft of the new Bylaws was approved by the full Board at the November meeting. We feel comfortable with our work, and are now prepared to send them to you - the membership for your review. We hope to be able to vote on these at the Annual Meeting in January.

These documents should arrive in your email box shortly after the first of December. We are planning to hold a zoom townhall and/or an in-person meeting (if possible) to respond to questions or concerns about this revision. Details on these meetings will be provided with the documents. Please review the Bylaws and be prepared, if need be, to attend one of the Q&A sessions and then to vote in January.

Best Wishes and a Fond Farewell

On November 1, members of our UU Congregation decorated their cars and themselves, created comical signs, composed songs (and even sang them), all in preparation to participate in a "Drive-By Farewell Party" for Ken and Bonnie Saunders. Ken and Bonnie set off on their new adventure November 7th, traveling to Ventura, CA where they have purchased a new abode. There, they will be enjoying the closeness of their family,



the ocean, the beach and of course, the nearest UU Church they can find. No doubt they already have one located.



Ken and Bonnie

have been long time members of our church and our community. Bonnie was, for the last 15 years, the keeper of our history as well as the Adult RE Chair. She taught a number of classes at the church including one annually called Great Decisions - a class on Foreign Affairs. She was also an active member of the Board, and Ken was our "go to" guy before Lois Bartels assumed his position. They were both involved in a number of activities within the church and in their community over the years and their presence will be missed.

We wish them good health and much happiness in their new place of residence. They reminded me as they drove away, that they will be accessible by email and through zoom.



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

uucsnewsletter@gmail.com

Visit our web site for current information

www.uusurpriseaz.org

Greetings from Buildings and Grounds

By Lois I. Bartels

Buildings and Grounds is not so much a committee as a team of volunteers dedicated to keeping our church and grounds attractive, functional, and safe for members and employees.

Because our building is a bit off the beaten path, we get a variety of activity from people who don't belong there. For instance, homeless and others from nearby apartments take donations placed outside the Salvation Army truck after hours, use the area behind our dumpster to sort through the goodies, and leave what they don't want scattered around our property. To that end, a clean-up "patrol" was formed this summer to check the grounds on a regular basis while the church is closed. That group is Gary McCarthy, Tom Reemstma, John Cline, Janet & David King, Frank & Liz Thomas, Sherry Robinson and maybe you (as I seem to be missing a name or two. Sorry).

Last year we installed bright lights around the church for night-time safety. This summer, we installed a camera system also for the safety of our employees and volunteers who are often at the church alone. On November 6, it captured pictures of a man who deliberately broke the PVC pipe on the fountain in the Memorial Garden, thus causing a minor flood on our property. A police report was filed with the pictures. Our eyes that day belonged to treasurer, Margaret Leahy. Don Helms and Tom Reemstma helped before we were rescued by our paid gardener,

Lucio Medera-Macias.

Lucio has been working with us for about 8 years. He continues to care for the plants and trees following guidelines he learned from Jack and Helen Sheehan. He and his crew keep the weeds down, try to keep the courtyard and parking lot clean, and he



fixes endless breaks in the irrigation system. Earlier this year, he trimmed and removed overgrown trees near the street which have been a long-time eyesore. Recently he planted a red yucca in front of the office door, a plant which was donated by Sherry Robinson and selected by our own Master Gardener, Claudia Yaeger-Smith.

Inside the building, Barbie Klarkowski is our paid housekeeper. She has been with us for about 20 years after taking over the job from her dad. People are



always in and out of the church so she continues to vacuum, clean bathrooms, and wipe down flat surfaces and door handles with disinfecting products. Before we return to Sunday services and other group activities, she will wash windows and sanitize the leather furniture. She also lends us

her eyes and ears, especially for broken toilets, which just seem to break themselves. Fortunately, Frank Thomas has the skills to fix them, no matter how often he is called.

When I met with Barbie this past week, she pointed out that there was an awful smell in the sanctuary near one of the vents on the floor. The source? Three dead mice! **Now I'm looking for someone who would like to remove the vent cover, retrieve the carcasses and check the rest of the vents to make sure there are no more surprises. Please contact me if you'd like to volunteer.**

Another project on the horizon is to put posts and chains across the south driveway and the Salvation Army driveway to keep cars, trucks, and school busses from cutting through and/or hooking up on our property. Are you interested in helping with this?

We learned that we had a mouse problem when Don Helms was building shelves in the social hall closet next to the kitchen. Steve Shanklin is setting bait boxes inside and out. Frank and Liz Thomas are putting weather stripping on the doors to seal the cracks. As for the contents of the closet, Susan Helms organized things in plastic bins and made it look downright neat!

Here are some other things that volunteers have done recently: Steve Shanklin and Sherry Robinson changed the light bulbs in the Social Hall and put in LEDs; Steve and Jim Gaunt erected no trespassing signs with signage recommended by the Surprise Police Department. Jim recently fixed a tire on a moving cart; someone fixed a drawer in the kitchen; Bob Walling has started monitoring the solar panels. There is more so I'm sorry if I should have mentioned your name. I just meant to illustrate that it takes variety of people within our church community to keep things humming. Please contact me if you'd like to hum with the Building and Grounds Team.

This Congregation Matters to Us!

2020 UUCS Pledge & Donation Update

submitted by Suzi Walling

Dear Members and Friends,

This Dashboard is intended to provide you with a brief overview of the current status of our 2020 Annual Stewardship Campaign (as of mid-November). We are most grateful to all of our fellow UUCS congregants who joined us in providing support for this, our beloved community, during this most challenging of times.

Campaign Goal - \$198,500

Pledges.....	158,961
Donations.....	36,804
Total	\$195,765

Percent of Goal - 98.62%

Some Clarification:

Pledges are written financial commitments made by completing a Financial Pledge Commitment Form.

Donations are financial gifts given without making a pledge commitment.

Pledging Households.....	74
Non-Pledging Households	51
Total Number of Gifts	125

Ways to Give For Campaign 2020

- To give online click the following: <https://uusurpriseaz.org/get-involved/#donate>.
- To request a printed copy of the Financial Pledge Commitment Form, call Kathryn at the UUCS office at 623.875.2250 or email her at uucsaz2@gmail.com.
- If you plan to give by automatic withdrawal from your checking account, complete the ACH form located on the website or request this form from the UUCS Treasure at uucsaztreas@gmail.com.

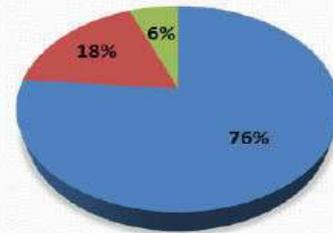
Total 2020 UUCS Budget: **\$298,000**

Annual Stewardship Campaign Goal 2020: **\$198,500**

Raised: **\$195,765**



Donations to Date: Proportion by Category



■ Pledged \$158,961 ■ Unpledged Donations \$36,804 ■ Legacy Gifts \$12,257

As the year draws to a close, we ask that those of you who have a special place in your heart for UUCS but have not yet made a gift to our Annual Giving Campaign, consider doing so now. In the spirit of this joy-filled holiday season, be as generous as you can within your means. Please know that whatever amount you feel comfortable giving will be greatly appreciated.

Yours in Gratitude, Friendship and Faith,
*Claudia, Don, Janet, Mary Anne,
 Sherry, Steve, Suzi and Terry*
 Your UUCS Stewardship Team



The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

As we continue our lives without the use of our sacred space, I am glad I can at least offer you, our faithful readers, a continuing list of excellent reading. These are highly recommended by our own UU bookstore and commercial sources. This month I am continuing reviews of my 2020 wish list books with three great reads.

“Twelve Step Unitarian Universalists,” subtitled: ‘Essays on Recovery’, edited by Ken and Cathlean. This collection of personal stories offers a compelling testimony to the power of recovery as a spiritual practice. Along with searing chronicles about what the road to rock bottom looks like, you will find here humor, insight, and wisdom framed and illuminated by the rich spectrum of religious faith held within UU. The book offers firsthand accounts of a solution to addiction that can be found in the meeting rooms and step work of AA. Quoted from Amazon 4.5 Star review.

“A Life Beyond Reason,” subtitled: ‘A Father’s Memoir’, author Chris Gabbard. An unflinching and luminous memoir that explores a father’s philosophical transformation when he must reconsider the questions ‘what makes us human?’ and ‘whose life is worth living?’ Despite his faith, modern medicine would not fail him; his son was born with a severe traumatic brain injury as a likely result of medical error and lived a deeply disabled life. This book will challenge readers to reexamine their beliefs about who is deserving of humanity. Quoted from InSpirit Books, it is a 4.5 Amazon title.

“Breaking and Blessing,” subtitled ‘Meditations’, author Rev. Sean Parker Dennison. This is the 2020 volume of the InSpirit books meditation series. Rev. Dennison imagines letters from angels, draws on the natural world, and reflects on love and calling. His meditations chart a path, moving here and there, as if across a constellation--connecting mathematics to love, stars to saplings, and breaking to blessing. This is Rev. Dennison’s striking debut meditation volume for InSpirit will serve as both solace and flame to readers looking for them in equal measure. From InSpirit reviews and an Amazon 5 Star title.

Wishing all our faithful UU readers a peaceful holiday season shared with a good book. And also remembrance to ‘keep breathing’.

Musings from the Loft...

Debby Bullins, Music Director



As we welcome fall, cooler temperatures and more outdoor opportunities, we hope for a holiday season of love and healing. Due to the pandemic, most of us must make hard choices about holiday gatherings. As the Covid-19 numbers rise again, we must

stay distanced, stay safe, stay healthy and continue to find ways to connect.

I invite you to join us on December 13 for a virtual service, Holidays for Healing, the Music Departments’ Lessons and Carols service. Sit back and join Rev. Terry Sims, Connie Jahrmarkt, Kent Trostel and myself for a morning of healing music. There is no better time to come together, to forgive and to heal our divisions. We hope this service leads you to open your hearts to a world where “everyone is welcome, everybody cares and everybody matters.”



BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

BUUK Circle meets SECOND Tuesday evening 6:30-8:30pm on Zoom. Please join us whether you’ve finished the book or haven’t yet started it. For more information, contact Julie Wambach azwambach@icloud.com.

When we meet in December, we will select books for January and February of 2021.

December 8, 2020. ***“Nomadland: surviving America in the Twenty-First Century”*** by Jessica Bruder.

“Nomadland tells a revelatory tale of the dark underbelly of the American economy—one which foreshadows the precarious future that may await many more of us. At the same time, it celebrates the exceptional resilience and creativity of these Americans who have given up ordinary rootedness to survive, but have not given up hope.” (Rebecca Solnit, Barnes Noble) The inspiration for the 2020 Golden Lion award-winning film starring Frances McDormand.

Committee Announcement A New Chair and a New Name!

With Bonnie Saunders leaving, the Board was left searching for a new volunteer to assume the role of Committee Chair for the Adult RE Committee. Last month we were fortunate to announce that Juliet Gustavson had agreed to Chair this committee. Juliet has assumed her position with enthusiasm, and her first order of business was to change the name from Adult RE Committee to “Questers,” which will represent our adult education committee. Juliet tells me this name has a history; perhaps we can encourage her to tell us about this when she introduces her ideas and her plans for our future Adult Education Program – Questers.

Thank you, Juliet. We are glad to have you on board, and we look forward to hearing your ideas and helping you implement them.

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 602.573.5942 (Bob is a former Certified Financial Planner™ and makes all of his UUC and other charitable gifts through this strategy.)



RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

Anyone driving by our church this past October 25th might have been surprised to see our parking lot bustling with activity. The pandemic inspired our first ever Trunk-or-Treat as a safe way for us to hold a socially-distanced-social-activity. The event was strictly outdoors and masks were mandatory. We had many ghoulish participants join our “Quarantine-o-Ween” with a total of 15 creepy cars in all! Grown-ups enjoyed visiting with each other from afar while children collected candy and made crafts. I'm looking forward to

repeating this event next year and maybe adding a few more activities and opportunities for more family fun!

The children and I have been busy rehearsing for another upcoming event as well. We may not be able to do a live holiday pageant for you at the church this year but we can record one for you on ZOOM and bring it right to your living rooms! This year we tell the tale of Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins, a story written by Eric Kimmel and adapted by, moi! In a small village, somewhere in time, goblins have taken over the old synagogue up on the hill. These goblins do not like Hanukkah at all and forbid anyone from celebrating. Can Hershel of Ostropol break the curse, free the village and restore Hanukkah? This special holiday service will be brought to you on Sunday, Dec. 6th at 10:30 A.M. ZOOM Link TBA



UUC Surprise
Children's RE Presents:

Hershel
And the

Hanukkah
Goblins

(A Dramatic ZOOM Reading!)
Sunday, December 6 at 10:30 a.m.
Link T.B.A.

Trunk-or-Treat



Mary Ellen Baker, Sharon Steigman and Nathan



Jack Lawrence



Steve Shanklin and Sherry Robinson



Reggie Johnston, Liz Swan and Frank Thomas



Rev. Terry Sims



Daro, Lisa and Sam Lawrence



Gretchen See, Charlie Jones, Deaglan Jones and Rowan Jones



Bea Gentry

Stewardship: – a New Initiative and a New Opportunity to Move Us Forward into 2021

Stewardship For Us is the term UUA uses to describe how we “Build Cultures of Generosity & Commitment.” *Stewardship for Us* to me means the ability for us to understand and appreciate the many ways in which our UU Faith and Values have enhanced our lives; how the people we have met along the way are souls we can relate to and learn from, as well as where we can share our gifts of time, talent and treasures.

As we move into 2021, and because we have no clear idea when we will physically be coming back to our church home, the congregation’s leadership has identified a new and better way for us to communicate going forward. This new way has grown into an important initiative; a project is that is already in motion and which needs your support and assistance to succeed.

We have started down the path of “livestreaming” directly to the internet and enhancing our audio capability, which will enable us to provide our worship services, business and social meetings, and even workshops and classes in a real-time environment, particularly enhancing our worship services as well as other communication. All of this will help us better connect with one another.

To successfully complete this project, we need \$10,000 (actually we need \$9,930) in additional funding, and this is where we need your help. We are encouraging you to make a year-end gift for this special project over and above your current pledge. **We can do this** if we all join in, and the result will be a better way of connecting and communicating. Thank you for your generosity

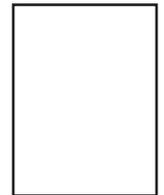
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45th Anniversary 1975 - 2020



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 December 2020

The Theme for this month is Kindness

12/6 - Children's Holiday Pageant..... Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins

You will not want to miss this inventive, fun, and educational story on the themes of Hanukkah: the struggle to overcome adversity; freedom from oppression, and moving from darkness to light. The children in our religious education program will dramatize and sing the story for us, and we will hear lively, traditional Jewish klezmer music, all to begin our holiday season.

12/13 - UUCS Musicians Lessons and Carols (adapted for these times)

Although we do not have our choir back yet, our Music Director, Debby Bullins, has inspired Connie Jahrmarkt, violin, Rev. Terry Sims, cello, and Kent Trostel, piano, to join her in creating music for the holidays. In this service, traditional Christmas music will be interwoven with the spoken word about the healing we and the world need now.

12/20 - Rebecca Riggs Leaving a Rose in the Snow

What is the symbol of a rose blooming in the winter cold trying to tell us? Using stories and music, this will be a Christmas reflection on giving and receiving. Sometimes we are the giver of gifts – sometimes the recipient – and both can lead to deeper understandings, healing, and joy.

12/27 - Rev. Terry Sims A Commitment to Kindness

As we end one year and move into a new one, I find myself asking what I would commit to doing to enhance my own life and to reify my vague longing to do my part to make the world a better place. I am reminded of what the great storyteller, Aesop, said: "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."