

# Unitarian Universalist Church Newsletter

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

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

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**Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

**President:** Sherry Robinson



45th Anniversary 1975 - 2020

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**Printing:** Kathryn Pabich

January 2021

## From The Minister's Desk

I often ask myself how my UU values show up in everyday life. A few weeks ago, soon after the election, I saw a video clip of a man in his 30s or 40s outside the Arizona state capitol at a televised “stop the steal” rally. Among other things, that man asked the crowd around him, “What are you willing to do to keep your children from growing up in a communist country?” “What is he talking about?!” I thought.



I'm going to assume that this man's fears of his children growing up in the U.S. as a “communist country” are real to him. And other than that statement and others he made during his rant, he did not appear to have lost touch with reality. And yet he said that Republicans and Democrats were both out to take our freedom as Americans away from us. And that Donald Trump was the only person who could stop this country's slide into communism. The man said he “was willing to do anything” to prevent that from happening. I could not believe what I was hearing; that this person's reality was so divorced from mine, which I truly believe is more widely shared and thus more likely to be true in the sense of being “objective”. I was aghast to hear him say that there is nothing he is not prepared to do to hold onto what seems to me to be his utter delusion.

Tom Vander Ark wrote for Forbes: “The Internet was supposed to create a shared reality[. B]ut social media reinforced information gullies that have widened into canyons of difference with competing facts interpreted through tribal logic models and resulting in distinctly different realities. . . . [I]t's

clear that rather than serving as a unifying force, social media has become a wedge that divides. . . .

“The fundamental problem is one of communication, “the problem of persuasion, the problem of getting people to agree on a shared consensus view of reality, and to acknowledge basic facts and to have their probability assessments of various outcomes to converge through honest conversation,” explained neuroscientist and author Sam Harris. [Harris continued:] “[O]ur [attempt] to fuse cognitive horizons through conversation is reliably derailed by politics.” He adds religion as a second ideology that shapes individual views of reality.”

Vander Ark noted the obvious but essential point that “it's hard to make progress without starting with a common fact base and a shared sense of reality. . . . Humans interrupt facts through complicated values-based filters which are shaped by groups we associate with. This tribal psychology motivates how we behave to fit in with our peers. “At times, since belonging goals are so vital to our survival, we value signaling that we are good members of our tribes much more than we value being correct, and in those circumstances we will choose to be wrong — if signaling we believe wrong things seems like it will keep us in good standing with our peers,” said David McRaney about why some people don't wear masks in a pandemic.

As a result of these thick and influential group memberships, just laying out the facts isn't enough to create a shared reality. It requires involvement and enrollment in shared values. Journalist Jad Abumrad realized that “hammering at a scientific truth when someone has suffered, that wasn't going to heal anything.” [Tom Vander Ark, “Moving Forward Requires A Shared Reality: It's Invention

Opportunity #1”, 9/20/2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanderark/2020/09/20/moving-forward-requires-a-shared-reality-its-invention-opportunity-1/?sh=2c17df52437e>.]

I do believe that, to an extent, each of us lives within our “individual realities”, as a commentator said the other day. My experiences, history, understandings, circumstances are all different than yours. On the other hand, I am not ready to abandon a commitment to the possibility of a widely shared reality. Without a shared reality, where is the hope for us? And what is the alternative? The UU 7th Principle states the reality that we are all part of the interdependent web of all existence, not isolated individuals. So what do we do as UU’s trying to help the world?

I think the reality we want to share with others needs to start with values rather than facts. Surely there are some values most of us can find in common – like not kicking puppies, the biblical commandment not to murder, or not making the Earth uninhabitable. That’s really the hope of the UU Principles – they state values, not facts, that I think most reasonable people can agree on. The inherent worth and dignity of every person, for example. Or commitment to a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning”. I hope we continue to offer a values-based reality rather than a demand for agreement on facts. Maybe that will give us all a decent chance to live together in peace, liberty, and justice, another UU Principle and what seems should be a widely shared value. I’ll see you in virtual church.

Yours in our faith



## Message from the President

*Sherry Robinson, President*

*Happy New Year – to you all.*

We have just been through a year like none we have ever known. The pandemic, the racial tension, the protests and violence and the chaotic election cycle have all led to the disruption of our lives, creating new challenges and even questioning our long-held beliefs. People have died, 300,000, millions have lost their jobs, others have



seen their savings disappear, and we have all seen families and friends’ lives pulled apart by social isolation and loneliness.

Still, as in the past, we have demonstrated remarkable resilience in adapting to the circumstances around us. We have learned to use technology to make our lives easier, to stay connected and to reduce the isolation that happens when personal contact is not possible. We have been given time to focus on ourselves and to think about what’s important in our lives and what we want to do when we return to some sense of normalcy. What we have witnessed across our country in racial and social tensions force us to reflect on what kind of country we want and to work harder for Social Justice.

2020 has ended! It is now time to look forward to that time when our lives return to routine. We have a vaccine promising to prevent further sickness and death; we have a new administration moving into the White House bringing trust and integrity to the country, and we have lessons learned from this past year that will help us more fully appreciate what awaits us in our new normal.

UUCS has accomplished much during this period; we have gone about our work and kept our community connected; we have revitalized our Bylaws from which we govern; we have maintained the physical assets of the Church keeping it ready for our return. We have installed security cameras to maintain safety and we have upgraded our technology - our phones, and our Audio/Visual system to live stream and record our services, classes, meetings and even social gatherings. Most importantly, our members have continued to support our work with generous financial support.

None of us expected this year to go as it did – and many plans were altered; however, we are well situated to meet the new year head on – no matter what it has in store for us. I did not expect to spend my first year as President doing our work virtually; however, from this experience I have gotten to know much about this congregation. We still have work to do – but knowing now what I do about you, the members of this Church, I look forward with enthusiasm to doing this work with you.

*Blessings for a Peaceful New Year,  
Sherry*

## Attention UUSC Members and Friends:

This is a reminder that the Annual Meeting of UUCS is taking place via Zoom on Friday, January 8th beginning at 7:00PM. You have already received the formal invitation with a tentative agenda and some details for the meeting. If you have not, please contact Kathryn immediately. You will be receiving the full packet for the meeting on January 5th, which will contain the information you will need for the meeting.

We will also be sending you the link to be used for joining the meeting. We encourage all of our members to join us. This is an important meeting for the Church. We will be voting on passage of the Bylaws, the proposed 2021 Budget, the new Trustees for the Board, and the members for the Nominating Committee. A Quorum is required to do our business and to pass our budget for the coming year. We encourage your participation in the work we do, and we value your input and support..... Keep in mind you do this from the comfort of your home and with only a click of a button.

I look forward to "seeing" you on Friday at 7 PM - January 8th.

Sherry Robinson  
President/ BOT

## Giftng Securities to UUCS

*Bob Walling, Chair, Investment Committee*

As you may know, UUCS can receive shares of securities from your nonretirement account into our Vanguard Brokerage account which recently moved from Morgan Stanley to Vanguard. This strategy is not a sale, but a gift to a charity, and generally does not generate a personal capital gain. Please contact Margaret Leahy, UUCS Treasurer, at [uucsaztreas@gmail.com](mailto:uucsaztreas@gmail.com) for account information. Consult your personal tax adviser for tax questions. As always, UUCS appreciates your gift to support our programs.

## Questers (Adult Education Program) Offering

*Juliet Gustavson*

### Great Decisions 2021: U.S. Foreign Policy

Via Zoom, at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday evenings in February and March, we are pleased that Dr. Bonnie F. Saunders will once again lead this popular series of discussions on eight U.S. foreign policy topics:

- Feb. 2 - Global Supply Chains and National Security,
- Feb. 11 (*Thur*) - Persian Gulf Security Issues,
- Feb. 16 - Brexit and the European Union,
- Feb. 23 - Struggles over the Melting Arctic,
- Mar. 2 - China's Role in Africa,
- Mar. 11 (*Thur*) - The Korean Peninsula,
- Mar. 16 - Roles of International Organizations in a Global Pandemic,
- Mar. 23 - The End of Globalization?

Come, listen, think, ask questions, discuss, agree, or disagree. Bonnie says, "We always have civil discussions!"

**Registration:** Registration is required and limited to 30 people. To register, email Carol Calkins at [carolpcalkins@gmail.com](mailto:carolpcalkins@gmail.com) – Subject: Great Decisions 2021. Include your name and preferred email address for receiving Zoom invitation.

**The Book for the Series:** In January, Bonnie's friend Susie Bowman will have copies of the **Great Decisions 2021** book. Email or call her to request your copy and arrange pick-up or mail delivery. Cost: \$20 for pickup or \$23 (postage = \$3) for mail delivery.

Email Address: [gandsusie@gmail.com](mailto:gandsusie@gmail.com) –

Type "Great Decisions 2021" in the subject line.

Phone #: 469-371-1959

Address: 16501 N. El Mirage Rd., # 240,  
Surprise, AZ 85378.

If anyone wishes to contact Bonnie, e-mail her at [BonnieSaun@aol.com](mailto:BonnieSaun@aol.com) or call her at 602-312-7098. She has moved to 147 Geranium Way, Ventura, CA 93004.

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**Please have information for the Newsletter  
submitted by noon on the 15th of each month  
to the Editor, Charlie Mannino at  
[uucsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:uucsnewsletter@gmail.com)**

## RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

To all of the children, parents and friends who participated in making our virtual holiday play “Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins” a success, Mazel tov on a job well done. This was such a fun story to bring to life and a great teaching opportunity to take a look at some Jewish religious traditions. Thank you everyone!



This January I look forward to getting back into the swing of teaching our regular curriculums “Rainbow Connection” and “Spirit of Adventure”. Each class moves

back to their regular Zoom times of preschool at 10:00 and 2nd & Up at 11:00. Our preschoolers will begin a unit on the second principle “Be kind in all you do” or “Justice, equity and compassion in human relations” and the 2nd and Up class finish up a unit on winter holidays and begin one on Unitarian Universalism in medicine.

I’m excited to share that one of our RE family members recently made me aware of Chalica, a UU holiday all of its own. What is Chalica you ask? The UUA defines it as “A week-long celebration of our Unitarian Universalist Principles. The holiday first emerged in 2005 out of a wish to have a holiday organized around Unitarian Universalist values. Chalica begins on the first Monday in December and lasts seven days. Each day, a chalice is lit and the day is spent reflecting on the meaning of that day’s principle and doing a good deed that honors that principle.”

As a religious educator, this holiday intrigues me as a wonderful way to encourage family worship. The Rev. Lisa Schwartz of the UU Fellowship of Topeka describes it as, “yet another way to support and encourage families to find noncommercial ways to celebrate the holiday season; it helps us teach some basics of the faith to our fairly young congregants.” For reference, there is a website, FB page and blog which follow how some UU members and congregations have celebrated over past years.

Although the date for Chalica has passed this year, it does give us twelve months to decide how best to participate in this practice next December. I definitely see a Chalica festival in our future!



Hershel  
Jason Gaunt



Villager  
Beatrix Gentry



Pickle Goblin and  
Horsefly Goblin  
Deaglan and Rowan Jones



King of the Goblins  
Jack Lawrence



Pickle Goblin  
Brayden Gaunt



Dreidel Goblin  
Sam Lawrence

## UU Values Matter...Pledging Secures Our Future

The Stewardship Team has chosen as our 2021 Campaign theme, *UU Values Matter...Pledging Secures Our Future*, to highlight the importance our shared UU values play as the foundation upon which our spiritual community stands. As well, this theme highlights pledging which provides us with the clearest indicator of what our financial circumstances will be in the coming year, and enables our Board to plan our congregation's work accordingly.

Through Stewardship, taking responsibility for caring for one another and for providing financial support for our community, we come together for a higher purpose and a deeper commitment.

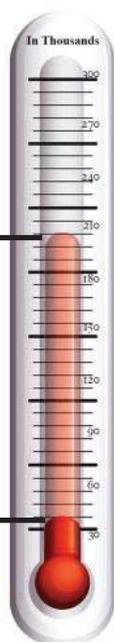
Without all of us who care about the values, principles and people of UUCS, our church is just a building. But with all of us working together to support this place, we are a congregation of hope, loving-kindness and peace.

If UU values matter to you, please make a gift today to help secure the future of our congregation. For more information and to give online go to [www.uusurpriseaz.org](http://www.uusurpriseaz.org). Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

In Faith, Friendship & Gratitude,  
*Bob, Claudia, Don, Janet, MaryAnne,  
Sherry, Steve, Suzi, Terry*  
Your Stewardship Team

Annual Stewardship Campaign  
Goal, March 30 2021: **\$206,000**

Year to date raised: **\$40,400**  
(19.6% of goal)



## The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Welcome to our New Year 2021 dear readers! Here is toasting to the hope we see each other in person very soon. With the New Year, your Library will be moving ahead on that hope by proceeding with purchase and set up of great new books for your check-out. Until that time, below are the final three books currently on our short list for purchase. Please consider downloading your interest from your local Library system or purchase through an online sales service in the meantime.

***“Conversations with the Sacred,”*** subtitled ‘A collection of Prayers’, by Manish Mishra-Marzetti. Citing reviews, this book brings alive heartfelt words and artwork. It is a moving testimony to the power of prayer. Prayers of love, lamentation, justice, inspiration, and transcendence--all are here. Whatever your relationship to prayer, whether it comes naturally, you have a complicated history with it, or you have never prayed before, “Conversations” is a powerful and accessible resource for anyone looking to explore or deepen a spiritual practice of reflection or prayer. 5-star Amazon reviewed.

***“Demystifying Shariah,”*** subtitled ‘What it is, How it Works, and Why it’s Not Taking Over Our Country’, by Sumbul Ali-Karamali. A direct counterpoint to fear mongering headlines about shariah law--a Muslim American legal expert tells the real story, eliminating stereotypes and assumptions with compassion, irony, and humor. She explains that shariah is not one set of punitive rules or even law the way we think of law, but religious rules and recommendations that provide Muslims with guidance in various aspects of life. 4.5-star Amazon reviewed.

***“For Small Creatures Such as We,”*** subtitled ‘Rituals for Finding Meaning in Our Unlikely World’, by Sasha Sagan. This book is part memoir, part guidebook, and part social history, a luminous celebration of Earth’s marvels that require no faith in order to be believed. The author was raised by secular parents, the astronomer Carl Sagan and the writer and producer Ann Druyan. They taught her that the natural world and vast cosmos are full of profound beauty, that science reveals truths more wondrous than any myth or fable. She has written a book we may all find profound. 4.5-star Amazon reviewed.

*Have a beautiful New Year shared with a great  
UU recommended book!*

## 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](mailto:azwambach@icloud.com)

**Jan. 12, 2021 - "Caste: The Origins of our Discontent"**  
by Isabel Wilkerson.

"The Pulitzer Prize-winning, bestselling author of *The Warmth of Other Suns* examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives today are still defined by a hierarchy of human divisions." (Barnes & Noble website)

**Feb. 9, 2021 - "How to be an Antiracist"**  
by Ibram X Kendi.

Called a "Self Help" book, Kendi offers an opportunity to look inward in order to spark conversation and real personal growth.

**Mar. 9, 2021 - "The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz"**

by Erik Larson.

"The Splendid and the Vile" takes readers out of today's political dysfunction and back to a time of true leadership, when—in the face of unrelenting horror—Churchill's eloquence, strategic brilliance, and perseverance bound a country and a family, together." (ErikLarson.com)

## 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 [sarrobison@msn.com](mailto:sarrobison@msn.com) or Rev. Sims at [terrysimsuu@gmail.com](mailto:terrysimsuu@gmail.com). This is all so new to many of us. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.



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Unitarian  
Universalist Church  
of Surprise

A Progressive, Inclusive Faith Community

WELCOME



## Transportation Resources:

### **Valley Metro Dial a Ride - 602-716-2100**

To use *Valley Metro Dial a Ride* you must be 65 or over or ADA certified. The ride costs \$4.00 each way to the doctor or grocery store. To check on eligibility for this program call 623-222-1500. Valley Metro also provides a program called *Ride Choice*. People who qualify for this program pay only \$3.00 for a one way trip costing up to \$21.00. You must be 65 or over or ADA qualified. To enroll call Valley Metro at 602-716-2100.

### **Benevilla in Surprise - 623-584-4999**

This non-profit agency provides free food shopping services for shut ins. You provide a grocery list over the phone, and they will shop for you free of charge. You only pay for the groceries. They also provide transportation for medical appointments, a friendly visitor service who will visit or call, and a handy person who will do minor repairs like change a light bulb; a wonderful service for people in need. *This service is free of charge if you notify them at least 12 days in advance.*

### **Peoria Dial-A-Ride - 623-773-7435**

\$3.00, ADA \$2.00, needs one day advance notice. **Note:** As of January 1, 2017 Dial a Ride is not available unless you are ADA certified. To get ADA certification you have to be declared disabled for at least six months. This applies to people living in Surprise.

### **Northwest Valley Connections - 623-282-9300**

NVC helps connect seniors and people with disabilities with available public, private and volunteer transportation resources based on their individual needs. Personalized assistance and support is available by contacting our Call - Click - Connect center at (623) 282-9300. Area transportation resources are also listed on our website at [NorthwestValleyConnect.org](http://NorthwestValleyConnect.org).

**West Valley Connections - 623-282-9300** Call for information regarding services available.

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## 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.

*Sunshine Services* will loan equipment to people who live in Sun City (623-974-2561) 9980 Sante Fe Drive, Sun City.

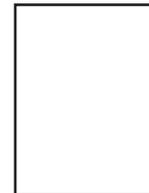
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45th Anniversary 1975 - 2020



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](mailto:uucsaz2@gmail.com).*

## Sermon Titles For January 2021

*The Theme for this month is Consolation and Desolation*

**1/3 - Amy St. Peter ..... Unseen**

Each day we may walk into the unknown, into unseen growth, challenges, and mysteries. As we depart 2020 and step into unseen experiences awaiting us in 2021, we can pause for a moment, gather our breath, reflect on what we have learned, and prepare to welcome the new year.

**1/10 - Rev. Terry Sims ..... The Polarity of Existence**

The Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland writes: "It is not clear if life is joy punctuated by tragedy, or tragedy punctuated by joy." We live forever between the poles of existence, between desolation and consolation. But the Rev. Dr. John Buehrens tells us that the way we live in that space "matters forever."

**1/17 - Rev. Terry Sims ..... Desolation: Swimming, Not Drowning**

There are times when I wonder if, in the end, there is only suffering and the absence of suffering. Desolation is real. But it is not all there is forever. And joy is real, too. If desolation is the ocean we swim in, it need not be where we drown.

**1/24 - Rev. Terry Sims ..... Consolation: Receiving and Giving**

I'm not sure what life is for, other than consoling others, relieving pain and suffering. Henri Nouwen says "we need to be angels for each other." If there is a higher human purpose, I don't know what it would be. And, maybe surprisingly, consoling others helps all of us bear our own desolation better.

**1/31 - Emrys Staton ..... Obituary of a Famous Nobody: One of the Well-Known Travelers of the Spiritual Silk Road**

A generation of American spiritual seekers traveled across India and Asia, importing various teachings into our society and psyches. Ram Dass, one of the early and more well-known of these trans-pacific culture connectors, inspired thousands throughout his life - including many UUs.