

# 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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May 2017

## From The Minister's Desk

I was recently introduced to the work of Lauren Berlant. Berlant is the George M. Pullman Professor of English at the University of Chicago. As a creative, incisive observer of race, sexuality, politics, and culture, Berlant asks “How do individuals get attached to groups?” “How do people start having feelings of intimacy with abstractions like a nation, political parties, their team, a city, their region? Is there a ‘general public’ anymore?” [<http://theshow.kjzz.org/content/458695/professor-examines-political-emotions-impact-elections>.] She describes individuals’ emotional identification with groups as “being-in-common.”



I understand Berlant to say that, as ubiquitous and essential as it is to attach emotionally and thus “belong” to a group, the ideal we fantasize from such identifications is unattainable, leaving us disappointed. Groups that are made up of individuals ask a lot of those individuals and promise them much. But the promises and expectations are often left unfulfilled.

Berlant: “So when I said I write as a depressive realist, I meant that I see awkwardness, incoherence, and the difficulty of staying in sync with the world at the heart of what also binds people to the social. What doesn’t work, makes no sense, or is ungainly always accompanies fantasies of the good life[. A] nd . . . the question of fantasy is centrally about how it helps people remain attached to worlds and situations (and find ways of thriving within them) that are also quite toxic, difficult, infelicitous, or

just messy. I look at the ways people bear how life proceeds without guarantees. This positioning—as my blog and my . . . book, *Cruel Optimism* (2011), argue—asks “Why do people stay attached to lives that don’t work?” [<http://hypocritereader.com/5/depressive-realism>.]

“Depressive realism allows for an account of the utility of fantasy in maintaining but also imagining alternative modes of life. *Cruel Optimism* tells some pretty difficult stories about how people maintain their footing in worlds that are not there for them.” [<http://hypocritereader.com/5/depressive-realism>.]

“‘Cruel optimism’ is the term that Berlant has coined to describe a particular relation we have to an object: [a] relation to cruel-optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. Nevertheless, attachments to forms of life, love, friendship, work, pursuit[s] by most populations, crumple in their persistence to hold onto the ideality of such forms. The destruction of the ideal, Berlant indicates, begins to affect not only the subaltern populations (precarious workers, dissident artists or groups) but also the normative middle-class populations who never thought that, for them, the ideal of the good life could be strained. [Elena Loizidou, “Lauren Berlant as Cynical Philosopher: An Introduction”, 19 December 2013, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/12/19/lauren-berlant-cynical-philosopher-introduction/>.]

“The investment in certain forms for providing the continuity of life goes some way to explaining the stickiness of some kinds of injustice, inequality, and energy-siphoning that structure so much of the reproduction of life. [] But as there is no collective

life without norms, the question isn't how to become post-normative as such but how to respond to the urgency to engender other kinds of anchors or magnets for new social relations and modes of life. [ ] I would want it to be our critical work to make alternativity imaginable." [http://hypocritereader.com/5/depressive-realism.]

In a radio interview, Berlant asked "How do we think about people making room for each other, making room for individuality? [People believe that their] sovereign individuality [is something they] choose to join the world with [and that a group might take from them. But that is] not the actual experience of belonging. First you belong, and then you develop individuality within belonging. Individuality is one of the things that belonging lets you cultivate." [http://theshow.kjzz.org/content/458695/professor-examines-political-emotions-impact-elections.]

Berlant's work provides an enticing lens through which to view our emotional attachments as individuals to various groups, particularly our national and political-party identifications and affinities. But I am especially interested, of course, in how her analysis applies to religion and churches, and in particular, Unitarian Universalism and our UU congregation. While our emotional attachment, our belonging to certain groups may let us down and make life more difficult, I hope that we can largely avoid that in our congregation.

Even in our congregation, the ideal is never completely attainable. But the reason I think we offer the hope of belonging to each other and the world is this: Belonging to a group is indispensable. And belonging to this congregation is based not just on group identification, but on a commitment to shared ethical, spiritual, practical principles. Rather than presenting a fantasy, a "cruel optimism" that creates obstacles to the flourishing of each member, we do not ask individuals to forfeit their individuality to belong here, just to stay in sync. Instead, we do imagine alternativity. We embed making room for each person's individuality in our Principles. And that, I believe, lets each of us cultivate our individuality by belonging here with each other. I'll see you in church.

Yours in our faith,



## President's Letter to Congregation

Pat Lindgren, President



Why I like this church so much? It can be summed up in the affirmation that we recite every Sunday.

**Love is the spirit of this church.** I see this every Sunday. We gather in the Social hall before and after services to talk, to greet each other, sometimes to hug or shake hands, to console each other for

losses and troubles, to celebrate our triumphs and joys and watch our children play.

**And service is its law.** You see this in our committees, in our Board, in the volunteer work we do in the office, in the kitchen, in the classrooms, in the building maintenance, in the grounds maintenance, in our work for the Surprise schools and for refugees, in the work we do for the UUA, the PSWD, the UU Service Committee and the United Nations Committee.

**This is our great covenant.** Our faith does not recite a creed of beliefs, but rather we have a covenant with each other

**To dwell together in peace.** We covenant to dwell in peace with each other. Are we always at perfect agreement, no, but we try to resolve differences face to face and courteously. We have established a policy and committee of Right Relations with guidance from UUA, we hold congregational meeting to discuss issues, our elected board works with the various committees to run the church and to solve conflicts.

**To seek the truth in freedom.** We allow each other to find the truth based on our own conscience. I am a Humanist, but I have friends here who are atheists, and Christians and Jewish and Wiccan and other faiths. We are all free to seek our own truth.

**And to help one another.** We are very good at helping when members are ill or hospitalized or suffer losses or just need a friend. We send cards, write letters, make phone calls, give rides, run errands and just be friends. I would like to see us expand our ability to help in the future by setting up and funding a minister's discretionary fund to confidentially help members who have financial emergencies.

The best thing that has happened to me since I moved to Arizona was to find this church, this faith and all my friends in this congregation. Thank you to all of you.

## The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

A reminder to all our UU readers, I am traveling in cooler climates until mid-September. However, the Library remains open for you. Self-serve book location, and check-out information, is posted in the Library to help you with your needs. Please continue to use and enjoy the terrific selections we have on the shelves.

Also, be sure to look over the sale cart located just outside the Library door. We currently have an abundance of varied and interesting titles for you to consider taking home. The cost of these books is very minimal. The current pricing is posted on the side of the cart. Payment is on the honor system in the box on top of the cart.

Books on the sale cart come from your donations of good condition current materials as well as books exceded from the Library. If you have some books you would like to donate to the cart, please add them as there is space. If you have a quantity of books, please see Marylu Rideout for guidance. Funds raised from the sale of these books goes toward purchase of new books for the Library and occasional related supplies.

Now let's look at a few of the titles currently on the Library shelves:

***“Jefferson’s Pillow,”*** by Roger Wilkins, number 973.09WIL. The author is a historian and social commentator. In this book he explores the subject of our founding fathers and slavery. A highly regarded book, passionate and illuminating as it addresses the dilemma of black patriotism—loving our country’s democratic principles but hating the history of slavery.

***“Ambiguous Loss,”*** by Pauline Boss, number 155.9BOS. Subtitled, ‘learning to live with unresolved grief’, this book looks at the ‘frozen sadness’ that so often accompanies grief and loss. The author explores the tumult of emotions and wide fluctuations of grief. She is a family therapist versed in the subject and considered a compassionate presenter.

***“Great Quotations on Religious Freedom,”*** compiled and edited by Albert Menendez and Edd Doerr, number 808.88MEN. This outstanding volume is reviewed as a crucial look at a historic

understanding of church-state threats to religious and political freedom. The book is composed of memorable quotes on such subjects as abortion rights, freedom of conscience, and separation of church and state.

*Have a blessed day shared with a good book!*

## New Website and Webmaster

John Cline

We have purchased a new and trendy website design to present an updated online appearance of our church. The board has been shown a preliminary version of it and it’s a knockout! In addition to our new look, our website will continue to provide essentials such as the church calendar, announcements, sermon recordings and our on-line newsletter, to mention a few.



Now, as in the case of a new vehicle, we need a driver to use it; that would be the church webmaster. I have been your Webmaster for over 10 years now and have given the Board notice of my termination date, the end of May, when I leave for the summer. It is urgent that we find a replacement.

Our web developer Cheri, Charlie Mannino and myself are working together on this exciting project for now. If you have an interest or know of someone who would like to volunteer as our new church webmaster please contact myself, Charlie Mannino or a Board member.

The basic job skills needed to maintain the new website will be provided primarily by Cheri, the developer. The new system uses the highly popular WordPress software.

## General Assembly

Sharon Beard

**General Assembly** will be held at the New Orleans Convention Center in New Orleans, LA from June 21-25. A new UUA president will be elected, and one of the candidates is Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray from the Phoenix UU congregation! Registration opened on March 1st....go to [uua.org](http://uua.org) for more information and to register.

*We will once again be streaming the General Assembly Sunday Service on June 25th from our pulpit starting at 10:30 am.*

## Greetings from the Loft!

Debby Bullins, Music Director



It's May, the cactus are blooming, birds are singing and the Music Department's program year is coming to an end.

The last musical events of the season will be on May 21 at 3:00 p.m. when *Arizona Masterworks Chorale* will present a concert in

our sanctuary. This event is celebrating Dr. William Gleason's 10th Anniversary with AMC, as well as mine! The concert will feature some of Dr. Gleason's favorite pieces, bringing a variety of music from American composers that ranges from sacred to secular and Broadway, with texts by Lord Byron and Robert Burns and music by Ralph Vaughn Williams, Robert Shaw and others. Please see Debby or visit [www.arizonamasterworks.com](http://www.arizonamasterworks.com) for ticket information. It will be an afternoon that will put a spring in your step and a song in your heart.

The choir will offer its last anthem on May 14 with David Burrows "We Are Sunshine in the Streets", inspired during the "Justice" GA held in Phoenix in 2012. I want to thank each of them for their musical gifts, generosity with their time, openness to learning new genres of music and their laughter. I am so grateful for our musical family.

A special thanks to our fabulous accompanists, Connie Jahrmarkt, Kent Trostel, Maggi Mahan, Ruth Swank, Julian Rush and Cathy Mannino who bring us their passion for music each Sunday with such grace and professionalism.

Reflecting on the year, I remember the talented people who have brought rich and wonderful music to our congregation, Connie Jahrmarkt, Kent Trostel, Walter Hartman, Ronda Marshall & Terry Sims, Ernie Kassian, Brian White, Cameron Deal, Owen Deal, Don Marine, The Izotov/Meier/Thiefain/Michel Jazz Quartet, The Legend of the Celtic Harp and the Arizona Masterworks Chorale.

I am so grateful to Terry, for his encouragement, support and collaborative style which allows the music to weave through each service, enhancing his worship message. Lastly, I thank the congregation and the Board for supporting the Music Department. I love your comments, seeing you at our concerts and

Special Music events. Your gift of financial support is greatly appreciated enabling me to pursue my musical vision. I strive to make the UUC Surprise the place to come for a great musical experience.

*"This will be our response to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, and more devotedly than ever before". Leonard Bernstein*

## BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

BUUK Circle meets in the Social Hall on the third Thursday of the month. After our May meeting, we will be off for the summer, but we've already chosen our book for October. For more information, contact Julie Wambach [azwambach@icloud.com](mailto:azwambach@icloud.com).

May 18, 2017 - *"The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West"* by Peter Cozzens. Brings together a cast of "fascinating characters including Custer, Sherman, Grant, and . . . Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and Red Cloud."

October 19, 2017 - *"Turning Point: Essays on a New Unitarian Universalism"* edited by Fredric Muir. Essays by 20 UU leaders calling for change in the denomination. **Note:** Paperback and Kindle available from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

## We Are Here To Be Of Assistance!

Lay Pastoral Care Committee

If you, your family or another member of our congregation are experiencing illness, hardship, isolation or are in need of support, please contact Janet Kafel (530-340-3230), Lenore Gaudin (623-933-0186) the church office (623-875-2550) or speak with any of the committee members on Sunday at church. We wear a second name tag that says LAY PASTORAL CARE.

### *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: Brooks Marshall at 623-362-1195

## RE Report

*Lisa Lawrence, DRE*

May 21st will bring closure to our RE season. We will celebrate this with a Jedi /Knighthood Ceremony with the congregation during service. Since the fall we have offered classes in the areas of Skill, Senses, Courage, Insight and Spirit. The



purpose of this training was to help these young students – who we call Padawans - develop in their spiritual quest for truth and meaning. We have practiced mindfulness. We have explored justice and equity. We have gained insight into the power of choices, fear, and even death.

Padawans who attended a significant number of classes and passed their Jedi trials will be ready to become Jedi knights. We are offering their knighthood ceremony in front of the congregation because you are all a part of the spiritual growth of our children.

Although the 21st is the last day of classes, childcare will be provided throughout the summer in the preschool room for children ages 7 and under and older children are welcome to join their parents in the sanctuary to enjoy the service.



## Easter Sunday



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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 [uucsaz@aol.com](mailto:uucsaz@aol.com).*

## **Sermon Titles For May 2017**

*This months theme is "Acceptance"*

### **5/7 - Rev. Terry Sims..... Accepting Limits**

Limits are everywhere. Our abilities are limited, as are our understandings and even our lives. I find that accepting limits is one of the great challenges of living. But if we can manage that, I believe our spirits will be rewarded.

### **5/14 - Rev. Terry Sims ..... Accepting Each Other**

Our Third UU Principle is "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations." None of the principles is easy to practice, is it? I guess that is what makes them a spiritual practice.

### **5/21 - Rev. Terry Sims ..... Accepting Responsibility**

One of the recognizable attributes of maturity is the willingness to accept responsibility for our actions and their consequences in our own lives. But I think we are called to more than that. It seems to me that the more we live as spiritual beings who recognize the interdependence of all life, the more responsibility we are willing to take for the whole world. ?

### **5/28 - Rebecca Riggs..... The Power in Flowers**

Throughout history flowers have represented the hope of a better world through their beauty and dogged staying power. They are also part of how we remember those that have died. Remember the song from the 1960's, "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?" Today we'll reflect on where the beauty and strength and hope represented by flowers have gone and where we still need to take their message. *This service will include a flower communion.*