

Unitarian Universalist Church Newsletter

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

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40th Anniversary 1975 - 2015

From The Minister's Desk

Like so many, I am trying to understand how we came to the bitterness of extreme division and hate we see and feel in our country. To the extent we are inclined to see our troubles as only recent developments, it is both discouraging and a small comfort to know that hate waxes and wanes. Benjamin Franklin, whom I admire in other respects, was a xenophobe and a white nationalist. Hate in America began even before there was an America.



Among Benjamin Franklin's many written rants against what he called the 'Stupid, Swarthy Germans,' was this: "Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion."

The new nation, he wrote, should be a haven for 'the ... purely white People in the World,' because so many other places were 'black or tawny' [Africa], 'chiefly tawny' [Asia], or 'swarthy' [most of Europe, including Spain, Italy, France, Russia, and — to the puzzlement of historians for centuries, Sweden.] It is only logical to distrust those who look different, he argued, because "I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind." [Andrew Romano and Lisa Belkin, ["Hate in America: Where it comes from and why it's back", Yahoo News, November 15, 2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/hate-america-comes-back-100032161.html>]

"In the 1970s, researchers studying the dynamics of social groups found a pervasive 'in-group bias.' Within minutes of being divided into minimally cohesive teams — even on such trivial pretexts as a taste in art — strangers tend to see their own group as superior and seek to maximize their advantage over other groups. Polish-born psychologist Henri Tajfel explained this on the basis of what he called 'social identity theory.' According to Tajfel, groups offer people two key benefits: identity (they tell us who we are) and self-esteem (they make us feel good about ourselves). It's only natural, according to Tajfel, that people believe their own group is better than other groups." "Albert Camarillo, an emeritus professor of history at Stanford University who specializes in the study of American minorities, believes all hateful chapters start with the same stewing 'intolerance, a hatred, a feeling of 'our problems are caused by someone else and something needs to be done about that.'"

The periods of rising hate in our history share three factors, according to the article cited above. Those three factors are 1) economic uncertainty; 2) loss of dominant power ("For a lot of these [white] men, they perceive their world slipping through their fingers and other people benefiting from their loss,' says Camarillo. "That's not to say there aren't elements of truth in their world changing, but when that fear is projected on another group of people, then it expresses itself as hate."); and 3) "political and cultural leadership that condone[s] the expression of hateful views." [Ibid.]

People today believe that Democrats and Republicans are exact opposites. They each believe they share no fundamental qualities with each other, including decency, and that what qualifies you as

one totally disqualifies you from being the other. [Rebecca McInroy, "Why We Share A Lot More Common Ground Than We May Think", Two Guys on Your Head, November 3, 2017, <http://kut.org/post/why-we-share-lot-more-common-ground-we-may-think>.]

Our overarching theme for this church year, "Reimagining Our Common Good", drums in my heart and my head. As Democrats and Republicans, progressives and conservatives, whites and non-whites, rich and poor, we desperately need to find some good things we share in common. If we don't, our country may not survive. And even if it does, our institutions, our trust in each other, and we ourselves will suffer.

I was moved by the simple message of the choir's anthem on Sunday, November 12, 2017, "More love, less hate." I find myself needing to return to that message constantly, trying to focus more on my interconnections with those I see as different or with whom I disagree rather than what separates us.

With the coming of the holiday season, we are celebrating hope this month. My hope for all of us is active, not passive. It is that every day we will find our own ways to show more love and less hate wherever we are. I'll see you in church.

Yours in our faith,



President's Letter to Congregation

Pat Lindgren, President

Where are religions headed today in the United States?



The most obvious answer that is that religions are shrinking at ever increasing rates. More and more Americans are leaving churches. When asked what religion they are, the answer is *NONE*. The polls show that people under 30 are the most likely to have no religious affiliation.

The Gallup polls that ask people if they have attended a church in the past seven days continue to report that 40% of Americans say yes. But all the research shows that people over report actions they think are good like voting and church attendance and under report things that are bad like drinking.

I have read a lot of articles about church attendance and why people are leaving the church. Some of the articles were written by analysts, reporters and pollsters, but many articles were written by ministers, priests, and other religious leaders. The articles written by church leaders were almost always the opposite of those written by analysts and reporters. It was amazing to me how good the religious leaders are at fooling themselves. They would say that there is no decline in attendance and then would say that the reason that people are leaving is that the church is not strict enough, there was not enough God, Bible, Jesus and faith. They never say that people leave because there are too many rules, too much exclusion, too much hate. For example, one survey showed that nearly one-third of Millennials who left the faith they grow up with told Public Religion Research Institute that it was "negative teachings" or "negative treatment" related to gays and lesbians that played a significant role in them leaving organized religion.

I think that what we need in America is a new Reformation and I believe that we in the UU church would lead it. I also believe this new reformation needs to be about our first two principles as have so many past reforms been, but just not piecemeal.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Why these two? Because most religions profess to believe in these two principles already, so they are a good starting point. The problems come in the "excepts" that churches add to these principles.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person - except gays and lesbians, except illegal immigrants, except people with dark skin, except people of different faiths, except people who speak other languages, except, except, except. Of course, even we UUsers have our own excepts that we have to overcome, except conservative politicians. We need to teach the world to include, not exclude; to eliminate the excepts.

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Justice is a concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, religion, equity and fairness. Is it justice that in Uganda people are jailed or killed for being gay? Is it justice that in the United States, African Americans are sentenced to prison for minor drug crimes at rates much higher than whites are for the same crimes?

Injustice often follows the “excepts” to the first principle. Work on changing the “excepts” will help correct many injustices.

We UUers need to use the current means of communication to inspire our reformation. We need to use social media to get our message out, not just from our UUA, our districts and our churches, but also from each of our members. We have never been very good at evangelizing our beliefs and viewpoints, but the world needs us now. So I encourage you all to go out and start a reformation. Talk about the principles, live them. Spread the word that here is a church that is inclusive, that believes and practices these principles and encourages other churches to do the same.

Fundraiser for Two AZ Tax Credits

Linda Vitale

It's time again to take advantage of two AZ tax credits that redirect your AZ tax dollars to worthy causes. In the past, I've held two separate fundraisers; one for the Valley View Food Bank and the other for Surprise Elementary (our adopted school) SO, just to make it easier, I will combine them into one fundraising event.

Either of these (separate) tax credits, puts your donation to work by helping to feed those in need and/or help Surprise Elementary students. If you make a donation to Surprise Elementary, you can even choose which character education program or extra-curricular activity you want your donation to support. Your donation helps the school fund those programs - that would otherwise go unfunded.

I will have a table during our Annual Membership Meeting if you wish to donate. Please remember to bring cash or your checkbook, credit cards are NOT accepted.

Here's how both credits work: The credit is equal to the dollar amount of your donation. Dollar-for-Dollar, your donation offsets any taxes you owe on your State of AZ tax return. However, the donated amount can only be used to the extent that it reduces your AZ tax liability to zero. Any unused amount can be carried forward for 5 years.

Moreover, even if you are not an Arizona resident, you may also be able to deduct your donation as a charitable contribution on your federal return – but only if you are able to itemize your deductions on your federal tax return.

Both of these credits have a yearly maximum limit amount. The School Tax Credit max is \$200 for Single filers and \$400 for Married Filing Jointly filers. The tax credit for the Valley View Food Bank (aka-Qualifying Charitable Organizations) max is \$400 for Single filers and \$800 for Married Filing Jointly filers.

P.S. In case you forget to bring your checkbook, I will have blank mail-in forms for both charities. This is a Win-Win situation for you and these charities! So, please give whatever amount you can. No donation is too small.

P.S.S. New tax rules now make it possible to even make a donation up until April 17, 2018. So, if you find that you owe taxes on your AZ State tax return, you can still offset that amount by making a donation to Surprise Elementary or Valley View Food Bank. Just be sure that you designate on the donation form that your donation is to be applied to the 2017 tax year.

Shared Christmas Dinner December 25, 2017



Berta and George Czczyk will organize the Shared Christmas Dinner. They encourage members and friends to come and bring guests to this church community event. Bring your choice from the following kinds of potluck dishes: main dish, appetizers, vegetable dishes, other side dishes, breads, sauces, salads, desserts, or your special favorite dish.

The Social Hour will begin at 2:00 p.m. The Dinner will begin at 3:00 p.m. The sign-up sheets will be in the Social Hall on November 26th. Sign up and bring friends and good food.

Please have information for the Newsletter submitted by Noon on the 15th of each month to the Editor, Charlie Mannino at newsletter@uusurprise.org

Principles Class Finishes 7th Montage

Tom Reemtsma

The Seven Principles Workshop finished with an evaluation on November 21st. Over seven sessions several members and guests explored the relationship of Unitarian Universalist 7 principles to seven other religions. At the end of each class a montage was created to represent one principle both in bright living color and dark suffocating denial. As we opened windows into these other faith communities, we found struggles to establish respect for new insights and the long histories of writing down literatures in the understanding of new life sustaining values. We saw that traditions evolved over the years and adaptations were made to suit local conditions of politics and geography. Now that the study is completed we are turning to revealing how our own principles shall be made real in today's nearby communities. The text for this study was the book from our church library, "With Purpose and Principle," Edited by Edward W. Frost.

USA Maternal Mortality Rate

Lenore Gaudin

December 6 at 1 PM, I will be leading a discussion on the high USA maternal mortality rate. It will be based on the report by NPR and ProPublica after a six-month investigation. They found that the rate of 26 deaths per 100,000 births is almost 3 times the rate of the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Germany at a rate of 9. Come to share your ideas.

Notice - New Church Photo

Look for special announcements regarding a date in January to take a new church photo with the congregation outdoors.



Our Hope for Christmas...

Debby Bullins, Music Director

'Tis the season...

...to deck the halls, light the candles, find some wisemen and fa la la la to our hearts content.

This is also the time to celebrate and be thankful for the gifts we have received and mindful of the gifts we give. I am extremely thankful for our choir, accompanists and musicians who give of their time and talents, bringing beautiful music to our worship service each week.



We will begin the month with our Hymn Sing on December 3rd at 10:10 a.m. Come early and settle in for a fun morning of laughter, singing and community. Clapping and dancing are highly encouraged.

The Music Department is preparing their themed music service, Our Hope for Christmas, to present as their gift to the congregation on December 17. The music begins at 10 a.m. as Kent Trostel sets the mood of the holidays. Our Lessons and Carols Service begins at 10:30 a.m. when the choir will celebrate the season with beautiful and interesting music. Please arrive early to enjoy the total experience.

Lastly, I am also thankful for you, our congregation, who have given your smiles, friendship, praise, gift of community, sharing of ideas, and support which allows me to bring a variety of music to our church.

Here's wishing you a very Happy Holiday Season!

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

Name Tags

Janet Kafel

Magnetic name tags are now available for purchase through Janet Kafel. They are \$5.25 each. To order yours, see Janet on Sundays at the table by the front door of the Social Hall or contact her at janetkafel@gmail.com or 530-340-3230.

When you see a name badge with a green dot, it signifies a new member. Take time to say hello, and welcome them to our congregation.

Sunday Potluck

Danean Mitchell

We are very pleased with the success of the First Sunday Potluck. Most important is to give a big **Thank You** to Marian, Mary Beth Chrest, Bill Chartrand and DeThomasis family (the kids were great helpers) for helping. I also want to thank anybody else that helped that I might have missed. I want to thank everyone who attended for providing us with such a bounty of great food. We had 60 folks sign-up and served 72 which represents 60% of the entire congregation who attended church. First Sunday is a work in progress. I learned a great deal that will make going forward even better. I am anxious to have input from anyone with ideas, disappointments, general comments and those who would like to volunteer to help with future food events. You can e-mail them to danean@aol.com and thank you.



I have decided not to have a First Sunday potluck in December. Our annual meeting with a catered dinner is the Friday prior to, and we will have just finished Thanksgiving dinner. With Christmas dinner just around the corner, it seems like there is just so much Holiday cheer going on. We will have much to look forward to moving on into the New Year. Speaking of the New Year, the 31st of December falls on Sunday, and I would like to continue a tradition I started last year by making my New Years Good Luck Soup, both the original and the vegetarian versions.

Our next potluck will be the 4th of Feb. 2018. Since it is Super Bowl Sunday, our theme will be "Tailgate Potluck." More info to follow. . . .

Happy Holidays

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

The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Fall has arrived with beautiful Arizona weather, a great time for patio reading our brand new UU Library books. This year we are adding a dozen new books from Skinner and Beacon Presses (UU book services). Let's get right to a look at four of these great new reads:

"A History of Religion in 5 ½ Objects," subtitled 'Bringing the Spiritual to its Senses', by S. Brent Plate, number 203.7PLA. The author "asks us to focus on five ordinary objects, stones, incense, drums, crosses and bread, which we connect with religious meaning and fulfillment. He explores how the world's religious traditions have put each of them to different uses," explains Beacon Press. I found this an easy read and a fascinating new way to look at religion. The '½ Object'? The human body.

"Daring Democracy," subtitled 'Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want', by Francis Lappe and Adam Eichen, number 320.97LAP. Lappe is the author of the famous book "Diet for a Small Planet". This book is a new Beacon offering. The authors "open with an essential truth: it is not the magnitude of a challenge that crushes the human spirit, it's feeling powerless--fearing that to stand up for democracy is futile. It's not," says Beacon. This is a very powerful book, a must read for empowerment in our trying times.

"Cultivating Empathy," subtitled 'The Worth and Dignity of Every Person—Without Exception', by Nathan C. Walker, number 177.7WAL. This Skinner offering is "emotionally honest and a personal exploration of conflict. The author introduces a creative and compassionate way to develop empathetic responses. He explores the concept of the moral imagination—a way we can project ourselves into a conflict and understand all perspectives," Skinner explains. A terrific book to study and learn the practice our UU 7th Principle.

"The Seasoned Soul," subtitled 'Reflections on Growing Older', by Eliza Blanchard, number 204.4BLA. This is a deeply moving, beautiful book of 87 elegant essays that reflect on aging. The author "uses wise and inspiring quotations from many cultures and religious traditions," Skinner says. Topics include coping with life changes, dealing with fear, retaining dignity and passion and leading a life of meaning. A wonderful book.

Have a blessed day shared with a great UU Library read!

RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE



This year the children will be performing, “Old Befana: a Fireside Tale” for their holiday play. Please join us in service on Sunday, December 24th for this unique tale and feel the warmth of winter and the comfort of story. As our curriculum this year is focused

on story, we bring to you La Befana, a traditional Italian folktale. La Befana is a tale that revolves around the birth of Jesus and the journey of the Magi to visit the Christ Child.

In the classroom...

This past month the children’s World Religions class completed a short, four lesson unit on the religion of Islam. They heard four stories which introduced basic principles of the Islam religion, holidays, and culture.

The first tale shared was “The Hundredth Name” by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim. This story taught children that Muslims call God Allah and that within the Qur’an (the Islamic holy book) Allah is referred to by 99 different names. In the story, a young boy, Salah, wonders if his beloved camel, Qadiim, might know Allah’s hundredth name. The traditional importance of camels was also discussed.

In a modern day tale called, “Sitti’s Secrets” by Naomi Shihab Nye, the kids learned about a young girl, Sitti, who recently moved to America and is missing her Grandmother who is still living back in Palestine. Sitti is missing the culture and traditions of her old home. The class was shown where the Middle East and Palestine were on a world map in relation to the United States. On a secondary level, Islamic art was discussed. Geometric Design, flower patterns and calligraphy are frequently used to decorate. The children had fun learning about and making their own prayer rugs out of brown paper bags!

The focus of “The Day of Ahmed’s Secret” by Florence Parry Heide & Judith Hiede Gilliland, was to introduce the Arabic Alphabet which looks very different from our own. In the story a young boy from Cairo learns to write his name in Arabic using calligraphy. The children were shown examples of Arabic writing and given the opportunity to write their own names using fancy word art.

The final book was “Fasting and Dates; A Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr Story” by Jonny Zucker, which talked about fasting, one of the five pillars of faith. This story introduced the Islamic holiday of Ramadan when Muslims fast. It is called the Fast of Ramadan and lasts an entire month. Our kids were glad to hear that Muslims do not require children to fast and agreed that this would be very hard! They learned that at the end of the day the fast is broken with prayer and a special meal where dates are often the first food eaten. After the lesson the children had the opportunity to taste some dates.

BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

The BUUK Circle meets on the third Thursday 2pm – 4pm in the Social Hall. Here are selections for the next two months. Join us, whether you’ve finished or even started the book. For more information, contact Julie Wambach at azwambach@icloud.com.

Dec. 21, 2017 - “*Sisters in Law: How Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went to the Supreme Court and Changed the World*” by Linda Hirschman.

The author tells the fascinating story of the intertwined lives of Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Jan. 18, 2018 - “*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*” by Matthew Desmond.

Sociologist and MacArthur ‘Genius’ the author “follows eight families in Milwaukee as they struggle to keep a roof over their heads.” “Transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of 21st century America’s most devastating problems.” Highly praised by innumerable critics.

Setting a New Example

Ken Saunders

I have been thinking for a long while that we must try to set a better example. From now on instead of putting a dollar in the collection basket, make it a ten dollar bill. If you are putting only a dollar in the collection plate you ought to rethink that the coffee after the service is worth that. Hopefully, you get much more value out of the entire Sunday service.

We do not want you to give til it hurts, just until it feels really, really good.



Visit our new web site at
www.uusurprise.com

Unitarian Universalist Church of Surprise

A Progressive, Inclusive Faith Community

WELCOME



Suggested language for including UU Church of Surprise in your will or estate plan:

I herein give and bequeath \$_____, or _____ percent of the rest, remainder and residue of my estate, or the proceeds from the sale of real estate by my estate that I own located at _____ to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Surprise located at 17540 N. Avenue of the Arts, Surprise, AZ 85378-2581.

Federal tax ID # _____

*For more information about creating a legacy to the UU Church of Surprise
Please call Brooks Marshall at 623-362-1195*

Including a gift to UU Church of Surprise Arizona in your will or estate plan helps your church in its mission of providing a liberal voice in our Community, State and Country.

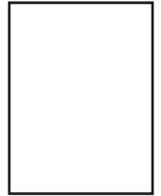
- Simplicity** Just a few sentences in your will or trust are all that is needed.
- Versatility** You can structure the bequest to leave a specific item or amount of money, make a gift contingent on a certain event, or leave a percentage of your estate to us.
- Tax Relief** If you are subject to estate tax, your gift allows you to be eligible for an estate tax Charitable deduction for the gift's full value.

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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.

Sermon Titles For December 2017

This months theme is Hope

12/3 - Rev. Terry Sims.....Hoping for Good

What do we hope for? If we are to be the spiritual force in the world we want to be, I think we have to be careful to hope only for good things all of us can share in common.

12/10 - Rev. Terry Sims Hope's Champions

All of us can become discouraged. But I believe we need to practice hope as a spiritual discipline. It is entrusted to us to keep hope alive, for ourselves and our world.

12/17 - Choir.....Our Hope for Christmas

Now is the time to celebrate and be thankful for the gifts we have received and mindful of the gifts we give. The Music Department prepared their themed music service, Our Hope for Christmas, as their gift to the congregation being mindful that the best gifts come in a smile shared, love unconditionally given and a song that comes from the heart.

12/24 - Children's RE..... Old Befana: A Fireside Tale

Children's RE and fellow theatrical church members will be presenting the traditional Italian folktale, La Befana, as this year's intergenerational holiday play. La Befana is a tale that revolves around the birth of Jesus and the journey of the Magi to visit the Christ Child.

12/31 - Pat Lindgren..... Faith, Hope and Charity, UU Style

How we UU's define and practice these three qualities.