

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

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January 2018

From The Minister's Desk

I write this in the season of holidays – Hanukkah, Christmas, the Winter Solstice, Kwanzaa, a New Year. I find myself thinking about endings and beginnings, about newness.

I have noticed something new on several occasions recently. One of those occasions was the painting I've had done at my house. A new coat of paint did wonders for the room and for how I look at it and enjoy it. There is something about a fresh start to almost anything that truly lifts my spirits.



The wife of one of the young lawyers in the firm where I formerly practiced just gave birth to a baby girl. The infant's new life has made her parents' lives new, too; not just because they are newly responsible for another person and are getting considerably less sleep, but also because they are transformed by a new love for their daughter. As my lawyer friend said, "Our old lives are over. We're beginning new ones."

This past week I had a regular medical checkup. My doctor is a progressive Lutheran, active in his church. Being from Minnesota, he knows about Unitarian Universalism. When there is not much to discuss medically (which is always a relief!), we talk about church matters, our theological perspectives, and what we hope for our world and its people.

As I was waiting for the doctor to come in to see me, I noticed a small, wood carving that sat on the small desk across the examining table from me. It had raised strips of light wood at right angles to each other above a darker, uniform background.

At first, I thought the strips of lighter wood were arranged randomly, except for their right angles to each other, but as I continued to look at the carving, in an instant the image changed for me. The carving resolved in my vision and in my mind so that the darker background spelled out "JESUS" in block letters, with the lighter raised wood strips forming the open spaces within and between the letters.

This season of holidays is largely about newness for me – new perspectives, new openness, new discoveries, new chances. One of the reasons I like seasons is that they pair a familiar ending with a beginning of something unfamiliar, a new future. The new in our human existence is always there, beckoning us toward a fresh start. I think it is newness that is at the heart of many of my favorite things – invention, science, art, learning, spiritual growth. It is newness that calls and propels us forward in our personal lives and together as a world. This is the evolutionary path of human individual, and social development.

Of course, what beckons asks that we be ready to receive something new; ready to see, understand, or appreciate something in a new way. So in this holiday season, I hope to make myself ready for the new to break into my life. For some of us, that may mean the urge to change an old opinion or habit or view of someone else, or infusing our routines with new meaning. For others, it may mean a readiness to see miracles in the night sky or in the birth of a child. For some of us, it may mean a readiness to hope and trust again, a willingness to give or accept forgiveness. As we move from our December theme of "hope" into our January theme of "justice", maybe we can ready ourselves to see and understand justice in a new way. I'll see you in church.

Yours in our faith *Terry*

President's Letter to Congregation

Pat Lindgren, President

On Sunday, December 17th I attended our annual music and reflection service put on by Rev. Sims, Debby Bullins, Kent Trostel and our wonderful choir. It was a beautiful morning of great music. Next Sunday, I will get to see a special program put on by Lisa Lawrence, our children and their helpers. I realize that by the time you read this, these events will be history, but I hope most of you got a chance to see both performances. If not, make sure you watch for these two special weekends in December.



I have been preparing for the sermon I am giving on December 31st. In getting ready I have been reading a lot about our faith. I came across an article from Peter Morales, our past president in the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide. I would like to give you parts of it because it means a lot to me.

There have always been people of faith like us: We are the people who sought a religion marked by freedom and reason and acceptance, in addition to faith and hope and love. Our forebears were martyrs who died for religious freedom, ministers who preached that no one is damned to hell or outside the reach of divine love, thinkers who taught us that no spiritual tradition has a monopoly on wisdom, and activists who focused our attention on bettering this world rather than placing our hope in the afterlife.

We stand in a grand and glorious stream of faith, always flowing toward freedom, justice, and love of the world. We are called by our faith to respond to the world, its sorrows as well as its joys. We are often heartbroken about the state of this world, but never truly in despair. We who are privileged to be part of this liberal faith have inherited an extraordinary legacy. We have been given the gift of freedom to believe or to doubt; the gift of reason, to consider what we know of life and compare it to the timeless wisdom from other cultures. We have received powerful examples of courage in the service of humanity and of a love that encompasses all life.

These are treasures—but they are not ours to keep. They enrich each one of us, but only if we give them away, again and again. Because of these religious values, Unitarian Universalists have always sparked social change far out of proportion to our actual

numbers. We have been instrumental in the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, and the fight for economic and environmental justice, among other things.

We do this work best when we remember what church is and what it is not. Most importantly, church is not a place to hide. It is not the place to get away from the world. It is not a place where we all get to pretend that the life we live and our particular situations are not terribly complex, often confusing, and sometimes depressing. Church is the place where we stand with one another, look the world in the eye, attempt to see it clearly, and gather strength to face what we see with courage and, yes, with joy.

Unitarian Universalism is especially important right now, because something sinister is brewing in our culture and our world again: a harsh and hateful fundamentalism in both religion and politics that makes a mockery of discourse and a joke of fellowship. Unitarian Universalism, with its deep roots in democracy and in community, provides a corrective saving grace. We give religious freedom voice and hands and feet; we put it in the service of others. We know that nothing takes the place of community and connection, nothing is a worthy substitute for our ties to the Holy and to one another, across all creedal barriers. We believe in this saving message. We believe in building and sustaining communities of memory and hope, in providing way stations of resistance for a people and a world battered by the relentless assault of intolerance.

I believe that we can work together to change this path we seem to be on. I see hopes of change in recent elections, in the #metoo movement, in the growth of our congregation with many new members. Please help me to welcome these new members and all our visitors this winter. During the social hour if you see someone new, please talk to them, get to know them. We have serious problems ahead of us in this world, but I agree with Peter that we need to gather strength to face what we see with courage and, yes, with joy.

Notice - New Church Photo

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

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.

Circle Suppers Are Coming Back

Circle suppers are potluck dinners held in members' homes. They are a good way to really get to know each other. We anticipate holding the suppers in mid or late January and are currently looking for participants and volunteers to host. Hosts would be responsible for drinks and appetizers. Other participants will be assigned main course, side, or dessert. Please see the table in the Social Hall for more information. For more information call Susie Cole at 406.600.8857 or Nancy Flann at 623.583.4636.

Act for Justice Arizona

Tom Reemtsma

Three actions are coming up in January and February. First is a seminar via Zoom meeting on January 21st from 4 until 5 P.M. Cochise County Superior Court Justice Wallace Hoggatt will reveal how racial and economic factors influence the death penalty in Arizona and around the country. Register for this webinar at www.uujaz.org/jst.html. Second is the Point In Time Count in Surprise of our homeless population. This annual count is for Federal funds released to cities to aid homeless residents around the country. Sign up now at the information table near our church library to be an enumerator on January 23rd. Thirdly, keep in mind that this year the UU Day At the Legislature will take place on February 19th. Appointments are now being set up for members of our church to visit with legislators from Districts 21 and 22. This is always a memorable day.

Justice Strength Training for AZ UUs - UUAZ

www.uujaz.org

UUAZ is hosting a series of webinars for Arizona UUs, designed to encourage, support, and strengthen us for justice work. Register for the next webinar on line!



Great Decisions 2018: U.S. Foreign Policy Discussion Series

Bonnie Saunders

What will happen in U.S. foreign policy in 2018? What issues will you need to know about as you listen to the news? Will you know enough to make sense of news reports? If you want to know enough to make sense of news reports, join Bonnie Saunders in February and March in discussing the topics noted below. You will also have the option to send your opinions on these issues to the Department of State by a survey at the end of our discussions.

In January, Bonnie will have the briefing books for \$20. See Bonnie at church or e-mail her at BonnieSaun@aol.com to get your book, read the articles before we discuss them on the following dates, and be prepared to ask and answer questions about these issues.

Discussions will begin at 7:00 p.m. on the following Mondays at the UU Church of Surprise:

The Waning of Pax America	2/5
Russia's Foreign Policy	2/12
China's Geopolitics	2/19
The Media and Foreign Policy	2/26
Turkey: Partner in Crisis	3/5
U.S. Global Engagement & the Military	3/12
South Africa's Fragile Democracy	3/19
Global Health Issues.....	3/26

Social Activities

Danean Mitchell

*The December and January table decorating theme is . . . and a **Rose** in the wintertime.*

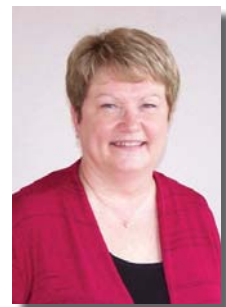
The signup sheet is in the Social Hall for the 4th of February Tailgate Potluck. I have listed food items suggestive of a tailgate party. Please sign up on the line for an item you would like to bring. If you would rather bring something you do not see on the list, please feel free to bring what you want. Just sign up on one of the blank lines. Again, I am giving those an opportunity to participate without bringing a food item but giving a donation towards the purchase of whatever we need to fill in. If this is your choice, please contact me at church or at 623-546-6050.



Musings from the Loft!

Debby Bullins, Music Director

Happy 2018! The New Year is upon us and the Music Department is busy planning some exciting, uplifting and inspirational choral anthems for the next several months. I am looking forward to the rest of the choir year with our merry troupe of singers.



For those of you whose resolutions include trying something new, I encourage you to give our choir a try. We rehearse at 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings and usually sing three Sundays a month. There is an additional rehearsal one Thursday a month where we woodshed notes and learn parts. No previous experience is needed, just a love of singing. Contact me at debbyb@uusurprise.org with any questions you might have and a schedule of rehearsals.

On January 7, we will have our monthly Hymn Sing beginning at 10:10 a.m. Gather the entire family, come early and settle in for a fun morning of laughter, singing and community. Clapping and dancing are highly encouraged.

Mark your calendars on February 10 at 7:00 p.m. when Kent Trostel, pianist, composer and arranger, will present a concert in the sanctuary where he will feature some of his favorite contemporary composers as well as a few of his own compositions. It will be an evening you won't want to miss. Admission is \$20.

UU Endowment Fund

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

For further information call:
Brooks Marshall at 623-362-1195.

The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Happy New Year Dear UU Library Patrons! Let's get right to reviews of more of our recently added new books:

"The Third Reconstruction," subtitled: 'How a moral movement is overcoming the politics of division and fear', by Reverend Dr William J Barber II, number 277.3BAR. Cornell West says of Rev. Barber: ... he "is the closest person we have to Martin Luther King Jr. in our midst." Beacon Press says about this short but powerful book: "In this memoir of a transformative coalition for social justice, the author offers an analysis of race-based inequality...strife and economic injustice. He writes movingly and pragmatically."

"A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism," subtitled: 'Volume One, from the beginning to 1899', edited by Dan McKanan, number 289.1McK, vol. 1. If you are interested in or researching early UU history this is the volume for you. Newly published by Skinner Books in 2017, it is the most current and definitive book on our faith. It is reviewed as an excellent and well-edited collection with well chosen material. It is the first comprehensive collection of primary source material from UU history. Thomas Jefferson, Ethan Allen, Mary Wollstonecraft, Lucy Barnes and William Ellery Channing are but a few of the authors you will find in this fabulous volume.

"A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism," subtitled: 'Volume Two, from 1900 to the present', edited by Dan McKanan, number 289.1McK, vol. 2. This second new volume of UU history follows on Volume One. The reader will again find a powerful book including sermons, theologies denominational statements, hymns, autobiographies and manifestos. One reviewer commented: "UUs today can benefit from greater awareness of the depth and resources of their own faith tradition." This book provides that awareness. Individual authors include Charles W. Elliot, Clarence Skinner, A. Powell Davies and Peter Morales.

Have a wonderful seasonal day shared with a terrific new UU book!

RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

Happy New Year!



I hope you enjoyed this year's holiday play. I really made an effort to represent Humanist, Pagan and Christian tradition and sentiment in this year's performance, and believe me, it wasn't easy! Thanks go out to all those who made it possible, from Reverend Terry, to my

music friends Debby Bullins and Julian Rush, to supportive congregation members, parents, and of course, the children.

As always, with the hanging of a new calendar, I am looking forward to a fresh start full of possibilities. My hope for the winter/spring session is for it to be filled with diverse and enriching lessons and experiences. To start, the children will be finishing up our last unit of World Religions with two more classes on Buddhism before moving on to a brand new curriculum about Bible Tales.

Also new in the classroom, beginning this January, we will begin taking up a collection each week in the children's classroom. The goal of this ritual is to teach kids about stewardship and supporting that which supports us.



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.

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

Set Our People Free

Rev. Julian Rush

January 14th is one of the most important Sundays in this church year. On this day, we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King and his message of freedom for all. We know that America is not really the home of the free because tens of thousands of Americans are still marginalized - certainly anyone whose skin is not white, or anyone whose belief system does not agree with the ultra conservative Christian, and those of us in the LBTGQ community. And we are now acutely aware that many women in our country are still marginalized as well, and on it goes.

I'll be offering a musical sermon on this day which is a plea for all of us to seek ways to convince our country to set free all of our marginalized people. Please join us on this important Sunday.

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.

BUUK Circle

Julie Wambach

BUUK Circle is moving to the *SECOND* Tuesday evening 6:30-8:30pm in the Choir Room. (NOTE: That's second, not third Tuesday.) Please join us whether you've finished the book or haven't yet started it. For more information, contact Julie Wambach at azwambach@icloud.com.

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

"Harvard sociologist and MacArthur 'Genius' Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they struggle to keep a roof over their heads...transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation...unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home."

February 13, 2018 - "**Out Of The Wreckage: A New Politics For An Age Of Crisis,**" by George Monbiot.

Monbiot "shows how new findings in psychology, neuroscience and evolutionary biology cast human nature in a radically different light: as the supreme altruists and cooperators. He shows how we can build on these findings to create a new politics: a 'politics of belonging'."



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www.uusurprise.com

Unitarian
Universalist Church
of Surprise

A Progressive, Inclusive Faith Community

WELCOME





Regional Assembly Information Pacific Western Region Portland, Oregon, April 27-29, 2018

Plan to join attendees from 185 PWR congregations as the four districts of the Pacific Western Region convene in Portland, Oregon, April 27-29, for the 2018 Regional Assembly. Three dynamic speakers will address the theme, Stories of Hope, Courage, Resistance, and Resilience. The Rev. Dr. William Barber, a national figure in civil rights activism, will be in the pulpit for Sunday's worship service. Saturday's keynote speaker will be Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, the first Indian-American woman to be elected to U.S. Congress. Jayapal has spent the last twenty years working internationally and domestically as a leading advocate for women's, immigrant, civil, and human rights. The Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, UUA president, will speak at Friday evening's opening ceremony. FrederickGray will share her emerging vision for the future of the UUA and the wider movement.

Several workshops will be offered during Saturday's programming. If you prefer, you may opt to participate in a local social justice activity. Full details about workshops and the social justice activity will soon be posted on the Pacific Western Region website (www.uua.org/pwr).

All four districts of the Pacific Western Region will hold concurrent annual meetings on Saturday afternoon. Meeting materials and delegate information will be distributed in February/March.

If you are a minister, religious educator, or music director you will want to attend the day-long Professional Day activities on Friday, April 27. Rev. Erika Hewitt, UUA staff Minister of Worship Arts, and Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, Director of Worship and Music at the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, will be presenting a workshop for religious professionals on multi-generational, multicultural worship. In addition, the Revs. Elizabeth Stevens, Emily Brault, and Susan Maginn will be presenting "From Burden to Blessing: Working with Secondary Trauma" for community-based ministers. Professional Day programming will be held at First Unitarian Church of Portland prior to the start of Regional Assembly. Registration for Friday's Professional Day will be available via the Regional Assembly registration form.

Regional Assembly registration will be open by January 4. You will be able to access full details and the registration form through the Pacific Western Region website (www.uua.org/pwr).

The Portland DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, site of the Regional Assembly, is offering discounted room rates through March 29, be sure to use the group code, UU8. Full details will be posted on the PWR website before registration opens January 4. PWR staff is working hard to keep registration costs low. An Early Bird adult registration fee will be available through January 31 and fees for young adults, youth, and children will be discounted. Still, could your congregation consider either subsidizing or fully funding the costs for at least one person to attend Regional Assembly? What a great opportunity for someone identified as a potential leader in your congregation!

Be sure to check the PWR website (www.uua.org/pwr) after the first of the year for full Regional Assembly details.

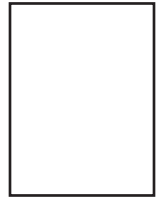


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First Class Mail

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 January 2018

This months theme is Justice

1/7 - Rev. Terry Sims..... The Implications of Justice

There are various ways to think about justice, but I keep coming back to the idea that all forms of justice make ethical demands the privileged probably will not like. How we respond to those demands determines whether we can honestly think of ourselves as just persons or a just society.

1/14 - Rev. Julian Rush..... Set Our People Free

I'll be offering a musical sermon on this day which is a plea for all of us to seek ways to convince our country to set free all of our marginalized people. Please join us on this important Sunday.

1/21 - Rev. Terry Sims..... Giving Life the Shape of Justice

With our tendency to group people by shared characteristics, it is not hard to identify distinct groups of people who are treated unjustly. How can those who are given justice understand what it is like for those who are denied justice? Are we getting closer to our principle of justice for all?

1/28 - Rev. Terry Sims..... White Supremacy and Anti-Blackness

My experiences at General Assembly last June changed my understanding of racial injustice and how I hear terms like "white supremacy". As we confront our collective past and present and resolve to create a more just future, I think it is important to know when to take personal responsibility and when not to.