

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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Minister Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

President: Sherry Robinson



45th Anniversary 1975 - 2020

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April 2021

From The Minister's Desk

I continue to be dismayed by the gulf that stands between so many of us and our neighbors; the extreme polarization that divides us, especially right now in the United States. Unfortunately, I am not just a neutral observer to this other pandemic of polarization; I feel very separated in my own thoughts and feelings from many of my fellow citizens.



Using the Senate's budget reconciliation process, Democratic President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act became law without a single Republican in the House of Representatives or the Senate voting for it. But that process cannot be used for all the planned legislation on President Biden's ambitious agenda. Political power has shifted, but the extreme polarization of our country evident in party affiliation and attitudes, and along economic, social, and racial lines, has been worsening for a long time. In 1992, Pat Buchanan gave a memorable speech at the Republican National Convention in which he declared a "culture war" for the future of the country.

An article by Brian McLaren, with italicized comments by Richard Rohr, points toward more understanding of why we are so divided.

"Recognizing Our Biases

Center for Action and Contemplation faculty member Brian McLaren has done thoughtful and helpful research about what makes us see things so differently from one another. He identified thirteen biases that we outline today. He writes:

'People can't see what they can't see. Their biases get in the way, surrounding them like a high wall, trapping them in ignorance, deception, and illusion. No amount of reasoning and argument will get through to them, unless we first learn how to break down the walls of bias. . . .

Confirmation Bias: We judge new ideas based on the ease with which they fit in with and confirm the only standard we have: old ideas, old information, and trusted authorities. As a result, our framing story, belief system, or paradigm excludes whatever doesn't fit.

Complexity Bias: Our brains prefer a simple falsehood to a complex truth.

Community Bias: It's almost impossible to see what our community doesn't, can't, or won't see.

Complementarity Bias: If you are hostile to my ideas, I'll be hostile to yours. If you are curious and respectful toward my ideas, I'll respond in kind.

Competency Bias: We don't know how much (or little) we know because we don't know how much (or little) others know. In other words, incompetent people assume that most other people are about as incompetent as they are. As a result, they underestimate their [own] incompetence, and consider themselves at least of average competence.

Consciousness Bias: Some things simply can't be seen from where I am right now. But if I keep growing, maturing, and developing, someday I will be able to see what is now inaccessible to me.

Comfort or Complacency Bias: I prefer not to have my comfort disturbed.

Conservative/Liberal Bias: I lean toward nurturing fairness and kindness, or towards strictly enforcing purity, loyalty, liberty, and authority, as an expression of my political identity.

Confidence Bias: I am attracted to confidence, even if it is false. I often prefer the bold lie to the hesitant truth.

Catastrophe or Normalcy Bias: I remember dramatic catastrophes but don't notice gradual decline (or improvement).

Contact Bias: When I don't have intense and sustained personal contact with "the other," my prejudices and false assumptions go unchallenged.

Cash Bias: It's hard for me to see something when my way of making a living requires me not to see it.

Conspiracy Bias: Under stress or shame, our brains are attracted to stories that relieve us, exonerate us, or portray us as innocent victims of malicious conspirators. [1]

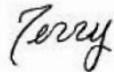
Richard again: I don't know any other way to be free of all these biases except through the contemplative mind. I see almost every one of them within myself—at least at some point in my life. I also believe there are enough good-willed people out there who, if presented with a list of these biases, have the freedom to investigate, "How can I let go of that? How can I move beyond that?" [2]

[1] Brian McLaren, *Why Don't They Get It? Overcoming Bias in Others (and Yourself)* (Self-published: 2019), e-book.

[2] Adapted from Brian McLaren, Jacqui Lewis, with Richard Rohr, "Why Can't We See?," October 5, 2020, in *Learning How to See*, episode 1 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2020), podcast, MP3 audio."

May we, in the Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise, Arizona, be some of those "good-willed people" "who . . . have the freedom to investigate" our own and others' biases. I'll see you in virtual church.

Yours in our faith,



New Newsletter Editors

Charlie Mannino

I am happy to announce that Gus and Juliet Gustavson have volunteered to be the Newsletter Editors starting with the May 2021 issue.

Message from the President

Sherry Robinson, President

As I write my message this month – I feel different. I have been trying to pin down why that is and I have begun to feel real hope that we are finally crawling out from under this black cloud. I have started to look to the future of UUC instead of focusing on the effect that covid has had on our daily lives and our community. I am beginning to feel a shift and hope we are heading for the finish line. I am not suggesting "it" is over but we are closer and appear to be improving day by day. Vaccines are up and hospitalizations are decreasing. It is not perfect but enough to produce a bit of optimism.

We will soon be celebrating Terry's retirement, seeing him begin his next chapter and welcoming our Interim Minister. Charlie and Cathy Mannino have decided to reduce their volunteer positions in order to explore new opportunities for themselves. We will miss the leadership they have provided for 9+ years. But it is time to congratulate them on a job well done, thank them for their generous contribution of time and expertise and wish them well on their next adventures.

Coming together - things will be different - the Church will be our church but with a new Interim Minister, Newsletter Editor, Web Manager, and control booth crew. We have even added a new position - that of "You Tube" Administrator, which Evert Adams has generously volunteered to do. Our services may be different - dependent upon how we offer music for members, how we pass the basket, how we greet each other, and how we do social hour.

With all these changes added to the anxiety and apprehension of "Coming back" - we will see and hear different feelings expressed by those around us. We must be mindful of those whose experiences were different than ours during the "lock down." We need to listen and recognize the fears and concerns of others. I believe we are all a little different now; how can we not be? This year has challenged us in ways we never imagined. Let us strive to be a little more forgiving of each other and ourselves. Let us be patient and accept with grace those opinions and feelings that differ from ours. This is our congregation. *May it be so.*



Thank You for Livestreaming Capability and Improved Sound!

We want to thank all those who responded so generously to the request to help fund our church's purchase of the livestreaming cameras, software, computer, and new, digital sound board! That project is now complete, and we have been enjoying livestreamed services every week since January 10. This development started because, during the pandemic, we wanted a better way to reach not only members and pledging friends with our Sunday services, but also to expand our web outreach on our church's YouTube channel and Facebook page. This new capability will allow us to continue to increase our church's online visibility even after we return to in-person services. Again, we send a huge thank-you to all who contributed to making real the dream of livestreaming of our Sunday services and improving the sound quality in our sanctuary!

On behalf of all of us,
Sherry Robinson, Board President
Rev. Terry Sims, Minister

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: Bob Walling at 602-573-5942

UUA 2021 General Assembly June 23-27

Sharon Beard, Denominational Affairs

As it was last year, General Assembly will be virtual this year. To find out what's in store for this year's program, go to uua.org/ga. If you think you may be interested in being a delegate, please feel free to contact Sherry Robinson (sarobinson@msn.com), Brooke Guant (bagaunt37@gmail.com), Juliet Gustavson (julietgus@msn.com) or me (sabeardaz@gmail.com), all of whom were delegates last year, and we will be glad to share our experiences. Our congregation is allotted four delegates, so please let me know if you plan to sign up.



Dianne Evans, Carol Calkins, Jeff London, and Julie Wambach serve with me on the new Questers Adult Education Committee. We are thrilled that so many in the congregation have already come forward to lead offerings ranging from hikes to Examining Whiteness. The possibilities for offerings are endless, and we welcome your ideas and/or your leadership for an idea. Contact Juliet Gustavson at julietgus@msn.com.

Go to our website - uusurpriseaz.org/questers/offerings/ - to register for the following two quests or to see what else is current, ongoing, and on the horizon.

Survey of Favorite Music Genres

Leader: Maggi Mahan

Where: Zoom during Covid-19 restrictions

When: 4 Sessions, Thursday, 6:30-7:45pm – May 13, 20, 27 and June 3

Registration: To register and receive Zoom invitation email Carol Calkins - carolpcalkins@gmail.com - Subject: Music Genres

Most of us have a favorite, or more than one, type of music we like to listen to, be it classical, rock, jazz, blues, hip hop, country or one of many others. This class is designed to stimulate interest, share knowledge, and potentially enhance UU Surprise congregational gatherings.

Building A Butterfly/Pollinator Garden In The Low Desert

Leader: Claudia Yeager-Smith

When: Saturday, May 8 and July 24, 8:30am-10:00 or 10:30, with last session in the fall, to be determined by plant sales

Where: Claudia Yeager-Smith's garden and Arizona Room at 9856 W. Oraibi Drive, Peoria, AZ 85382

Registration: Email Carol Calkins - carolpcalkins@gmail.com - Subject: Butterfly Garden

What if you could create a beautiful low-desert garden to enjoy and at the same time contribute to the support of butterflies and other pollinators, including the endangered Monarch butterfly? Well, you can, and Claudia Yeager-Smith is just the person to help you make that happen in this 3-session offering.



Unitarian Universalist Church of Surprise

... is genuinely excited to share with our membership a wonderful opportunity which will extend and enhance the teachings and practices of the Golden Rule.

Bruce Sorter, a longtime devoted congregational member, has generously donated \$6,000 to establish an Endowment Fund for our church. This gracious contribution will provide UU members with opportunities to create and develop programs and projects that teach and reinforce living the Golden Rule.

Bruce's donation this year of \$6,000 allows us to establish criteria to ensure that the spirit and intent of the gift is understood and properly implemented. To that end, a committee has been established to explore and designed potential opportunities to fulfill this goal. The focus for all outcomes will be to encourage, teach, and reinforce or reward individual practices of the Golden Rule.

For questions, contact:

Claudia Yeager Smith at 480-387-1973

John Cline at 623-910-7055

Cheryl Garrett at 623-680-5147

Let your creative thoughts flow: think about a *Class, Workshop, Lecture, Field Trip or Scholarship*. Immerse yourself and others in this marvelous opportunity to impact our church community!



Please have information for the Newsletter
submitted by noon on the 15th of each
month to the Editor at
uucsnewsletter@gmail.com

The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Welcome back to your reading source for great UU books! Spring is certainly in the air already, and Easter is even early this year! Blessed be, it is a wonderful start to a new year.

Change/opportunity is our mantra for your reading enjoyment this year. First, we are both eager and excited to be early participants in the Golden Rule Fund, so generously established by our member Dr. Bruce Sorter. Look forward to great new readings on principles and practices of the Golden Rule here at UU Surprise. Three additions are already included in the new book list below!

Next, I moved ahead and have been adding our new year books previously promised. In this list, I am starting to provide the shelf 'call numbers' for your reference for book check-out. Please keep this list as your reminder.

****Golden Rule****- "*Gideon's Promise*," subtitled 'A public defender movement to transform criminal justice,' by Jonathan Rapping, number 345.7RAP. Look for this book in the Special Collection Golden Rule area.

****Golden Rule****- "*Rectify*," subtitled 'The power of restorative justice after wrongful conviction,' by Lara Bazelon, number 364.6BAZ. Look for this book in the Special Collection Golden Rule area.

****Golden Rule****- "*Full Dissidence*," subtitled "Notes from an uneven playing field," by Howard Bryant, number 306.2BRY. Look for this book also in the Special Collection Golden Rule area.

Two additional new books for your reading enlightenment:

"*Create Your Own Calm*," subtitled 'A journal for quieting anxiety,' by Meera Lee Patel, number 152.4PAT.

"*Breaking and Blessing*," subtitled 'Meditations,' by Shawn Parker Dennison, number 242DEN.

More new books listed next month. Including a recent donation of books by poet Maya Angelou! Enjoy your spring reading list everyone!

2021 Stewardship Campaign Update

Dear Members and Friends,

We are pleased to report that our 2021 Stewardship Campaign is well on track to meeting the campaign goal at some point this year. By mid-March over 60% of the campaign goal of \$205,401 had been reached from more than 54% of Members and well over a third of our Friends. What a great commitment so far!

There seem to be two interesting trends. Possibly the more significant one is that so many of you have increased your pledge from last year! Another trend worth noting is that nearly twice as many pledges than donations have been made. This supports what many of us believe, that a personal commitment to support our community is important because "UU Values Matter...Pledging Secures Our Future".

If you have not yet made a pledge, we hope you will pledge now. This month the Stewardship Team will follow-up with those of you who have given in the past but not yet committed to pledging this year. Be as generous as you can but know that whatever amount you feel comfortable pledging will be greatly appreciated. Help us reach our goal in support of the programs and services of this beloved faith community.

The Board and Stewardship Team are grateful for the generosity of so many Members and Friends who have joined together to enable this congregation to grow and stay resilient during these challenging times.

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



Ways to Give

UU Values Matter ... Pledging Secures Our Future

1. Give online at:
<https://uusurpriseaz.org/get-involved/#donate>.
2. Request a printed copy of the Financial Pledge Commitment Form - call (623.875.2250) or email uucsaz2@gmail.com Kathryn at the UUCS office.
3. By automatic withdrawal from your checking account (see information online).

RE Report

Lisa Lawrence, DRE

Spring in the Time of Covid-19

Once again springtime brings us hope; fresh buds and flowers, baby birds and bunnies, warmer weather, and this year-- the hope of a waning pandemic. We're not there quite yet but definitely getting closer with vaccine availability. We can't have a church Seder but I will still be doing a combined class reading of the Maggid with the children and an overview of Passover and the Seder meal. We can't have an Easter egg hunt but we can have friend and family fun exploring new territory during Lisa's Springtime Scavenger Hunt and Socially Distant-Ice Cream Social.

Our holidays won't be exactly the same, or even in person for that matter, but they do give us the opportunity to create new traditions and growth.



Visit our web site for current information

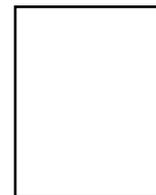
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First Class Mail

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 livestreaming service during Covid restrictions at 10:30 am on Facebook or YouTube

If you are not a member but would like to receive church announcements by email, please send your email address and full name to uucsaz2@gmail.com.

Sermon Titles For April 2021

The Theme for this month is Mindfulness

4/4 - Rev. Terry Sims Miracle at the Sink

Louis L'Amour said: "Few of us ever live in the present. We are forever anticipating what is to come or remembering what has gone." Mindfulness, learning to pay attention and then practicing that attention, offers a solution. The Eastern religions have known that for millennia, but each of us must find it for ourselves.

4/11 - Rev. Terry Sims Overcoming Obstacles to Mindfulness

No matter how much we want to be mindful of the present moment and all that is around us, the rest of life constantly works to steal our mindfulness and our peace. In this service, we will look at some obstacles to mindfulness and how we might overcome them.

4/18 - Rev. Terry Sims Mindfully Doing Our Part

The effort of being mindful allows us to become aware of all that is around us, including the needs of others and the world, in addition to our own needs. Such awareness can awaken compassion; a desire to do our part to relieve suffering and to let all people lead their best lives.

4/25 - Emrys Staton..... The Postmodern Elephant in the Room

Those topics that are looming but uncomfortable to talk about lead to this classic metaphor. But the world is shifting where we each have our own perception of the elephant and what it means. This sermon will lean on the many teachings of elephants to see what wisdom they may offer our postmodern world where everything is relative and little is certain.