

Newsletter

May 2021

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

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From the Minister's Desk:



Our Fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle says that we UUs affirm and promote “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large”. But what is meant by the “democratic process” depends on which group is using the term.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, as of February 19, 2021, “state lawmakers ha[d] introduced 253 bills in 43 states that would make it harder for their residents to vote in upcoming elections”. Since then, CNN reports that restrictive voting laws have also been introduced in the North Carolina and Wisconsin legislatures. “The state legislatures with the highest number of restrictive bills were Georgia, Pennsylvania and Arizona, which all flipped from 2016 to vote for President Joe Biden in 2020.” [https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/16/politics/voting-

rights-debates-by-state/index.html.]

But according to those who continue to believe, without evidence, that the 2020 election was somehow stolen or “rigged”, those bills are not intended to restrict anyone’s right to vote. Instead, they are needed and intended only to ensure “election integrity” and to restore faith in the electoral process for the bills’ sponsors and others.

“Democrats in the [U.S. House of Representatives] have passed a sweeping bill that includes a number of voting reforms, including automatic national voter registration. Currently, 18 states and Washington, DC, have automatic registration. Expanding that requirement nationwide could enfranchise 50 million Americans, according to the Brennan Center. The bill would do a lot more, including putting an end to partisan gerrymandering, by which parties draw congressional lines to protect their incumbents, mandating a two-week early voting period and more.” *Id.*

On April 13, 2021, Terry Gross interviewed Henry Louis Gates on her NPR program “Fresh Air”. Gates is a professor at Harvard, where he directs the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research. He hosts the series “Finding Your Roots,” in which, “through DNA tests and in-depth genealogical research, he reveals the ancestral history of his well-known guests.”

During the interview, Gates said: “I had the pleasure of tracing Congressman [John] Lewis' family tree on “Finding Your Roots.” I revered him. I loved him. . . . He was a hero to me. And what I revealed to him was that his great-great-grandparents were Tobias and Betty Carter. And they [] were [both] born into slavery sometime around 1830 in Pike County, Alabama. They got married December 16, 1865, only 10 days after they were freed and 10 days after the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which finally abolished slavery.

Tobias registered to vote in Alabama in 1867. And I showed John his great-great-grandfather's [voter] registration card. And, Terry, it's one of the most emotional moments in all the years that I've been doing “Finding Your Roots.” . . . I was moved to tears when he was moved to tears. . . . [W]e figured out that no one in his family line had voted between his great-great-grandfather and John because they had taken away the right of Black people to vote with the state constitutional conventions during “redemption” and the “lost cause” movement. And that's why the

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Voting Rights Act was absolutely necessary.”

Gross said: “John Lewis risked his life for voting rights.” To which Gates replied: “And he suffered. I mean, he went to jail numerous times. And he was beaten so badly on Pettus Bridge, a beating, a sacrifice that he took that forced [President] Lyndon Johnson to endorse the Voting Rights Act.” [https://www.npr.org/2021/04/13/986731926/henry-louis-gates-jr-on-the-black-church-and-his-own-bargain-with-jesus.]

When I heard Gates tell that story, I felt a desperate sadness and longing to make sure that all adults who want to vote in the U.S. can. I also felt angry; angry that we are still having arguments in this country about whether and how to guarantee all adults, but especially Americans of African ancestry, whose forebears suffered under the sin of slavery, the right to vote. The right some have fought and died for while others have denied and suppressed it.

I hold no illusions that we can convince by argument or evidence those who still believe that the 2020 election was stolen and that “election integrity” therefore justifies making voting harder. But our faith is one of hope, of grace, of possibility. So I continue to hope that compassion might yet soften hearts to expand voting rights rather than restrict them. I’ll see you in church, soon in person.

Yours in our faith,



Message from our President



I can hardly believe it has been a year without gathering. Sometimes it feels like ten and sometimes like only a month. So much has happened in this last year. So many lives lost and so many in our country suffering the loss of jobs, income, and especially family members. I look around me, and I feel blessed. It has been hard to be without our faith community in person; however, we have continued to be connected in any number of ways, and I thank you all for that. I have witnessed so much caring and reaching out to each other and so much support for what we are trying to do.

Our "aleness" is slowly coming to an end. With many of our population vaccinated and the numbers decreasing, I believe the "new normal" has begun. And on Sunday May 9th, if all goes according to plan, we will once more gather in our spiritual home. It will not be the same, but we will be together. **Rev. Terry and the Board have decided, if our Covid numbers continue to decrease and our building is prepared, we will offer in-person services, in addition to Live Stream services, beginning May 9th.** We are doing this ahead of the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA's) schedule; however, we believe we can, with everyone's help, do it safely. We recognize our members and friends are eager to return to see and hear Rev. Terry in person before he heads out for retirement. *You should have already received a letter from Rev. Terry and me explaining the process for our return and the restrictions we will be working with, so that we can be safely together. Please review this information carefully.*

While we have been debating our return, we have continued to do the Church's business. Our **Stewardship campaign** is coming to an end. Of course that does not mean you don't need to continue to donate. We have not reached our goal and need your financial support to continue our work. It has been a strong and coordinated campaign, and we thank our Stewardship Committee for their work and you for your support.

Your Search Committee, under the guidance of Brooke Gaunt, has prepared the information that will go out to Interim Ministers applying for positions this year, and we are awaiting word from the UUA regarding who might be interested in coming here. We should have this information soon. And then we begin the interview and selection process.

And lastly, our Coffee Brewer has ceased to work properly. Thanks to David and Janet King, we now have a new brewer already installed by Frank Thomas and ready to go. Thank you, Frank, and the Kings.

Until we are back together in our Spiritual Home, let's "hang in there". We can do this!

Sherry Robinson

2021 UUCS Pledges & Donations Update

Dear Members and Friends:

This Dashboard provides you with a snapshot of the current status of our 2021 Stewardship Campaign (as of mid-April). The Board and Stewardship Team are grateful for the generosity of so many Members and Friends who joined together to enable this congregation to maintain our resilience during these challenging times.

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|
| <u>Campaign Goal</u> | \$205,401.26 | Some Clarification: <u>Pledges</u> are written financial commitments made by completing a Financial Pledge Commitment Form. <u>Donations</u> are financial gifts given without making a pledge commitment. |
| Pledges | \$130,706.00 | |
| Donations | 10,525.00 | |
| Legacy/Memorials | <u>2,625.00</u> | |
| Total | \$143,856.00 | |
| Percent of Goal | 70 % | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Pledging Households | 62 | Donors by Group | Pledged | Unpledged | Total #/% |
| Non-Pledging Households | 23 | # Member Units | 57 | 19 | 120/63.3% |
| Total Commitments | 85 | # Friend Units | 5 | 3 | 18/44.4% |

The Stewardship Campaign is winding down. If you consider UUCS to be your Faith Home, Spiritual Community or simply your base of support, and have not yet made a financial pledge commitment to UUCS, please do so now. A member of the Stewardship Team may call you this month and, if needed, assist you in using our website. Please be as generous as possible within your means but know that any amount you give will be greatly appreciated. We need you!

Yours in gratitude, friendship, and faith,
*Bob, Claudia, Don, Janet, Mary Anne,
 Sherry, Steve, Suzi & Terry*

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

The Golden Rule Projects - On the Way

The Golden Rule Committee was created last fall to provide a vehicle for members and staff to apply for funds in support of projects that focus on living the Golden Rule through our UU Principles. The committee members are Bruce Sorter, Cheryl Garrett, Claudia Yaeger Smith, Priscilla London, Sherry Robinson, and Rev. Terry Sims.

The funds for these projects have been generously donated by longtime member Bruce Sorter and are available through an application process developed by our Committee. This application along with a full description of the process for applying will be on our website soon. The funds are not reserved for a specific group; however, they are restricted to projects addressing or related to the Golden Rule. The application process is open to staff, members, and friends.

Currently we have two projects underway and a third in the planning stages. Our first is coordinated by our Librarian, MaryAnne Balzer. We are establishing a Golden Rule Corner in the library where books and readings that address issues related to the GR (Golden Rule) will be housed. MaryAnne is hoping to feature new and pertinent books and readings for the membership, as well as books that may assist parents in teaching the Golden Rule to their children. We are also looking to expand this idea to include books that speak to the GR for children. Mary Ann is working with

Lisa on this. Our library project will be ready to go when the Church Year begins in the Fall.

Our second project will "happen" this summer and is coordinated by Rev. Sims. On June 13, the sermon and focus of our Sunday Service will be the Golden Rule, and Rebecca Riggs will be our spiritual leader for that day. Rebecca is excited and already working on the sermon. The idea for this project came from Bruce and a sermon that was offered in 2017 by another UU congregation in Leominster, Massachusetts.

Our third project is being coordinated by Lisa Lawrence and will be offered sometime after the first of the year – dependent upon our return to in person services. It will be an activity for the entire Congregation and will probably take place on a Sunday after our regular Service. You will hear more about this as it develops. It will be interactive and will focus on how we use our principles to live the Golden Rule.

This is just the beginning. We hope to see members and friends become involved and perhaps create an activity of their own to teach the Golden Rule. The funds are there for us. If you have an idea or just questions about this, please feel free to contact any of the committee members. They are all in our directory and would be happy to talk to you about these funds and their purpose. Thanks again to Bruce Sorter for making this happen.



Circle suppers are back! These potluck dinners are a great chance to have some in-depth conversations with fellow UUs. A big thank you to Claudia Yeager-Smith for hosting the May 1st event. Her great backyard and her knowledge of flora and fauna makes a fun experience extraordinary.

Depending on interest, we hope to continue the circle suppers throughout the summer. If you have questions or wish to sign up, contact Susie Cole at 406-600-8857/scole100@msn.com or Nancy Flann at 623-583-4636/nancyflann@hotmail.com.

Watch for future information in the weekly announcements.



The Monthly Book Report

MaryAnne Balzer

Welcome faithful readers to our full-on Arizona spring! May your May Day be in full bloom! In this month's column I continue to provide our shelf 'call numbers' for the new books added to our collection this winter. In addition, I will start the reviews of the Golden Rule special collection books available when we reopen.

"Twelve Step Unitarians", subtitled: 'Essays on Recovery', edited by Ken and Cathlean, number 616KAC.

"A Life Beyond Reason", subtitled: 'A Father's Memoir', author Chris Gabbard, number 649GAB.

"Demystifying Shariah", subtitled: 'What it is, How it works, and Why it's not taking over our country', author Sumbul Ali-Karamali, number 340.59ALI.

"For Small Creatures Such as We", subtitled: 'Rituals for finding meaning in our unlikely world', author Sasha Sagan, number 390.09SAG.

"Conversations with the Sacred", subtitled: 'A collection of prayers', author Manish Mishra-Marzetti, number 242.8MIS.

"Real Change: Mindfulness to Heal Ourselves and the World", author Sharon Salzberg, number 126.SAL.

****Golden Rule**** Special Collection Books: We have started our UU Surprise collection on the Golden Rule with nine new books for you.

Below we feature the first. Each month we will feature more in this great new topic collection.

"How to be Antiracist", author Ibram X Kendi, number 305.8KEN, GR. This is a NY Times Best Seller and a National Book Award Winner. From the Amazon 4.5star review: The title encompasses the main thesis: simply not being racist isn't enough. "We must actively choose to be "antiracist," working to undo racism and its component polices in order to build an equitable society. To read this book is to relate to the author as an individual and realize just how much we all have in common."

Enjoy a peaceful day reading a highly recommended UU book!



Here are a couple of the **Questers Adult Education Program offerings** currently available. To see all current and on-going opportunities go to <https://uusurpriseaz.org/questers/offerings>.

BUUK CIRCLE welcomes anyone looking for a good book and a group to share it with. Below are selections for the May and June, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom meetings.

May 11 -“Americana: A 400 Year History of American Capitalism”
by Bhu Srinivasan.

“In a winning, accessible style, Bhu Srinivasan boldly takes on four centuries of American enterprise, revealing the unexpected connections that link them.”

June 8, 2021—“The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race” by Walter Isaacson.

Nobel Prize winner Jennifer Doudna and her colleagues opened a new world of medicine with the creation of a tool, called CRISPR, that can edit DNA. What are the moral issues associated with changing the human form? **To sign up and receive the Zoom link, email Julie Wambach at azwambach@icloud.com Subject: BUUK Circle.**

BUILDING A BUTTERFLY/POLLINATOR GARDEN IN THE LOW DESERT

The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature.



To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.
(Alfred Austin)

Claudia Yeager-Smith would certainly agree with Alfred Austin.

And she is eager to share her enthusiasm and expertise with others who would like to create their own butterfly/pollinator garden.

When: Saturday, May 8 & 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 & Arizona Room
9856 W. Oraibi Drive, Peoria, AZ 85382

Registration: Email Carol Calkins (carolpcalkins@gmail.com) – Subject: Butterfly Garden

Further details are on the church website – <https://uusurpriseaz.org/questers/offerings>.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Tom Reemtsma

Well, Hello Again. – Seems like I have opened my eyes on a new world. I’m taking a look at what it means to commit to citizenship now that there are fewer excuses for reticence.

While viewing the Moral Mondays actions in Charleston, West Virginia and Bessemer, Alabama, the phrase “All Politics is Local” sprang from its resting place to say “Hey!” My attention was drawn to the question of how to respond to the nagging desire for influence in the debates of our time. Here in CD8, LD21 and LD22 is where local lives and where most of us live. So I am going to get my word on the desks of my representatives:

CD8 Rep. Debbie Lesko: Lesko@house.gov - 12515 W. Bell Rd, Ste.104, Surprise 85378 - 623-776-7911

LD21 Sen. Rick Gray - rgray@azleg.gov - 602-926-5413
Rep. Kevin Payne - kpayne@azleg.gov – 602-926-4854
Rep. Beverly Pingerelli - bpingerelli@azleg.gov – 602-926-3396

LD22 Sen. David Livingston - dlivingston@azleg.gov - 602-926-4178
Rep. Ben Toma - btoma@azleg.gov – 602-926-3298
Rep. Frank P. Carroll - fcarroll@azleg.gov – 602-926-3249

Choose your issue; do some re-search for backup; and release your passion.

Let’s write and co-sign letters to mail to our representatives. Get neighbors to co-sign.

Search Moral Mondays for videos.

There are also good things to learn at congress.gov and azleg.gov.



Children's Programs

Lisa Lawrence – D.R.E.

We made it through a year of virtual ZOOM classes!



Thank you families for sticking with me. I am grateful. May 16th will be the last day of RE classes for the season.

I am overjoyed that our church will begin in-person services on May 9th. I know that many of our vaccinated members are feeling safer about venturing back into life (with safety protocols) as they know it. This will allow folks to visit with Rev. Terry a few more times before his last sermon. Our children, however, still remain unprotected! Since the RE season is finished on May 16th, I have decided to continue to hold children's RE classes on ZOOM rather than join in-person and put their health at risk. I am keeping my fingers crossed that an approved vaccine will be available over the summer so that next Fall they, too, can join us back at church. Here's to healing and new beginnings.

Meanwhile, here are the winners of "Lisa's Springtime Scavenger Hunt", posing with their Golden Unicorns. Many thanks to everyone who came out to play!

First Place



Second Place



Third Place



Jr. Scavenger Thumbs Up

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT LOANS

In need of medical equipment on loan? The following are possible resources.

- ◆ **Youngtown Community Fund** will loan medical equipment to people in Surprise, Peoria, Youngtown, and El Mirage. Phone number (623-977-4661) 11215 AW Nevada Avenue. Equipment is loaned out for 4 months without charge. Youngtown, AZ. 9:00-12:00 Monday- Saturday.
- ◆ **Helping Hands** will loan equipment to people who live in Sun City West. Phone: (623-975-5449) 146 W RH Johnson Blvd. Sun City West, AZ 85375.
- ◆ **Sunshine Services** will loan equipment to people who live in Sun City (623-974-2561) 9980 Sante Fe Drive, Sun City.



REMEMBER...
OUR CHURCH DOORS REOPEN
FOR IN-PERSON, 10:30AM, SUNDAY
WORSHIP ON MAY 9.

Live-streaming will still be available, as well.

We Are Here To Be Of Assistance!

Lay Pastoral Care Committee

Are you unable to come to church but would like a visit from the minister or a member of the Lay Pastoral Care Committee in your home? Do you know someone else who is in that situation? If so, please let us know by contacting Joan Carlson (jomc127@gmail.com), Darnell Kirksey (dirk38338@aol.com), Sharon Beard (sabeard@gmail.com), or Rev. Terry Sims (terrysimsuu@gmail.com).



We have a ministry to celebrate and a minister to thank. And we can come together for the occasion...another reason to celebrate.

Where: Unitarian Universalist Church
in Surprise

When: May 22, 4:00pm

Email Brooke Gaunt (bagaunt@gmail.com) to RSVP.

Zoom Available - RSVP to Brooke Gaunt and request Zoom link.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts
Surprise, AZ 85379

Ph: 623.875.2550

Email: uucsaz2@gmail.com

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 worship at 10:30 a.m.

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

Sermon Titles For May 2021 **The Theme for this Month: Acceptance**

5/2 – Amy St. PeterLessons From the Pandemic

As we transition from quarantine to vaccine, we can consider what we have lost, gained, and learned during our time apart and what we can embrace by coming back together in person. This includes impacts and insights for our spiritual and social connections.

5/9 – Rev. Terry Sims.....A Wider Acceptance

It is a challenge to accept ourselves as we are, and others as they are, rather than as we would like all of us to be. That goes for life, too. It is at least as difficult to accept life on its terms rather than on ours. But wider acceptance is the first, indispensable step toward all the possibilities of transformation.

5/16 – Amy St. PeterFor Terry

On this day we will gather, standing together on the cusp of change. Your messages to Rev. Terry will give voice to what he means to us as we celebrate the gifts he has generously given to us, shape the aspirations as we wish him well for his next adventure, and ponder what lies next for our spiritual home.

5/23 – Rev. Terry SimsWe Might Have Missed It All

This will be my last sermon to you, a fact that I accept with a good deal of sadness. As singer/songwriter Jackson Browne wrote, “all good things must come to an end”. Those good things include ministry and life itself. When they end, it seems natural to look back and ask the existential question: “What was it all for?” I think our 15 years together have given me at least a few, uplifting answers to that question that I would like to share as I leave you.

5/30 – Rebecca RiggsAfter Being Broken

On this Memorial Day weekend, we set aside time to honor those who have died in wars. My message is not directly related to this holiday, but losing those we love, to wars or anything else, inevitably brings heartache. And heartache and heartbreak IS my theme this morning. How do we learn to heal in a world that often discards that which is broken?