

Newsletter

MAY 2022

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

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TRANSITIONAL THOUGHTS

by Rev. Samuel Schaal
Transition Minister

TRAGIC OPTIMISM FOR THESE DAYS

Each day we're presented with searing images of war-torn Ukraine, not to mention all the other conflicts, challenges and inequities of the world. To remain grounded, do we just look beyond all this? Or not look at all?

In a recent online article in *The Atlantic* (a publication founded in 1857 in Boston by a group including notable Unitarians of the day like Emerson and Longfellow, but that's another column), author Scott Barry Kaufman addresses the subject of "toxic positivity." He says much has been written of the need for being positive and affirming the blessings of life. But such can be a denial of reality. Refusing to look at difficult experiences can even be detrimental to mental health.

Instead, he counsels the idea of "tragic optimism," a phrase coined by existential humanistic Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. Kaufman says, "Tragic optimism involves the search for meaning amid the inevitable tragedies of human existence, something far more practical and realistic during these trying times." This empowers our natural human resiliency that "is quite remarkable and underrated." Real gratitude can result from understanding our own place in life over and against the tragedies of life. If we've experienced tragedies (and who hasn't?), that we have survived and learned from them is cause for gratitude.

And, perhaps, beauty. Nurturing Beauty is our worship theme for May. Growing up in the panhandle of Texas where farming was a major industry, it was not unusual to see older people in public who had spent a lifetime working the land in that dry, wind-swept climate, with very deep facial wrinkles. More prominent wrinkles than I've since seen. These folk were, in the eyes of the world, not beautiful. But I suspected that those wrinkles were earned, as was a stooped-over body. Such bodily attributes were, perhaps, signs of strong character and soul.

Even in the difficult and tragic circumstances of the day, perhaps we can find cause for a tragic optimism, a tragic beauty, that is inherent in humanity. May we see beauty in all its forms, especially in the difficult, hard-won places.

In Our Living Tradition,

SAM

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



It was just one year ago that our congregation was preparing to celebrate the retirement of Terry Sims, our then settled minister, and to begin the process of finding an Interim Minister to guide us through the search for a new settled Minister. On April 10 of this year, I announced to the congregation that we had begun the formal process for choosing members from our congregation who will take on the task of "Searching" for that new Minister. There will be much work in between; however, once we find this person it will be the vote of the congregation that will "call" him/her to our Congregation. UU Ministers are not hired by the Board – they are "called" by the congregation.

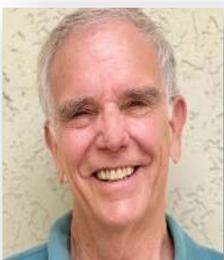
To some this seems like a complicated and prolonged process; however, it has been shown that if we take our time, choose our search committee members carefully and follow the guidelines set out by others who have gone through this before, we will have a better chance for success. And so, we have started, and you are now being actively recruited to give us your choices on whom you believe would best represent the members and friends to be on that special committee. The phone calls began April 18 and will continue until May 15th. If you have not been contacted yet – be patient—you will be, as we are calling all members and friends.

On June 3rd at a full Congregational Meeting via zoom— we will ask you to choose by vote from a list of the top names. Our goal is to complete the selection in June to allow the committee the summer to prepare for their work starting in the Fall. The ultimate goal is, by this time next year, to have completed the work and be ready to bring the candidate before the congregation for a vote. If all goes as planned, the new Minister will begin work August 1, 2023.

Thinking back on how quickly the last two years have gone – we can anticipate that next year will move just as quickly. The congregation will be involved in the work to be done, prior to ever interviewing a potential candidate. This work will begin in the Fall, and I will be keeping you updated as we move along, so that when it becomes your turn to join in the process, you will have the information you need to be a participant in the activities to find the next spiritual leader of our congregation.

Stay with us as we begin the next steps in what we hope will be a rich and rewarding experience for members, as well as friends. May it be so.

Sherry Robinson



MUSIC NOTES

Paul Yoder—
Music Director



Many of you have noticed that in the last few weeks our worship service has been evolving. Occasionally changes have come about because of recommendations or suggestions from church members and friends themselves. The one I want to talk about this month is the . . .

PRELUDE

. . . at the beginning of the service. Many have requested an atmosphere before the service begins that would help to prepare them for a spiritual encounter, whatever

that may mean to each person. We moved the **Prelude** to a place before the ringing of the bell for these people, so that they might find a quieter time in the sanctuary, free from conversations or other distractions. The plan was that people could remain in the Social Hall for conversations and other projects, and then move into the sanctuary when they were ready to quiet themselves for worship.

Unfortunately, nobody ever explained this solution to you!!! So here goes. Feel free to remain in the Social Hall for greeting and chatting. That's part of church. Try to be considerate of those already in the sanctuary as you move into it, and refrain from conversations or other distracting activities. We want UUCS to be a welcoming place where every-
one can feel worship and
at home for socializing.



MONTHLY BOOK REPORT

MaryAnne Balzer - UUCS Librarian



May flowers to all our UU library patrons! The library may be on summer self-serve, but it is stocked for your summer reading. The cart in the library has two dozen new books obtained

just this spring. In addition, there is our Golden Rule reading shelf with important books on the topic. And of course our up-to-date top-rated reading on the regular library shelves is available. Please come in and check-out some great summer reading!

Below are the first reviews of the new books added to our collection this spring. Several will be reviewed monthly into future months:

“Call Us What We Carry”, author Amanda Gorman, number 811GOR. The author “explores history, language, identity, and erasure through an imaginative and intimate collage. Harnessing the collective grief of a global pandemic, this beautifully designed volume features poems in many inventive styles and structures and shines a light on a moment of reckoning. It reveals that Gorman has become our messenger from the past, our voice for the future.” From Amazon 5-star review. A must read!

“Leading Change in the Congregation”, subtitled ‘Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders’, author Gilbert Rendle, number 206REN. “Many books have been written about leadership and change, but until now none has focused on the kind of change that tears at a community’s very fabric. The author provides a respectful context for understanding change, especially the experiences and resistances that people feel.” From Amazon 4.5-star review.

“A House for Hope”, subtitled ‘The Promise of Progressive Religion for the 21st Century’, authors John Buehrens & Rebecca Parker, number 814BUE. “An accessible discussion about the religious progressives who are creating a movement far stronger than fundamentalism: a liberal religious renaissance based on an expansive love for life. Hope is rising. The impact of liberal religion is richer and more far-reaching than many know.” From Amazon 4.5-star review.

Enjoy a great UU library book (or two) this summer!



FAMILY MINISTRY

Lisa Lawrence, Director

What a full Spring we’ve had!

Hopefully, you’ve been able to participate in some of the fun activities Family Ministry has offered these past two

months. In late March we held a church-wide cookout at the White Tanks. It was cold and windy, but we had a great turnout. We had many new members join us, and it was so nice getting to know everyone. There were even 4 dogs in our ranks! The food was wonderful, and people hiked, played horseshoes, and had a good time visiting with each other. As for our youngest members, they played nonstop on the playground, taking only moments to refuel with hotdogs and cupcakes!

On April 9th we had our first Eco-Olympics with a turnout of 22 participants! My goal with this event was to present important environmental issues and education in a way that was informative, fun, and inspirational, rather than catastrophizing to the point of numbness. I definitely think we achieved that goal, as there were requests for it to be repeated next year. I had a great team, who helped make it all possible. Many thanks!

For more on Eco-Olympics see Libby Christianson’s article and Picture Gallery on pages 4 and 5.

Finally, we welcomed an old tradition back this year, our Easter Egg Hunt. After service on Easter Sunday children searched for a total of 116 stuffed Easter eggs and half-a-slice of Matzoh, the Afikomen, for Passover. As you can imagine, the treats were well received.

In classroom news, I am happy to say that our classrooms have been fuller lately. It’s nice to see the children interacting in person and building friendships. It’s so important. We’ve been continuing our World of Wonder curriculum with some additional lessons for Passover, Easter and Earth Day.

And then, just like that, another RE season is almost over.

Our last day of classes will be on May 22nd. However, childcare will be provided throughout the summer in the preschool room for children ages 2 and up. Each week we will have crafts and games available. If children wish to sit through the service with their families in the sanctuary, they are welcome to do that as well.

Have a fun and safe summer! And as always, to find out more, please visit the Family FB page at: <https://www.facebook.com/uucsurprisefamily/>.



For information and sign-ups go to uusurpriseaz.org/Adult Programs/Questers/Offerings
Or visit the Questers Table after worship.

Your Questers Committee is taking care of loose ends before our summer break. Some of those loose ends include scheduling fall offerings and reviewing the responses from those who handed in the 2022 Questers Survey. *If you haven't given us your feedback on adult enrichment offerings you'd like to see, you can still do so by picking up a copy of the survey at the Questers table on Sunday mornings or emailing julietgus@msn.com for an electronic copy.*



SUMMER QUESTERS OPTIONS - These on-going offerings will continue through the summer. You will be able to check out the **Men's Group**, which meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month in person and on Zoom at 7:00pm. Or how about the **Women's Group**, meeting the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 10:30am, alternating between in-person and Zoom? Or maybe you would like to take advantage of an island of calm with **Insight Meditation**, meeting Wednesdays at 4:00pm and Saturdays at 2:00pm. Full details and signups available at uusurpriseaz.org/Adult Programs/Questers/Offerings and at the Questers table on Sunday mornings.

Your Questers Committee—Carol Calkins, Juliet Gustavson, Joye Kohl, Jeff London & Julie Wambach



Here To Be of Assistance! LAY PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Lay Pastoral Care Committee (LPCC) is to cherish and care for all members of our church community by offering support to people in need and being a resource for referrals. The Lay Pastoral Care Committee maintains close contact with the minister regarding people in need.

If you would like help, please call 623-826-3365 or 623-537-9449.

ECO-OLYMPICS

In anticipation of Earth Day the Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise hosted a fun, educational event called Eco-Olympics. Participants of all ages enjoyed challenging games that tested their knowledge about all things environmental.

After a light breakfast the morning's events began with "Recycle Relay", where teams decided how to reuse, recycle, or throw away items provided. Each team created ways to reuse items to keep them out of the landfill.

Next up was "Rainforest Musical Chairs" including a story about the Amazon, and then it was on to a few rounds of "Earthy Bingo". Participants had to work together to answer tough questions in "Where Does Our Food Come From?". And a rousing game of "Environmental Jeopardy" capped off the day.

At the medal ceremony the Green Team won Gold, Pink Team - Silver and the Orange Team - Bronze. People of all ages enjoyed a morning of fun and fellowship while getting to know more about how to reduce our environmental impact on the earth.

Everyone agreed the event will be repeated next year.

By Libby Christianson



*The Green Team brings home the Gold
at UUCS Eco-Olympics*

**See More Photos from the Eco-Olympics
and other UUCS Spring Events on Page 5.**

FAMILY MINISTRY 2022 COOKOUT



ECO-OLYMPICS



FAMILY MINISTRY 2022 EASTER EGG HUNT



Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

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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.

You can request a hard copy of this newsletter by calling the church office at 623-875-2550.

May Worship Theme: *Nurturing Beauty*



See your *Weekly Announcements* email for worship topics.

Join us on Sunday Mornings—10:30 a.m. In-Person and Livestreamed



Rev. Samuel Schaal, Transition Minister

Lisa Lawrence, Director of Family Ministry

Paul Yoder, Music Director