

Newsletter

December 2022

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

Transition Minister: Rev. Samuel Schaal
Minister Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder
President: Sherry Robinson



Newsletter Co-Editors: Gus & Juliet Gustavson
julietgus@msn.com



TRANSITIONAL THOUGHTS

by Rev. Samuel Schaal
Transition Minister

Unexpected Blessings in Unsettled Times

This is the season of dark and cold when (in other climates, at least) earth sheds its layer of green, seemingly withering and dying. Yet, the sacred stories of various religious traditions tell us something important is happening here.

Two miracle stories highlight the season. In each, deprivation and danger set the stage. In each, a miracle happens, something surprising that sustains a people for their times and heralds promise for the future. Each you've heard so many times you think you get the wisdom. Each still has the power to surprise. The first is the story of Hanukkah. The word means dedication. In the second century BCE a small band of Jews led by Judah the Maccabee defeated the larger powerful Greek army to reclaim the temple at Jerusalem. They needed oil to light the menorah to rededicate the temple but only had enough for one day. Miraculously, that small container lasted eight days. The temple was rededicated. Sufficiency amid insufficiency.

The second is the story of the birth of Jesus. The holy infant is born, not in a glorious palace, not among the privileged, but to a poor wandering homeless couple who were denied proper lodging and found shelter for the birth amid the common animals. Hardly where we would envision a prince of peace to be born. An unconventional beginning for an unconventional life.

Such stories teach about life's mysteries. They aren't about history. They are tradition's way of getting in underneath the nature of things. We need them to remind us of a deeper wisdom beyond ourselves. The world often thwarts us and our little plans. We are in an unsettling ministry right now, an unsettled time. That's the way intentional interim ministry is designed—a time to unsettle, then resettle in the next ministry.

Do not hurry to know the answers to all things. Do not hurry to depend, once again, on the conventional knowledge that has guided you in the past. Some things do not change. But, oh, so many things do. We wander toward our wonder, imaginatively preparing ourselves for light to come.

In Our Living Tradition,

SAM

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MINISTERIAL SEARCH INFORMATION

Available on UUCS Website— uusurpriseaz.org

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



October/November began on a high note with a highly successful Trunk or Treat done by Lisa Lawrence on October 23rd; followed on October 29th, by a Coffee House fundraising event – done by Lynn Melby. For a while, the world went nuts during the elections and then on November 13th the UUCS welcomed 11 new members to our community. The Sanctuary was filled that day with new members, new energy, hope, and enthusiasm. To all those new members – a warm welcome and a wish for each of you to find peace, friendship, and your perfect place in our community.

Unfortunately, this period ended on a sad and reflective note. Because we are not always as thoughtful, understanding and inclusive as we strive to be, our Music Director Paul Yoder has chosen to resign from his position with us. His talent, expertise and especially his work with the choir will be missed. I would also like him to know that from this we are reminded that inclusivity means everyone, not just those who either walk our same path or follow our lead. We need to not only teach our principles – we need to live them. We wish him well and thank him for his time and his contribution to our Choir.

With the election chaos behind us (at least for a while) we can concentrate on what comes next. I hope everyone enjoyed their Holiday and that it was filled with family, friends, and lots of food. The holiday play by our RE program comes next and then a special music Sunday, the Kickoff Celebration of our 2023 Pledge drive, and to close our 2022 year, the Annual Meeting in early January. You will receive information shortly on these events; however, as a reminder, the Pledge Kick-off is Sunday, Dec 4, following the Service. The Annual Meeting will be held in person on Sunday January 8th with details to follow.

The MSC (Ministerial Search Committee) has completed the phase of their work that actively involved our congregation. Our Congregational Record has been published and will be available for possible applicants to review January 3. You will still receive the Weekly Updates. However, the Committee will not be providing specific information about applicants. In late April or early May, if all goes according to plan, we will have the top candidate with us for what is called Candidating Week and we will, once again, be key participants. That week will end with a congregational meeting to vote to call our new minister. You can follow the MSC's progress on our website.

In the next few months, our work is to prepare for our “new beginning” and that work must start with a successful giving campaign. **On December 4th, please remember you are the financial support for this congregation.** Without your time, talent, and “treasure”, we will not grow, nor will we be able to do those things that maintain our building and bring pleasure to our members. (Such as painting the interior, replacing carpeting, and our irrigation system, as well as supporting the Homeless Youth Connection, participating in Pride Parade; joining the Interfaith Council and other Social Justice Activities of interest)

We will all have the opportunity “to give and to be involved.” There will be tasks and projects to keep us busy and if you do not have one – see me. I have several to share!

Have a Joyous Holiday season, and may the world see peace in the new year.

Sherry Robinson



**The Angel Tree Cometh.
Let's have fun shopping
and wrapping some great gifts.**

Homeless Youth Connection offers a comprehensive services program that engages high school-aged youth who are experiencing homelessness. HYC assists them in overcoming barriers to completing high school, graduating and creating a plan for their future.

**FIND OUT HOW TO BE AN ANGEL FOR A HOMELESS YOUTH
ON NEXT PAGE.**

HYC serves homeless youth, 13–21 years of age, who attend high school in Maricopa County and Coconino County, AZ. Each youth is identified by their school as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. They are without a stable home and homeless through no fault or choice of their own.

The Angel Tree is in the Social Hall just waiting for an angel like you to take a schoolhouse or cap-and-gown decoration. Each will have a desired gift and the student's bio on it. (You can team up for more expensive items, if desired.) **All you do is buy the gift, wrap it, tape the decoration on it, and bring it back to the Angel Tree.** It's as easy as that.

Questions??? Contact Tom Reemtsma—623-583-5473.



A Year of Giving Thanks

A Year of Giving Thanks is the theme chosen for the 2023 Annual Stewardship Campaign. The chalice lights the way to our future as the ministerial search committee has our support to find a new minister. We have lost some older members but have also gained more new members/friends of all ages. There is new energy on Sundays as we gather.

We need your pledges for: supplies and equipment used by programs, professional and support staff, and for upkeep and maintenance of our building and grounds. In turn, we have wonderful facilities in which to meet and celebrate and where lay leaders create and lead programs, such as, the Questers, Men's and Women's Groups, BUKK group, Social Justice Activities, Friendship Suppers, and the library. Pledged donations are the largest source of our funding.

The 2023 Pledge Campaign launches on December 4, 2022 after the church service. Please join us for some bubbly and snacks to enjoy while you read the brochure and complete your pledge form.

During services you will hear testimonials from congregation members. Each one will tell you, in their own words, what UUCS means to them personally and why they support the work of our congregation. Remember, it's up to each of us, who count on UUCS being here for us, to make those generous gifts in support of

this Faith Home.

The quickest way to pledge is to go online to <https://uusurpriseaz.org/get-involved/#donate>. Clicking on the *Pledge Now* link will take you to the Pledge Form. Complete the form. Then follow directions and submit. If you use ACH to make pledge donations from your bank account, complete a new ACH form only if there is a change in your bank or the amount being donated.

We thank you for your generosity,
Your Stewardship Team



MONTHLY BOOK REPORT

MaryAnne Balzer - UUCS Librarian



Greetings of the Holiday Season to all our UU readers! May your days hold good reading found in your UUCS library. This month we feature our latest Golden Rule books on the topic of Kindness. These books have all already been read and received great reviews by fellow Surprise UUs. For ease of check out of these very popular books, they will be featured on the table in the library during the month of December. Please simply follow the usual check-out procedures for your selection:

"A Year of Living Kindly", subtitled, 'Choices that will change your life and the world around you', by Donna Cameron, number 150 CAM GR. This book "is a beautifully rendered exploration of kindness as a way of life, arriving at the right moment, with the right guide. Cameron writes with humor and grace about this essential virtue. She makes it easy to follow her path—and to want to follow it."—Sarah L. Kaufman, Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for *The Washington Post*". A 74% 5-Star Amazon review.

"The Path to Kindness", subtitled 'Poems of connection and joy', by James Crews, Ed, number 811.6 CRE GR. This anthology collection of poetry is a profound reading into the depths of the meaning of kindness. (Comment by your librarian). "Is kindness a quaint, ineffectual virtue? For poet and Editor James Crews, the answer is a resounding no. As he demonstrates throughout this

book, kindness can be life-altering. The Christian Science Monitor” A 75% 5-Star Amazon review.

“Be a good in the World”, subtitled ‘365 Days of good deeds, inspired ideas and acts of kindness’, by Brenda Knight, number 150 KNI GR. “What’s really important in life? The author knows and leads the way for us. I couldn’t read just one page! I kept reading until I almost finished the whole book in one sitting. Now I keep it by my bed to refer to before I go to sleep. It helps me have a good night’s sleep knowing the possibilities to make this a more peaceful loving world.” From the 82% 5-Star Amazon review.

“Deep Kindness”, subtitled ‘A revolutionary guide for the way we think, talk and act in kindness’, by Houston Kraft, number 177.7 KRA GR. This book “pairs anecdotes with actions that can make real change in our own lives, the lives of others, and throughout the world. Diving into the types of kindness the world needs most today, it takes an honest look at the gap between our belief in kindness and our ability to practice it well—and shows us how to put intention into action.” From the 83% 5-Star Amazon review.

**Have a blessed holiday season
shared with loving kindness toward all.**



FAMILY MINISTRY
Lisa Lawrence—Director



Rehearsals are already underway for this year’s special intergenerational holiday worship service. Last Sunday during class we did our first read-through, and the children were very excited to find out what role they will get and what their costumes will look like. Because we will be rehearsing during class on Sundays, the children are to report directly to the classroom, so we have as much time to practice as possible. That means “Story For All Ages” in worship is canceled until after the play.

We invite you to join us for worship on December 11 when we will present *“Would You Like To Hold the Baby?”* with original songs and story by Joyce Poley

and Frank Henning. *“Would You Like to Hold the Baby?”* revisits the timeless story of Mary and Joseph, the Kings and the Shepherds, with the addition of a new character - a young stable girl. As Mary invites the girl to hold her baby, so we are invited to embrace the deepest meaning Christmas holds for each one of us.

DRESS REHEARSAL & POTLUCK

The main performers in the pageant are the children, along with a few brave adults. There will be **ONE DRESS REHEARSAL**, the day before the big show, on **Saturday, December 10th from 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

Following **DRESS REHEARSAL** there will be a **potluck from 3:00-6:00pm with food, crafts, games, music, and holiday specials.**

If you would like to be part of the pageant, please send an email to: familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org.



And so we come to the end of 2022. There is one more special 2022 Questers offering that we want to be sure you know about, perhaps for yourself or someone you know who is grieving the loss of a loved one. **“Coping with Grief During the Holidays”** will take place from **10:00-11:30am on Tuesday, December 13**, in our **Social Hall**. The presenter, Pat Forsythe, from Hospice of the Valley will address strategies for moving through a challenging time and being gentle with oneself and those who may be experiencing the roller coaster of grieving emotions. You can sign up at the Sunday morning Questers Table or by emailing Joye Kohl (joyebk@gmail.com – Subject: Coping w/ Grief). As is true with all Questers offerings, “Coping with Grief During the Holidays” is open to all in and outside of our UUCS community. So you can share this opportunity freely.

To jumpstart 2023, you can join Michael Piper starting on January 2 from 10:00-11:30 for “The Spirituality of Aging.” This 6-session offering, based on “The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully” by Joan Chittister. Participants will read part of the book for each session and then discuss how it applies to their lives. If you attended “Aging as a Spiritual Practice” in the fall, “The Spirituality of Aging” may be the next blessing as you continue your aging journey. Signups: Sunday Questers Table or email Carol Calkins

(carolpcalkins@gmail.com – Subject: Spirituality of Aging).

Your Questers Committee sends wishes for peace and a welcome measure of joy in the holidays.

Carol Calkins, Juliet Gustavson, Darnell Kirksey, Joye Kohl & Jeff London



MEMBERSHIP

How grateful we are to have welcomed so many new members at New Member Sunday this past

month. Please take the time to welcome new members and get to know them.



Deanna Friday and her grandchildren, Cora and Caroline

Barbara and Paul Playford

Bob McLachlan

Paige and Brian Rappleye and their child Cece

Pat and Tom Robinson

Andrea Schmidlin

Emily and Pax Whitmore and their children James and Natalie

If you are interested in becoming a UUCS member, please contact Rev. Sam Schaal at minister@uusurpriseaz.org or call the church office at 623-875-2550. You can also speak to any member of the Membership Committee: Lee and Mary Jane Askern, Carol Calkins, Libby Christianson, Ray Mahoney or Judy Reynolds.

It's wonderful to feel the energy of a busy congregation. One of the ways you can connect is to volunteer. Sunday morning jobs are easy to do, and we could use your help Greeting and Ushering. Helping in the Social Hall on Sunday mornings is also a great way to meet people and contribute to the overall health of the congregation. To learn more about volunteer opportunities contact Congregational Administrator, Judy Gilmore at admin@uusurpriseaz.org or call the office at 623-875-2550.

*All the best to you
during this festive season!*

UUC SURPRISE PRESENTS...

WOULD YOU
LIKE TO HOLD THE BABY?



Sunday, December 11th, 2022 during service from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts

Surprise, AZ 85378

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.

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

December Worship Theme:



Holiday Worship at UUCS

Sundays 10:30 a.m.

Dec. 4 “A Year of Blessings” Stewardship Sunday

Dec. 11 Holiday Pageant

Dec. 18 Holiday Service of Song with UUCS Choir

Dec. 24 at 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship

Dec. 25 Christmas Day

In-Person and Livestream



Rev. Samuel Schaal, Transition Minister

Lisa Lawrence, Director of Family Ministry

