

Newsletter

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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

The Congregation as Love

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Consider the power of love in a congregation. Centripetal forces pull a congregation together. Centrifugal forces push them out into the community in acts of service and justice.

A congregation is an embodiment of love that seeks to spread love (justice). The draft revising Article II of the bylaws of our national association reimagines our (nearly 40-year-old) Principles and Purposes with a revitalized and simplified concept of love at the center of six values (as noted in a January sermon). Love is centered.

This month in worship we'll consider, among other aspects of love, our place in the wider community. What are the neighborhoods we serve? Who do we serve there? How do we serve them?

One of religion's more prosaic definitions of congregations and love are in the Christian New Testament where Paul eloquently describes (in First Corinthians 12) how a congregation is gathered around the gifts of its members. That's the centripetal force of community. Being Christian, he calls the congregation the Body of Christ, but the principle applies universally for all kinds of congregations (even and especially UU) if we consider the congregation the Body of Love. His scheme applies particularly to our free congregations gathered in covenant.

In chapter 13 he describes the centrality of love in all our actions. That's the centrifugal force. Imagine Paul's descriptions of love applied to our social service and justice work—our social service is patient, kind, not boastful. It rejoices in the truth. It endures all things in serving the greater good. In our tradition which proclaims all people have inherent dignity and worth, especially those marginalized by society, we are natural practitioners of love in action. Both in the congregation and in the wider neighborhoods of the congregation. Love and power are a potent mix.

In Our Living Tradition,

SAM

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



“A Year of Giving Thanks” was chosen for our Pledge Drive this year because we have so many reasons to give thanks. For instance, the return of our members and friends following the Covid Pandemic and the influx of new members we are experiencing. Then there also is the successful continuing movement through Transition with support from our Transitions Minister Rev Sam and the congregation.

For me personally the theme represents how I feel about this congregation and the work you are doing. I am especially thankful for the attendance at the Annual Congregational Meeting and the trust given the Board. We made the budget for 2022 and our proposed budget for 2023 was passed by the congregation so we can continue our movement forward.

I am thankful for our newly formed Finance Committee and that our investments are as stable as one would imagine in these unstable times.

Membership has created a path for visitors to become members; Stewardship has designed a system for pledging that is simple and straight forward and are working on fundraising activities to bring the congregation together socially. Questers, which began during Covid as Zoom experiences only, has developed into a multi-faceted Adult Enrichment program that includes a wide variety of offerings open to all.

The Aesthetics Crew put their interior design talents to work to “spruce up” the Social Hall and transform the Choir Room into a Multi-use Room that provides workspace for staff and meeting space for small groups. The Buildings and Ground’s Crew have managed to keep our facility looking good and functioning properly. Our Memorial Garden now has a loving volunteer caretaker in Darnell Kirksey and a functioning fountain.

The list goes on...Circle Suppers are happening again. This year for the first time in 3 years Suzi Walling has offered to plan and coordinate the Seder in April. Have you visited our Library this year? Librarian Mary Ann Balzer not only staffs this “little gem” each Sunday. She also tries to coordinate her book display with the worship theme. And how lucky we were a year ago when Judy Gilmore walked in our door to accept the position of Congregational Administrator! She continues to amaze with her experience and skill and her commitment to supporting our congregation.

How could one not give thanks for the blessings we have received? I give my thanks to you for the opportunities given me to grow personally and spiritually. For all you have done – this is **MY Year of Giving Thanks**.

Blessings,

Sherry Robinson



DEALING WITH THE REALITY

Unsure what the current law in AZ is? For information about abortion in Arizona and information about laws in other states, go to <http://abortionfinder.org> and click on State-by-State Guide.

More details to come next month.



A Year of Giving Thanks

From Janet Jeffrey – Stewardship Committee Co-Chair

The 2023 Pledge Campaign is winding down. I will have the opportunity to give the last testimonial on Sunday, February 5, when I will share my UUCS story.

This congregation is my only one. I became a member a few years ago having been a friend for some time. The people in this congregation are the foundation of the winters I spend in the US and represent the best of Americans (as they really are and not some of what we are seeing in the news). I support this church financially because the congregation is important to all of us. Pledging matters. Pledging provides a solid foundation for financial planning.

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. Because we are a self-sustaining congregation, pledges are our largest source of funding. Although most of our pledges are received during the campaign, you may pledge at any time during the year. The quickest option for making your 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. We thank you for your generosity.

Your Stewardship Committee

MARCH CIRCLE SUPPERS

These potluck meals have been a great success!



A big thank you to the January hosts: Barbara and Bill Hughes, Bob and Suzi Walling, and Sharon Steigmann and Mary Ellen Baker. These meals provide a chance to get to know some

fellow UUs better. **The next opportunity to participate will be the weekend of March 3, 4, or 5.** Look in the Social Hall for a signup sheet. For questions call Susie Cole 406-600-8857 or Nancy Flann 623-670-4570.

MONTHLY BOOK REPORT

MaryAnne Balzer - UUCS Librarian



Happy Valentine’s month readers! Wishing you all the love and peace possible this month. We have recently added new books to the Library. You can locate them both on the book cart in the library and featured on the library table display. Pick up a good read to enjoy with some good sweetheart chocolate!

“This Chair Rocks”, Subtitled ‘A manifest against ageism’, Author Aston Applewhite, Number 155.6APP. The author “has written a rousing manifesto calling for an end to discrimination and prejudice on the basis of age. Lively, funny, and deeply researched, the book traces her journey from apprehensive boomer to pro-aging radical. Explaining the roots of ageism in history and how it divides and debases, she examines how it cripples the way our brains and bodies function, looks at ageism in the workplace and the bedroom, describes what an all-age-friendly world would look like, and offers a rousing call to action.” From the Amazon 4.5 review.

“The Unicorn, The Mystery: A Novel”, Author Janet Mason, F-MAS. This is a fiction book authored by a UU Lay Leader. She weaves a fascinating tale told from the alternating perspectives of a unicorn and a monk. With the gorgeous and magical Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters in New York as a conduit, Mason unfolds her story with lyricism, poetry, philosophy, and a profound spiritual consciousness.” “Mason’s fascinating novel uses a room in a museum containing seven tapestries featuring a Unicorn as the impetus for an intricate meditation on the conflict between mythological spirituality and the rigid dogmatism of Christianity totally submerged in fear of heresy.” From Amazon 4.6 reviews.

“Aging as a Spiritual Practice”, Subtitled ‘A contemplative guide to growing older and wiser’, Author Lewis Richmond, Number 294.3RIC. This “is a wise, compassionate book that guides readers through the four key

stages of aging, as well as the processes of adapting to change, embracing who we are, and appreciating our unique life chapters. Unlike many philosophical works on aging this one incorporates illuminating facts from scientific researchers, doctors, and psychologists as well as contemplative practices and guided meditations. Breath by breath, moment by moment, Richmond's teachings inspire limitless opportunities for a joy that transcends age." From the 4.5 Amazon review. *Have a blessed day shared with a terrific new UU Library read!*



MUSIC NOTES



Maggi Mahan —Acting Music Director

I am excited to guide the UUCS Music Program this winter and spring. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm.

Announcing Congregational Sing-a-Longs:

As we move into February, we are exploring ways to enhance the music program at UUCS. One way is to reinstitute monthly sing-a-longs before the Sunday morning service. Starting February 5th, EVERYONE is invited to join us at 10:00 a.m. for 20 minutes of energetic singing. Suggest your favorite hymn. Learn a new hymn. Practice hymns to be included in that morning's service. This winter and spring we will Sing-a-Long the first Sunday of each month. Come, add your voice to the musical fun!

Looking for a different opportunity?

Perhaps you like to "fiddle around" on a stringed instrument. Perhaps you are a secret harmonica enthusiast. Or maybe you once studied trombone, trumpet, clarinet, guitar, ukulele, percussion. You get the idea. Tambourine, anyone? Watch this column for information about making community music as we move into the spring.

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything."
Plato



FAMILY MINISTRY

Lisa Lawrence—Director



A Family Service Event

On Sunday, January 15th we celebrated the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. during service. We honored his life and what he stood for, to keep his vision and values alive. He was born in 1929 and if he were alive today he would be 94. In 1968, the year I was born, Martin's life was taken away by a bullet; when he was only 39 years old. Although that was a long time ago, our UU sources tell us that "There's a lot to learn from the wise people of long ago and today, whose lives remind us to be kind and fair"; and much can be learned from Martin's beliefs and values.

The day prior, members from our church participated in an event hosted by the City of Surprise called "The MLK Day of Celebration and Service." It was a big community event where his life was celebrated with music, dance, art, public speakers, community service and brotherhood. It was the perfect place to honor both him and the covenant of our church; "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."



We packed food for those in need; we packed backpacks for students, and we packed hygiene products for women. It felt really good to be able to help others. Martin Luther King believed that "Love was the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend." And

that “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.” He said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing to help others?” Helping others is a great way to spread love.

After the service project, there was a special program, with speakers, who reminded us that, during Martin’s time, not all people had equal rights. African American citizens weren’t allowed to do things that most white citizens were allowed to do, like: vote, live in certain parts of town, go to certain restaurants and schools, or even drink from the same water fountains... just because of the color of their skin. He said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” It reminded me of our first principle which says, “Each person is important” or “We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every human being”, not just certain ones; and our 6th principle which says “a true world community is one with peace, liberty and justice for all.”

I, personally, was glad for the opportunity to participate and put my faith into practice. I was also grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon, not only MLK’s vision and values, but also the beliefs and principles of my own Unitarian Universalist faith.



What is the lifeblood of Questers? Where do most of the offering leaders/presenters/facilitators come from? Miraculously enough most of those who make Questers offerings possible come from this congregation. That’s right. There is a treasure trove of potential leaders/presenters/facilitators among us. Some bring a talent to share, some an interest. Some create an offering, While some lead from an established curriculum. It’s true. What’s right here in our midst makes Questers possible. . . Not just leaders but also ideas for offerings. And of course presence at offerings.

So if you have leadership or ideas to share, we want to hear from you. Join us at the Questers table on Sunday morning or email julietgus@msn.com.

Your Questers Committee: Carol Calkins, Juliet Gustavson, Darnell Kirksey, Joye Kohl, Jeff London



MEMBERSHIP

The abundance of new members continues at UUCS. We welcome Sharon and David Moore to our congregation.

The Moore’s joined on January 1, 2023. A great way to begin the new year!

We are grateful for new members as we move into a time of growth. Let’s also thank the many among us that serve and feed this congregation year after year.

This month we would especially like to recognize long-time members:

Marilyn Kluge February 8, 1987 36 years

Betty Miller November 14, 1993 30 years

Mary Smiley November 9, 1994 29 years

Beth Malmgren September 10, 1995 28 years

Tom and Connie Reemtsma March 9, 1997 26 years

Thank you all for the continued support of this congregation and its work.

Let’s look at a couple of terms used to define membership. If you have spent time meeting with the minister to discuss responsibilities of membership, including pledging and volunteering and signed the membership book you are considered a Member. If you have not signed the book but make a yearly pledge/donation and participate in the life of the congregation you are considered a Friend. Visitors complete a Welcome Form which gets you into our database and includes you in the distribution list for our weekly emails about what’s happening at UUCS.

Are you interested in talking to Rev. Sam Schaal about becoming a Member? Please contact Rev. Sam at minister@uusurpriseaz.org or call 623-875-2550 to make an appointment.

Thank you!

Your Membership Committee: Lee and Mary Jane Askern, Carol Calkins, Libby Christianson, Ray Mahoney, and Judy Reynolds



MINISTERIAL SEARCH INFORMATION

Available on UUCS Website—
uusurpriseaz.org

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts

Surprise, AZ 85378

Ph: 623-875-2550

Email: admin@uusurpriseaz.org

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.

February Worship Theme: *The Path of Love*



Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.

In-Person and Livestream



*Rev. Samuel Schaal, Transition Minister
Lisa Lawrence, Director of Family Ministry
Maggi Mahan, Acting Music Director*

