

Newsletter

September 2023

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

Pastor: Karen Richter

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Terry Sims

President: Sherry Robinson



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KAREN'S CORNER

When I began training as a spiritual director, my program director made a statement in our first week: "You wouldn't be here if you weren't already leading a contemplative life." Internally, I said, "Huh?" And then I asked myself, "Do I *want* a contemplative life?" That was 2016, and I still haven't answered the question in any satisfactory way.

But the question has remained percolating in the background, and it has shaped me in surprising and profound ways. As I connect with this question, I find myself becoming a student of awe, a huge nerd for discernment in all its forms, and an avid experimenter in meditation and prayer. But do I want a contemplative life? I don't know; however, you might say that the contemplative life seems to want me.

Questions animate me. The unanswerable, the multi-layered, the mysterious. As I sat down to write this first article, I decided that this is what I wanted to share most: questions animate me! I am hoping that we have this trait in common.

During the process of writing this column I have been exploring more connections with UUCS - a finance meeting, some administrative tasks, and a lot of planning. And along with the whirlwind of hellos and goodbyes have come new and wonderful questions.

What kind of pastor do you need?

What kind of pastor do I want to be?

Who will we be together?

What joy awaits us?

What vision do we share for our community life?

What skills are required for us to become all that we want to be?

What styles of worship can we give ourselves permission to try out?

What social justice work is ours to do, individually and communally?

And how does all this fit into our time and place, our culture and social location?

In what might be my typical fashion, I've asked a lot of questions and offered few answers. See you in September, beloveds, and we'll continue the work of asking questions together.

Your Pastor, Karen Richter

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



GREETINGS! I do hope your summer has been restful and restorative. It is time again to begin preparing for the “formal” church year. What does this really mean? It used to signify the return of our traveling members, followed by the arrival of our snow/rain birds from their summer homes, the start of the children’s programs, new classes, and other congregational activities.

For many years we had reduced services and not scheduled activities during the summer, which made the “new church year” something to look forward to. However, this year feels different.

Maybe because last Spring we decided to make our church a “year-round” congregation, not only offering Sunday services but also providing ongoing activities for those who remain in the area. We added activities for children during Sunday services, continued our Circle Suppers, created fun and condensed classes through Questers, began new covenant groups, and invited new speakers to fill our pulpit on Sunday mornings.

It seems to have worked. Our attendance for the summer was between 80 and 90 each Sunday with lots of socializing after services. The circle suppers have had great attendance. The classes were full, and the covenant groups are thriving. We have become better acquainted with our new members and friends and have welcomed many first-time visitors who have become friends. We have opened our building to the new West Valley Chapter of Mothers Demand Action for their meetings, along with welcoming back the NOW organization and League of Women Voters.

Our congregation has changed – we have begun reaching out to better serve our community. We had a pillow drive for Homebase, an egg drive for Valley View Community Food Bank, and a water drive for St Mary’s Food Bank. We are offering a place with access to our Sunday morning Live Stream Services for parents with toddlers. And we have added a CUUPS (Covenant UU Pagan) Chapter to our congregation.

There have been questions regarding our going back “into search” for an ordained UU Minister. The Board discussed this among themselves, with members of the original search committee and with staff and at the August Board meeting a decision was made to step back for now and focus on “us” – our congregation, our new members and friends, our latest programs and activities, our expanding opportunities, and our new pastor, Karen Richter. We need this time to refresh and renew our mission and vision as we move forward into a new era.

I am happy you are joining us.

Sherry Robinson

MONTHLY BOOK REPORT John Benfield—Librarian

Hello fellow UU's. My name is John Benfield. Having presented my intention to serve as your newest librarian to our board and being accepted, I am going to begin by borrowing MaryAnne's vision the best I can. My desire is to continue the mission statement of UUUCS, "To support the work of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise, including the interest of the various groups within the church." I am looking forward to meeting everyone and hearing your own stories.

Message from MaryAnne Balzer, Outgoing Librarian:

Final greetings my beloved readers. Nine years ago the responsibility for your Library was passed to me. I felt

unprepared, reluctant, unsure. But I dove in anyway. Together we formed a terrific partnership, adding an important pillar of support to our UU faith explorations. Thank you all for your deep support of my work.

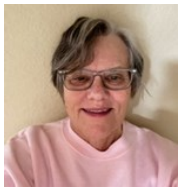
You now have a new, qualified, eager-to-take-the-reins, Librarian in John Benfield. Please visit the Library each Sunday and speak with John. He is there to help you in your search to find your next impactful read. Hold him up in your love as you held me up.

I say my goodbyes to you knowing the torch has been passed into John's capable hands. Below, I leave you with one last MaryAnne style book review. Goodbye in faith my beloveds. Peace be to you all.

“100 Ways to Keep Your Soul Alive”, subtitled: ‘Living deeply and fully each day’, by Frederic and Mary Ann

Brussat, number 291.43BRU. "This delightful book is truly a care package for the soul, full of practical wisdom for daily living and suggestions for healing and feeding the spirit." "Along the lines of thought-a-day. The book is NOT religious, or even overly spiritual. Its quotes are drawn from mystics and non-mystics alike." Quotes from the Amazon 4.3-Star Review.

Have a beautiful day shared with a terrific UU book!



MUSIC NOTES

Maggi Mahan—Acting Director

Summertime!

When you see them in the sanctuary or the social hall or the parking lot, please give a word of gratitude to our musicians who graced our late spring and summer services with delightfully varied music: Linda King, Christine Kyhn, Rosemary Schroeder, Amelia Davis, Don Marine, Ruth Swank, Emily and Natalie Whitmore, John Benfield, Bill Benfield, Bob Walling, Katie Iverson, Juliet Gustavson, Larry Lorenzen, Patricia Balfour, Doug DeVany, and Darren Reale.

SEPTEMBER SONG!

We are ready to begin! Again!

The choir will rehearse three Sundays a month before the service and sing at two Sunday services a month. Midweek rehearsals will be once monthly. The variety of rehearsal times is intended to accommodate busy work and volunteer schedules so that all may feel prepared. **We need all enthusiastic singers! Please join us. No auditions necessary.** Have questions? Contact Maggi Mahan at magathalee@gmail.com.

New choir members: If you have provided me with your email address and have not heard from me by September 6, please reconnect with me so I can send you schedules and music information.

First Choir rehearsal: Sunday, September 10, 9:00 – 10:00

Second Choir rehearsal: Thursday, September 14, 1:30-3:30

Third Choir rehearsal: Sunday, September 17, 9:00 – 10:00

FIRST CHOIR ANTHEM: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 10:30 SERVICE

AUTUMN LEAVES!

Nico Barberan will play for our service on October 1. We

are thrilled to welcome him back to our music program. He will be with us four times before the end of the calendar year.

Plan to join us for an exciting fall of vocal and instrumental music!



FAMILY MINISTRY

Lisa Lawrence—Director

Welcome back! Our **Sunday School/Ingathering Breakfast** is being held on **Sunday, September 10th from 9:00 -10:00 a.m.** Once again, a full breakfast is being prepared for us by the Stewardship Committee. The Ingathering breakfast is the time for parents to schedule classroom participation dates, register their children, meet and greet friends, and hear about this year's curriculum and program offerings. Following breakfast, children will go into the sanctuary for the first "Time for All Ages" of the season before heading off to classes. **Please R.S.V.P to familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org.**

This year our goal is to have operating classrooms for the nursery/preschool room (infant through first grade), second grade through fifth grade, and sixth grade and up. Do you love children and want to contribute to their spiritual growth? Do you have former teaching experience? Do you have children in the religious education program? Great, because in order to offer developmentally appropriate classrooms, we are going to need a team of volunteer teachers and assistants.

Our **children's religious education program** has always been a predominantly volunteer-run program. **For insurance and liability reasons, it is necessary for there to be two trained adults/staff in each classroom, each Sunday.** In order to share this responsibility equally among parents and other volunteers, we do this on a rotating schedule. That way no one has to miss service too frequently. I use a program called Signup.com where volunteers can pick and sign up for chosen dates.

This year there will be a **Family Ministry Volunteer Orientation** on **Saturday, September 23rd from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.** The orientation will give an overview of our curriculum, how to use it to put together a lesson, and UUA/UUCS policies for working with children. Please try to attend.

Our family-favorite **Trunk-or-Treat event** will be held on **Sunday, October 29th from 5:00-8:30 p.m.** This is a

great event for community outreach so, kids or no-kids, we need as many cars as possible to set up and hand out candy. This event has been growing more fun by the year, so be sure to join us.

That's all for now, but since the new season is just beginning, there is plenty more to come. As always, to find out more, please visit the Family FB page at: <https://www.facebook.com/uusurprisefamily>.



We are looking forward to those cooler mornings and evenings that come with September...usually. Your Questers Committee is also looking forward to a new program year and to welcoming one or two new people to our team. You see, in the past 6 months 3 of our beloved members have either already moved out of the area or are on the verge of doing so. So we'll soon be down to 3. Carol Calkins and Jeff London joined me as charter members of this 2+ year adventure, and we could not have imagined how quickly Questers would flower into a key UUCS program. When I asked Jeff and Carol why they serve on this committee, here's what they said.

Jeff: *Being a part of the Questers team has given me the opportunity to meet with so many talented people willing to share their knowledge with our congregation. I have also enjoyed countless conversations with members who have shared their ideas about the offerings we might develop. It connects me with the membership in a meaningful way.*

Carol: *Being on the Questers Committee has enriched my life by providing me with the opportunity to discover the wealth of talent and interests in our UU Surprise community. Through work on the committee and working with members and friends, who are leading the various Questers offerings, I have come to know people in a much deeper and more meaningful way.*

Maybe the Questers Committee would be a good fit for you...a place where you could make a valuable contribution to our UUCS life together. If that's true, I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what we do and how we do it. You can call me (602-527-5308), send an email (julietgus@msn.com), or talk to us on Sunday mornings at the Questers Table.

For complete information about fall offerings go to uusurpriseaz.org/AdultPrograms/Questers/Offerings.



MEMBERSHIP

As we celebrate Welcome Back Sunday and another year of faith together, here is a reminder of what it means to be a member of UUCS:

What Membership Means

Joining the Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise, AZ means—

- You want to be a part of this spiritual community.
- You are in sympathy with the Living Tradition of Unitarian Universalism, including its principles. (To learn more go to uua.org)
- You know that it is here where you can use your gifts to help bless the world.

What You Will Receive from Membership

- A congregation that will support you in your spiritual development and will work alongside you to make a difference in the world by advocating for social justice and equity in the wider community. Our pastor, lay leaders and congregation will celebrate the major events of your life, be available when you are in need, and will assist you wherever you are on your spiritual journey.
- A way of being religious which is balanced with the best we can know from many sources.
- A history and a heritage of those through the ages who have affirmed and fought for a way of being religious which is a free choice.

What We Ask of You

Attend worship on a regular basis. Worship is the central act of our religious community where we gather to lift the central values of our diverse congregation.

Deepen your spiritual and ethical development. We provide programs and resources to help you engage the task of growing your soul, so you are more open to life's richness and living peacefully and courageously in our diverse world.

Share your time and talents. We are a volunteer-driven church, each taking part in the ministries of the church.

Share your treasure. Members are owners of the congregation, supporting the church financially according to our abilities. We understand giving as a spiritual practice.

If you have questions or are interested in Membership, please contact Libby Christianson at maestro25@comcast.net.



OUR JUDY GILMORE— Part II

At the end of Part 1 Judy, the small-town girl from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, was in Sun City and had fallen in love with the dessert. With her daughter and grandsons no longer living in the area, she was ready to go back to work and found employment in Lutheran and Presbyterian congregations. Over the years she has continued her education and gained two Human Resources certificates: PHR (Professional in Human Resources) from the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) and SHRM-CP (Certified Professional) from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

When we were looking for a Congregational Administrator, Judy was feeling ready to go back to part-time employment after a year of taking care of her terminally ill significant other. It was Libby Christianson who found her on Linked-in and contacted her to see if she might be interested in our Congregational Administrator position. She came in for an interview and was impressed with the people. Although she was not familiar with Unitarian Universalism, she felt she could be open minded and would not be pressured to change her beliefs. So in January 2022 in the midst of the Covid shutdown Judy began her journey with us.

SURPRISES – How nice and considerate everyone is. How much there is to learn and how much work there is to do. She still learns something new every day. Sharon Beard has been especially helpful, coming in on Fridays to lend a hand. And Judy says, “Sherry has been a joy to work with.”

But there is more to this woman than her work. She wanted to grow up to be a dancer. Although that didn’t exactly turn out, she is a dancer who belongs to two dance clubs with Rock ‘n Roll music from her era and line dancing. She also likes the blues for listening. Not particularly fond of cooking, she does make some mean desserts and always keeps Johnsonville Brats on hand. Her favorite cuisine – anything Italian.

Finally, a word about faith. Judy was raised a Lutheran and remains a Lutheran. Although she doesn’t feel the need to go to church every Sunday, she finds that faith plays a more significant role in her life the older she gets. It is her guide

Thank you, Judy, for choosing us over that Zoomba class you wanted to join. We are fortunate to have you and

your cheerful voice that answers the phone if we call between 9:00am and 1:00pm Monday through Friday.

FALL ICE CREAM SOCIALS
\$5 Per Person



After Sunday Services
September 17
October 8

To help with the “scooping,” contact Claudia Yeager-Smith
480.387.1973 -or- honeygirlmom@yahoo.com

UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROCK STAR!

September 23, 2023

5:00 to 8:00 PM

\$15 advanced tickets or \$20 at the door

Hosted by: KJ “Bopping Bob” Walling



Come warble away your summer blues by belting out your favorite song! Enjoy an evening of entertainment, karaoke-style, where you can

be the lead singer or a kick-back audience member tapping your toes and singing along. This is a BYO appetizer, snack or dessert event so bring enough to share with others. Beer and wine will also be available for a small donation.

Those wishing to “strut their stuff” (sing) will need to get their song selections (first and second choices) to Bopping Bob by September 17th. Vocalists can do this by

emailing their two preferred song titles to bobwalling45@gmail.com or completing a Karaoke Song Request ticket at the sign-up tables available after Sunday services, starting in September. To ensure your tunes are available, go to YouTube and in the search box type in the song title followed by the word karaoke -or- call Bob at 602.573.5942. Anyone interested in helping with the party, (set-up or clean-up) can contact Caryn Key at 623.229.6393.

Tickets can be purchased on Sundays in the social hall starting in September or online via the [UUCS website \(donations page\)](#). Click on donate and select Karaoke Night.

Friday Night Frights



Do you like scary stories? Coming this September, Morgan Oviatt, our friendly congregational Dungeon Master, will be hosting a weekly Friday night D&D game for adults. The story will be voted on by the starting players; think horror, devils and vampires. This new campaign will run through early November. The game is limited to ten players. Contact Morgan with questions and to register: archaratar@gmail.com.

UUC-SURPRISE NEEDS YOU

Volunteer Opportunities

If you are new to us or just want more or different involvement, check out the list below. Pick one that best fits your skill and interest. Contact point person for details—email provided.

Facilities: Sherry Robinson uucsazpres20@gmail.com

Landscape overview, Memorial Garden, lighting, bldg. needs – Coordination only.

Membership: Libby Christianson maestro25@comcast.net

Opportunities include Sunday morning greeters and welcome desk

Questers: Juliet Gustavson julietgus@msn.com

Support Adult Education Offerings

Rental Monitors: Brooke Gaunt bagaunt37@gmail.com

Open/close building for renters/ provide minimal technical support.

Sound Booth: Evert Adams seberada@gmail.com

Comfortable with technology/Available for Worship Services – Training provided

Stewardship: Steve Calkins – steveandcarolcalkins@hotmail.com

Provide support for Fundraisers

SUMMER MEMORIES



Darren Reale tells his tale in song during a recent "Share Your passion" summer class, titled, "Sing-Along with, Darren, the Bard".



Questers – "Read Me a Story"



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.

For help please call **623-826-3365**.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts

Surprise, AZ 85378

Ph: 623-875-2550

Email: admin@uusurpriseaz.org

September Worship



**Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.
In-Person and Livestream**

September 3	Guest Speaker: Kayden Sheffield
September 10	Pastor Karen Richter
September 17	Pastor Karen Richter
September 24	Pastor Karen Richter

