

# Newsletter

October 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

### Perusing Karen's Bookshelf



Behold! Here's a snapshot of one of my 2020 Pandemic Projects. There are at least 10 bookshelves in my house. This one in the living room I organized by color. It took me most of an afternoon, and it was a fun distraction during a time when I wasn't having a lot of fun. I started bringing books into the Pastor's Office at UUCS in August, and having a few trusted volumes with me in the office has helped me feel at home among you (along with your continuing warm welcome, of course).

This month in the newsletter, I thought I would share with you what's on my current reading list and the authors and thinkers that are shaping my ideas right now.

#### **\*On Belonging** (Kim Samuel)

This is the source of our October worship theme! Samuel does a great job of outlining the ways that humans connect and the ways that false belonging creates division and even violence among us.

#### **\*Living Resistance** (Kaitlin B Curtice)

This is a lovely book! I'm just short of the halfway mark, and it's so much more compassionate and encouraging than I expected. If you are looking for support for your work in social justice and solidarity at a time when you feel like you're just not doing enough, try this book.

#### **\*falling down and getting up** (Mark Nepo)

A very recent Changing Hands purchase... I've read Mark Nepo quite a bit. He finds sublime words to describe everyday spirituality.

#### **\*Journal of Radical Permission** (adrienne maree brown and Sonya Renee Taylor)

I'm working through this journal as part of my Institute for Radical Permission group, a joint project of UUJAZ and Phoenix Metro Black Lives Matter. To get started learning from these visionary leaders, check out Emergent Strategy (brown) and The Body Is Not an Apology (Taylor).

#### **\*a good girl's guide to murder** (Holly Jackson)

A young adult mystery novel that I've just finished reading at the request of my bonus daughter, Claire. It's a fun read with a great protagonist's voice.

Thanks for joining me on a reading journey! See you on Sunday!

~Pastor Karen

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



I cannot believe how fast these last months have gone. Last Spring when I asked us to become a full year-round congregation providing activities and programs during the summer for those who remain in the Valley, I had no idea what I was asking. I believe we can consider our experience this Summer “a success”. We were busy even in the hottest weather with activities, new members and friends, fun classes and even children’s programs thanks to Lisa and her helpers. Thank you to all who made this happen!

We have had two committee chair changes: Paige Rappleye has stepped in to take the Chair of the Membership Committee as Libby Christianson steps away to take time for different responsibilities. We owe Libby and her committee a huge thank you for the work they have done to create a welcoming reception for new and first-time visitors and for also creating a pathway to membership at UUCS.

And we have chairs for the Building and Grounds Committee. In fact, we have a team of Tom and Pat Robinson for the building and David Moore for the grounds. They will be working with Judy Gilmore to keep everything running smoothly in and out of our building.

I had many goals when I assumed this position in 2020. Our Board Members were progressive thinkers and eager to get to work. Unfortunately, that was not to happen as Covid stepped in to alter our plans. We have worked hard to accomplish what was needed to move forward, and we have been lucky in having our congregation grow with youth and enthusiasm. Many goals and wishes have been met or are moving closer. Sunday mornings feel different. There is a new energy in the building as seen by watching our fellow members and friends. This does not mean we do not have more to do.

**I have one last goal.** I invite you to **check out the article on “Changing our Name” (page 3)** and join in the search for a new name which defines who we are now and how we would like to be defined. You might be surprised by what we learn about our community.

Thanks for all you contribute to our congregation.

*Sherry Robinson*



### *Stewardship – “A Communion of Hearts, Souls and Goals”*

Stewardship - A Communion of Hearts, Souls and Goals is the theme chosen for the 2024 Annual Stewardship Campaign that is represented by the flame of the chalice which lights the way to our future. Our new members have brought a new energy to UU Surprise. As we gather together our spirit becomes greater than the sum of each individual.

This year, the success of our annual campaign depends on the power we all have to make meaningful pledges to our faith community. A meaningful pledge is one that is financially significant, based on your personal circumstances. Your pledge conveys your commitment to support our liberal faith.

Pledged donations are the largest source of our financial wellbeing. Your pledge provides the fuel to run

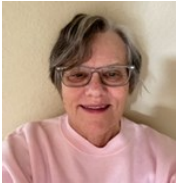
our congregation: professional and support staff, upkeep and maintenance of our building and grounds and supplies for programs and services. The benefits are realized in having energized leaders and an exceptional facility in which to meet and celebrate. Our flame burns brighter with offerings that include Questers, men’s and women’s groups, Covenant Groups, BUUK Circle, Social Justice activities, Circle Suppers, and our library.

By gathering our spirits and making significant pledges, we keep the sustaining flame lit. Remember: your pledge is an act of love.

The 2024 Pledge Campaign launches on October 15, 2023. After the service, please join us for a light luncheon while you read the 2024 brochure and complete your pledge form.

Or you can also go online to <https://uusurpriseaz.org/get-involved/#donate>. This link takes 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 bank and/or amount being donated.

### **Your Stewardship Team**



## MUSIC NOTES



Maggi Mahan—Acting Director

When our Questers program began we were trying to avoid Covid infections and one of the first courses offered was a series of Zoom gatherings for those interested in exploring various music genres. A group of us “made it up as we went along” and discovered a rather predictable fact: there are as many tastes in music as there are individuals in our congregation.

Since that time, we have welcomed former members of West Valley UU, new people in our extended community, and a vibrant group of children. So NOW, in October of 2023, I can only imagine how many different musical style preferences we have. And, in true UU form, they all can play a part in the musical expression of spirituality.

Why is this important? For me, it is a reminder that our Sunday services thrive when we pull together wide varieties of the universal language that music speaks. In October our music will include piano, guitar, violin, and choral numbers. The music styles will include classical, pop, Latin, and gospel. Our choir willingly and enthusiastically tries new things. Each time we sing together I am reminded that the gift of belonging -- to a congregation, a choir, a family -- envelopes the gift of variety.

**NICO BARBERAN** returns to our services October 1 and October 29. He holds a master’s degree in Classical Guitar and Pedagogy from Northern Illinois University. He plays a wide variety of musical styles, including Latin, rock, reggae and classical. And he is charismatically interested in building community through music. We are



## CHANGING OUR NAME

Changing our name began as a request to eliminate the word “church”. Growing up I merely thought the word was the name of a building where you worshipped. I have come to realize that to others it carries many different meanings. Many of our members believed it was time to eliminate the use of the word “church”. Others did not see the need, so the idea was to investigate alternatives and determine the change with a vote. We added this task to a list of goals for the new Board.

Changing a word seemed simple enough and we

planned for it to happen in March 2020 when Covid arrived disrupting all of our lives, and we were abruptly closed down.

Since then we have had a series of circumstances that required our being focused on congregational work. The work was not more important but more urgently in need of attention. When we look at what has transpired over the last two years in our congregation, I believe postponing the name change was a blessing in disguise. Talking about it casually and recognizing we have changed as a congregation has opened the door to examining our vision for the future. It has given us the opportunity to really change our name to one that better defines us.

Our name has been changed for business twice before but never officially. We are still legally in the books as The UU Church of the Sun Cities. With a new pastor and new members come new ideas and new ways of doing things. And with the growth of the surrounding area we are no longer just a UU Congregation for Surprise. This is the perfect time to envision a new name for UUCS.

Setting the word “Church” aside, I want you to think about what we could be called. There have been suggestions: Sonoran Desert UU’s, Friends of the Desert UU’s; Northwest Valley UU’s . There are NO Progressive /Liberal religious places of worship between us and Anthem. Imagine having an area where we can “widen our circle”.

We will begin with a simple Survey that you will be receiving sometime in October, and then on October 29 after services I will hold a listening session in the sanctuary to hear your thoughts and ideas. This can be the start of defining our mission and vision for our future congregation. Join me, and let’s see what we can create. (*Watch for further details in the weekly email announcements.*)

*Sherry Robinson*



## MONTHLY BOOK REPORT

John Benfield—Librarian

Hello UUCS from your new librarian, John Benfield. My plan to oversee the UUCS library involves but one point and that is 'Do Not Reinvent the Wheel.' The mission statement for the UUCS library is "To support the work of the UUCS including the interest of the various groups within the church." As your librarian I am continuing



our past UUCS librarian's efforts to order books in areas that both celebrate and elevate our individual spiritual journeys, areas of contemporary issues, religious history, social action and change, inspirational themes, men's and women's studies, and religious education.

For my book reports this month I highlight two new additions to the UUCS library, both donated by our outgoing Transitional Minister Rev. Sam Schaal.

**"Understanding Your Grief"**, Alan D Wolfelt, Companion Press. 176 pages.

"This book helps you understand and befriend your painful, complex thoughts and feelings after the death of someone loved." -Target Reviews

**"Governance and Ministry, Rethinking Board Leadership"**, Don Hotchkiss, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 268 pages.

"If our faith is held as a 'treasure in earthen vessels', then it matters deeply how we use those vessels we call congregations. Board, staff, and members need to fulfill their critical roles and align appropriately for mission." -Amazon reviews



## FAMILY MINISTRY

**Lisa Lawrence—Director**

To kick-off the first day of religious education classes, Family Ministry held its annual Ingathering for new and existing families on Sunday, September 10th. Families were welcomed in grand style with a full pancake breakfast, courtesy of the Stewardship Committee. It was nice to have the children with us in the service again, before being ushered off to their classrooms. We are beginning the new season with 14 registered children and youth.

We will be using the **Soul Matters curriculum** in our **preschool and elementary classrooms**. The theme is *"The Gifts of Our Faith"* and will focus on ten UU values. We will explore their potential to shape us and, in turn, shape the world. The values are: welcome, heritage, generosity, mystery, love, justice and equity, change, interdependence and pluralism. Although the overarching theme is the same for both classrooms, the content will be developmentally appropriate for each group.

**Our 6th Grade and Up classroom had the opportunity to choose their own curriculum and decided upon "The Fifth Dimension". "The Fifth Dimension"**

uses episodes of the television series "Twilight Zone" (1959-1964) to present in-depth discussions of a wide variety of topics. After viewing an episode, the class will engage in activities to encourage deep contemplation of social justice issues. Creator, Rod Serling, was a UU.

Our first **"7th-10th Grade: Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Workshop"** held its first class on Sunday September 17th. Registrants meet on the third Sunday of the month from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-purpose Room. Please try to give this group some privacy on meeting days and avoid the multi-purpose room, if possible. This month's chapters included: What is Sexuality?, Examining Values, The Language of Sexuality, Anatomy and Physiology, and Personal Concerns About Puberty.



Questers is in full swing now that summer is officially over. We invite you to give yourself a gift or several gifts by taking advantage of what Questers has to offer. And please remember that our offerings are open to all in and outside of our faith community. So you can feel completely free to bring friends along with you or tell them about something you think they might be interested in. All they have to do is go to our website (<https://uusurpriseaz.org/questers/offerings>) and sign up with an email.

**You might consider this as a sharing opportunity – Coping with Grief During the Holidays with a Hospice of the Valley presenter on Wed., Nov. 1 from 10:00-11:30am.** For those who have lost someone within the last year, those who lost someone during the holiday season at any time and those who want to know how best to support grieving friends and family, this offering might be just what's needed.

**The Questers page (<https://uusurpriseaz.org/questers/offerings>) on the UUCS website has full details on the following October and all current offerings: [an armchair adventure w/ Jan Murphy about her one-year teaching experience in South Africa](#) OR [an evening with Darren Reale, learning about the real meaning of Hallowe'en](#) OR [an introduction to the Enneagram with Tom Reemtsma and Margo Pardee](#) OR [a photographic feast Rich Manalis is serving up with Feast for your Eyes: Photography as Art](#) OR [a Climate Crisis discussion with Rich and others.](#)**



## MEMBERSHIP

Help us welcome **three new members** to UUCS: **Gail Manahan, Jim Reay** and **Mark Oelerking**. We are so happy you have joined us! We look forward to getting to know you. Please look for them and introduce yourself.

*Are you interested in becoming a member?*

Please contact Pastor Karen Richter at [minister@uusurpriseaz.org](mailto:minister@uusurpriseaz.org) or call 623-845-2550 to make an appointment with her.

Membership committee members Lee and Mary Jane Askern, Carol Calkins, Libby Christianson, Ray Mahoney and Judy Reynolds continue the ministry of welcoming visitors. Please welcome Paige Rappleye as the Interim Membership Chair. She brings a host of experience with volunteer roles from her previous congregation in Kalispell, Montana. Thank you, Paige, for stepping into this role. If you would like to volunteer to welcome visitors, please contact Paige ([splitaparts2021@gmail.com](mailto:splitaparts2021@gmail.com)).

UUCS Membership Committee



## UPDATE

We have found a Buildings and Grounds Leader – in fact, we have found a Team to work with Judy on maintaining our building and grounds. **Tom and Pat Robinson have agreed to coordinate the care of building issues, and David Moore has agreed to be available to help out in the Memorial Garden and support the work of our paid landscaper.** Thank You All.

During the summer months we have continued to update our building and grounds and catch up on much needed maintenance. Our **antiquated Irrigation system** was **replaced** with a more efficient, effective and smaller system providing water to those plants that require it. Piping and timers were also replaced. Lucio continues to maintain our monthly landscaping and recently was called to remove the trees we lost during a recent

storm . . .an enormous job for one person and well done.

The **interior walls**, with the exception of the Sanctuary, were painted as well as the metal door and window frames. We had the wallpaper removed from both restrooms and updated them with newly painted walls and metal stalls. – no more pink and blue. Our Aesthetics Committee (Carol Calkins, Joye Melby and Priscilla London) now has the job of rehangng artwork and other wall items. They also have chosen the **carpeting and flooring that will or may be already covering our floors**. This was a time-consuming and frustrating experience; however, I am sure we will all appreciate the result. This threesome also provides table center pieces for our different activities.

Another of our **Heating and Air Conditioning Units** (HVAC) has been replaced, which leaves 7 to go. These have been in place for close to 20 years. In our short range forecast we are hoping to replace 2 units per year. (Give generously. These are expensive but necessary items!)

The **lock and handle on the Office door** –will have hopefully been **replaced** by the time you read this with one that looks very much the same but has a different key. **This means if you have a key to the old lock, it will not work. If you have need of a key, please check with Judy to sign out a new one.** She has designed a system for keeping track of our keys to the building.

Lighting continues to be an issue; however, it is not being ignored. As time goes on, we will find more to work on, but now we have help and for that we are so grateful .



**WE ARE 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. We maintain contact with those unable to come to church due to illness or disability. Requests for help come to the LPCC in a variety of ways, i.e. church office, Membership Committee, concerned family members, and self-requested. 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.



**UUCS will have 2 ways to support, engage, and empower Pride on Sunday, morning, October 22.**

The Phoenix Pride Parade—UUCS Pride Parade marchers, riders & spectators will carpool from our parking lot. All who want and are able to participate in this way are invited and encouraged to do so. Please sign up in Social Hall.

The Sunday Worship Service—10:30am Those not at the parade can meet at UUCS in solidarity with the parade participants in a special worship service for the occasion.

### **CIRCLE SUPPERS**



**Watch for details about the October Circle Suppers. These potlucks in members' homes are a great way for long-time and new members to get better acquainted in smaller groups.**

Susie Cole (406-600-8857)

Claudia Yeager Smith (480-387-1973)

# TWO OCTOBER TREATS

ICE CREAM SOCIAL  
COMING SOON!!!  
\$5 Per Person



After Sunday Service  
October 8

To help with the “scooping,” contact Claudia Yeager-Smith  
480.387.1973 -or- [honeygirlmom@yahoo.com](mailto:honeygirlmom@yahoo.com)

A Halloween-themed poster for a 'Trunk or Treat' event. It features a green and red vintage car filled with decorated pumpkins. The background is a dark, spooky forest with a full moon. Text includes 'UUC SURPRISE', '4TH ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT', 'SUNDAY 10/29 5-8:30 P.M.', and 'R.S.V.P. to familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org'.

UUC SURPRISE

4TH ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT

SUNDAY  
10/29  
5-8:30 P.M.

R.S.V.P. to [familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org](mailto:familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org)

## Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

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Surprise, AZ 85378

Ph: 623-875-2550

Email: [admin@uusurpriseaz.org](mailto:admin@uusurpriseaz.org)

### October Worship *Theme: On Belonging*



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



October 1	<b>Pastor Karen Richter</b>
October 8	<b>Guest Speaker: Jim Reay—"October Musings"</b>
October 15	<b>Pastor Karen Richter—Stewardship Kickoff &amp; Lunch</b>
October 22	<b>2 Opportunities: UUCS at Pride Parade or Worship at UUCS (See page 6)</b>
October 29	<b>Pastor Karen Richter</b>

