

# Newsletter

November –December 2023

## Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

**Pastor:** Karen Richter

**Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

**Minister Emeritus:** Rev. Terry Sims

**President:** Sherry Robinson



**Newsletter Co-Editors:** Gus & Juliet Gustavson

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### KAREN'S CORNER

It was 95 degrees when I started writing this article, and already I was talkin' Christmas!

First, I must share with you all that I have tremendous fondness for all our winter holiday celebrations. When I was a child, my brother and I brought our dolls and stuffed animals into the family room on a "field trip," so they could all see the Nativity, the decorated tree, and our mom's collection of Christmas angels. My enthusiasm for December festivity, both spiritual and cultural, hasn't diminished a bit.

With that in mind, you can understand why my first conversation with our Board of Trustees regarding our holiday plans was exciting and full of possibilities. I'm pleased to offer the following events as part of our community celebrations:

- ◆ **Holiday Coffee House** on December 2 (See page 5.)
- ◆ **Cookie Exchange for Everyone**, following the RE dress rehearsal on December 9
- ◆ **Children's Program** on December 10 (See page 4.)
- ◆ **Choir Program** on December 17 (See page 5.)
- ◆ **Two services on December 24:** morning and evening, with the evening service including both candlelight and special music

BUT FIRST, let's move with intention and care through November. I'm especially looking forward to our Start Up Workshop with UUA Congregational Life representative Rev. Sarah Gibb-Millspaugh on November 4 and 5, and our Safety Workshop on November 12. These two events are quite different, but what's tying them together in my mind is that the purpose of both is our health and wellbeing as a community. Our time together those weekends is worth our best efforts.

See you on Sunday, of course, at Starbucks Office Hours on November 29 and December 20, and a special evening edition of "office hours" at Hurricane Grill (11340 West Bell Road) on November 8, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

Peace for the day,

*Pastor Karen*

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



I can't believe I am writing the Nov/Dec Newsletter article for 2023. This year has flown by, and here we are in the middle of our 2024 Pledge Drive to determine what we can do next year. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm of our members, both new and long standing, and I see wonderful things ahead .

Unfortunately, Steve and I will not be here with you to support and to celebrate your accomplishments. We have made the difficult decision to return to the Northwest (Portland, Oregon) where our family is and where we had always planned to live out our lives. This will be a sad parting as we consider this community our family and will continue to do so even after we are gone.

Before I disappear, I want to share some thoughts on what I have learned from being on the board. The first is—**One cannot do it all – and one especially cannot do it alone.** We need an entire community—talents, skills, energy, time, commitment and also importantly financial support. We need volunteers to fill holes on our committees and on our teams, so that one person is not responsible for the whole job. We need leaders to replace those who are retiring or just need a break,

We also need financial support. We are a lucky congregation in that we have savings and an endowment; however, we also have old solar panels, and incredibly old HVAC units that will need to be replaced soon. These take a huge chunk of savings along with those unexpected events that happen during a year.

We are halfway through our Pledge Drive to reach our goal of \$225,000. It will be tough – and it will mean digging deep into your heart to measure just how much this community means to you. **Is what you get worth what you give?** If not, then we need to know how we can change that, and if it is, then maybe you will find a way to increase your financial support.

We understand we are a faith based-based organization. I think that, sometimes, we forget how important giving is to sustain basic needs of this community. Several years ago, I started measuring what Steve and I pledged; I began thinking about what I would miss without this community. Giving has since become OUR way of sharing good fortune with a gift to the congregation. We doubled our pledge—giving back to support how much we received, and giving has become a part of our spiritual growth.

Not everyone can do what we did, and those who cannot will find other ways to give. For those who can – **now is the time.** We are a new congregation – with awesome potential – all we need to do is gather our talents, our energy, and our “treasures”, put it together, and go for it!

Blessings,  
*Sherry Robinson*



UUCS WALKS IN PRIDE  
PARADE





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

A Communion of Hearts, Soul, 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 the life of 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, and conveys your commitment to support our liberal faith and its commitment to social justice.

Pledged donations are the largest source of our financial wellbeing. If each member and friend in the congregation pledged, we might meet our goal of \$225,000. All pledges matter, whatever the size. 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 to meet in and celebrate. Our flame burns brighter with offerings that include Questers, men’s and women’s groups, Covenant groups, BUUK Circle, Social Justice activities, OWL (Our Whole Lives), Circle Suppers and our library.

By gathering our spirits and making significant pledges, we keep the flame lit to sustain and grow. Remember: your gift is an act of love.

The 2024 Pledge Campaign launched on October 15, 2023 and runs until November 19th. If you were not at the launch, you will have received a brochure and pledge form by mail. Please complete the pledge form and bring it to UUCS or mail to Judy Gilmore at 17540 Avenue of the Arts, Surprise, AZ 85378.

OR you can 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

## MONTHLY BOOK REPORT John Benfield—Librarian



Our library has many butterflies starting to appear, as we again sense their migration, we also can sense the message of the butterfly. As a butterfly is born, the caterpillar, although exhausting the use of its protective skin, also experiences the life transformation process. There is no language to describe that transformation, certainly no poetry yet penned, that pure poetry and magic of these butterflies. The patience demanded within any transformation is the deep wisdom of acceptance of our now moment. My three books I present here hopefully can present kindling for your thoughts about the many transformations now at our UUCS.

- ◆ **Book 1** - "On Man and God" Emerson, Ralph, W. 252 EME Peter Pauper Press.  
*A diverse but admittedly on target collection of paragraphs penned by Mr. Emerson. "Language is fossil poetry."*
- ◆ **Book 2** - "Life Lessons" Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth & David Kessler, Scribner 2000 170.44 KUB.  
*As one of over a dozen topics presented as a 'be here now' substitute, the topic of patience gives a clear advice worth any read: "Patience is a muscle... (needing) regular exercise."*
- ◆ **Book 3** - "The Book of Awakening" Nepo, Mark, Conari Press 204.32 NEP.  
*A book containing a massive distribution of wisdom and remembrance to remain in the present moment, within smaller doses, "a year's worth". Within the time of Spring, a touching on renewal but also on "Patience", we are but asked to listen. In acceptance we are told "What does it take to truly listen? The breakdown of everything that parades between our hearts."*



## AZ ABORTION ACCESS ACT PETITION

Petitions to have the Arizona Abortion Access Act placed on the 2024 ballot for AZ voters to make reproductive rights possible are available on Sundays in the Social Hall before and after service.

You MUST be a currently registered voter in Maricopa County to sign. NOTE: It is important that your signature stays totally within the two

lines and does not go over the lines above or below. A guide is provided.

Questions? Call, text, or email Claudia Yeager-Smith  
(480-387-1973/honeygirlmom@yahoo.com).



## Energize Our New Ministry by Attending This All-Congregation Workshop, November 5th!

Join us to energize the pastor-congregation relationship with the **Startup Workshop for Pastor Karen Richter and the Surprise UUs!** The main purposes of a Ministerial Startup Workshop are:

- ◆ To playfully, yet seriously, explore Surprise UU's and Karen's respective expectations, habits, and assumptions;
- ◆ To go deeper into the process of integrating a new pastor into the life, culture, and history of the congregation through interactive activities and storytelling;
- ◆ To help Surprise UU understand more about the new pastor: her style of ministry, her openness to feedback, her preference for collaboration, and more;
- ◆ To connect with other members and learn from them. And to have fun!

The workshop will be facilitated by Rev. Sarah Gibb-Millsbaugh from the Pacific Western Region. Lunch will be available after the worship service, and the workshop will run from approximately noon to 3:00pm.

(Childcare will be provided.)

## Ministerial Startup Workshop for Core Leaders, Saturday, November 4th, 9:00 am-12:00 pm

Pastor, board and other key leaders will join with our UUA regional primary contact Rev. Sarah Gibb-Millsbaugh to explore how we share leadership in this new settled ministry: how do our roles and responsibilities and expectations for one another change now that our new pastor has arrived? How can we work together to foster collaboration and trust, building a long-lasting shared ministry?



## FAMILY MINISTRY

Lisa Lawrence—Director

Fall is not only my favorite season, it's also my favorite time of the programming year. The classrooms and curriculum are up and rolling; families and volunteers are stepping up to assist with lessons, and it's cool enough in the mornings and evenings to begin planning and attending outdoor events like Trunk-or-Treat and the Pride Parade. Everything is *falling* into place...

Another thing going on this fall is our 7th-9th grade *Our Whole Lives* sexuality education program. So far, we have held two out of five or six workshops. These are long days for the kids and run from 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. one Sunday a month. Thankfully, we have some guardian angels looking out for us. The Monday Night Covenant Group has made it their service project to provide lunch for us each time we meet. It has been such a lovely gesture, and the youth and teachers really look forward to it.

While for most people, November brings to mind visions of football and turkeys, I will be thinking about menorahs, dreidels and goblins as I begin to prepare for this year's intergenerational holiday play, *Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins* by Eric Kimmel. Play rehearsals will take place during Sunday school hours, beginning Nov. 19th. If your children will be participating, please try to have them attend as many Sundays as possible through Sunday, Dec. 10th, the day of the show.

There will be **ONE** dress rehearsal the day before the performance, on Saturday, December 9th, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Following the rehearsal, there will be a holiday party from 3:30-6:00pm for anyone who would like to join us. There will be food, games and music. If you would like to be part of the play, please send an email to: [familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org](mailto:familyministry@uusurpriseaz.org).

As always, to find out more about our Family Ministry Program, please visit the Family FB page at: [UUC Surprise Family Page](#).



If you have ever wanted to support a friend or relative who was struggling during the holiday season because of losing a loved one in the past year or during another holiday season, but you didn't know what would be helpful or if you yourself are the person struggling to cope with the holidays, this Questers



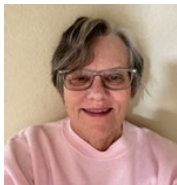
offering on Nov. 1 from 10:00-11:30 is a gift for you. Kim Sherwood from Hospice of the Valley will share valuable tools for an authentic season that honors the roller coaster emotions which can make November and December especially difficult.

And then there is the opportunity to take time out for pure enjoyment with Jim Reay on Nov. 8. From 10:00-11:30 it's "Hats Off to You", a foray into the world of hats. All the details are at [uusurpriseaz.org/questioners/offers](http://uusurpriseaz.org/questioners/offers) or at the Sunday Questers table.

After "Hats Off to You" Questers rest until we welcome 2024 with these January offerings. Flyers and sign-up sheets will soon appear on the Questers table:

- ◆ **Book Study - Reza Aslan's "Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth"** w/ Paige Rappleye – 4 Sessions starting January 6
- ◆ **What Is Dementia Anyway?** w/ Hospice of the Valley Presenter – One session on January 10
- ◆ **Our 7 Principles & Article 2** w/ Pastor Karen – 4 Sessions offered twice weekly – In person & evening Zoom, starting January 21.

Holiday Blessings to All from the Questers Committee - Carol Calkins, Juliet Gustavson & Jeff London



## MUSIC NOTES



**Maggi Mahan—Acting Director**

### NOVEMBER GRATITUDE - DECEMBER JOY

Many of you are aware that a quote from Plato is one of my guiding philosophies. It verbalizes a passion that is deep within me: *Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.*

This **November** I find myself in a state of deep gratitude for the opportunity to lead the UUCS Music Program. Singers in the choir and instrumentalists in the congregation have bonded together to create a musical family of love and support. Our broader UUCS community has encouraged us to seek new ways of doing music and has enthusiastically supported our efforts.

Our November music will seek to express deep gratitude for all this, and more. We will have flute/violin duets, choral anthems, and Nico Barberan's guitar music. As we move into **December** we will embrace the joyful celebrations of the season. Mark your calendars for December 17<sup>th</sup> when our service will celebrate Hanukkah,

Winter Solstice, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. Of course, the choir will sing and Linda King will be with us at the piano. But the icing on the holiday cake will be the inclusion of accordion, flute, violin, cello, and guitar music in the service. WHAT JOY!

December 31<sup>st</sup> will mark the end of my tenure as Acting Director of Music. I am deeply grateful to the choir, the instrumentalists, the Board of Trustees and the congregation for your enthusiastic support. Thank you.



## Partnership

Last spring, our congregation began a project to support the needs of HomeBase Surprise, a shelter and transitional living community for forty homeless 18-24-year-olds. With the help of congregants, we provided hygiene kits, dry cereals, and pillows. The committee in charge of the HomeBase Partnership met in October to begin preparations for the coming year. The committee separated responsibilities for future drives. So, plan to contact them if you have ideas, and expect them to announce when they need help

Group Leaders and their category include:

- Patricia Balfour—Recognitions. (birthdays, graduations, etc., of HomeBase residents)
- Sharon Beard—Food (Sharon has a Food Handler Permit.)
- Brooke Gaunt—The Whip (Keeps the group in order)
- Reggie Johnston—Personal Hygiene Items, Posters/Displays at church entry
- Caryn Key—Grant Writing and Fund Raising
- David King—Summer Coordinator, Mentors, Pillows
- Jeff London—Personal Hygiene Items (Kits, Large Containers of items)
- Jan Murphy—Finance, Computer Tutoring
- Tom Reemstma—Food Assistant, Christmas Tree & Presents
- Sherry Robinson—Personal Hygiene assistant
- Julie Wambach--Assistant to Coordinators, Publicity
- Rick Wambach—Winter Coordinator

We know HomeBase will have other needs, but for now, we expect those three items we provided so far will continue to be necessary. We are also expecting to provide Christmas holiday activities. Be ready to contribute homemade food and presents for HomeBase residents who have no other home. Be sure to read the Weekly Announcements and check the poster at the church entrance for more information.



**TIS THE SEASON TO CELEBRATE!**  
**UUCS HOLIDAY COFFEE HOUSE**  
**Saturday, December 2, 2023**  
**(6:00 – 8:00 PM)**  
**\$10 per ticket (kids under 12 free)**

Join us for a very special holiday celebration with great food, good friends, and plenty of fun. You won't want to miss this joy-filled evening of high-spirited entertainment brought to you by our own talented troupe of UUCS performers. Feel free to bring a special dessert or appetizer to share with others. Beer and wine will be available for a small donation. Those who want to showcase their talent can contact Juliet Gustavson ([julietgus@msn.com](mailto:julietgus@msn.com) or 602.527.5308) by November 20th. Anyone interested in helping with the party, can contact Caryn Key ([denrogkey@gmail.com](mailto:denrogkey@gmail.com) or 623.229.6393). Tickets can be purchased on Sundays in the Social Hall or online via the UUCS website ([donations page](#)). Click on donate and select Coffee House. Each ticket to the Holiday Coffee House helps to support our liberal faith community.

## A CALL FOR HOLIDAY COFFEE HOUSE PERFORMERS



Yes, our December 2 Holiday Coffee House is fast approaching. This is a terrific opportunity to share a holiday song, dance, reading, poem, instrumental solo . . . anything holiday . . . Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's Eve . . . All reasons to celebrate. Performances should be no longer than 8 minutes. All ages are welcome. Contact Juliet Gustavson ([julietgus@msn.com](mailto:julietgus@msn.com) or 602-527-5308) if you want more information or want to sign up.

And by all means, if you're not performing, come and enjoy the show.  
(See Information above.)

## Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

17540 N. Avenue of the Arts

Surprise, AZ 85378

Ph: 623-875-2550

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

### **Worship Themes** ***November: Embodying Change*** ***December: Creativity as a Spiritual Practice***



**Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.**

**In-Person and Livestream**



November 5	<b>Pastor Karen Richter w/ Guest Rev.Sarah Gibb-Millspaugh</b>
November 12	<b>Pastor Karen Richter</b>
November 19	<b>Pastor Karen Richter</b>
November 26	<b>Amy St. Peter</b>
December 3	<b>Pastor Karen Richter—Membership Sunday</b>
December 10	<b>Pastor Karen Richter—Children’s Program</b>
December 17	<b>Pastor Karen Richter—Choir Holiday Music</b>
December 24	<b>Pastor Karen Richter—10:30am &amp; 5:00pm</b>
December 31	<b>Darren Reale</b>

