

Newsletter

February 2024

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

Pastor: Karen Richter

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Dr. Walt F. Wieder

Minister Emeritus: Rev. Terry Sims

President: Brooke Gaunt



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KAREN'S CORNER

We're in this Together



Way back in 2016, a metaphor about immigration made its way through the news cycle: would you mindlessly munch a handful of Skittles if you knew that 3 Skittles in the bowl were poison? This is the kind of “common sense” sound bite we hear far too often in our political discourse. The politician offering this question seemed to be urging caution about allowing new people to enter our country, specifically people from Middle Eastern countries and majority Muslim areas.

Eyebrows raised. Brows furrowed. “Perhaps this is a question we need to consider.” On television, talking heads nodded sagely.

And then some smart person said, **“Hold up. Are the Skittles human beings?”**

Are the Skittles in the bowl fellow humans trying to escape violence and oppression? Then the answer is YES, I’m going to scoop up as many as I can, save as many lives as possible, despite the risk. The Skittles analogy only works as long as we’re willing to dehumanize people seeking to emigrate.

I mention this weird incident from a previous election cycle to urge intentionality and perseverance in 2024. The language we use matters. We need to give UU principles a strong voice when we’re confronted with dehumanizing language. Silence in the face of oppression benefits all the systemic injustices (patriarchy, transphobia, racism, ableism, and so on) that we seek to dismantle.

In community, we practice inclusive and affirming language. We knit connections that bring us encouragement and strength. In the pews, around the tables of the Social Hall, online, and out in our neighborhoods, we can offer safety and compassion to a hurting world.

Your Pastor, Karen Richter

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Come new friends! Come old friends!

Circle Suppers are a great way to get to know one another in a social setting. These potluck dinners are held in member homes with 8 or fewer people attending each dinner. You can sign up in the Social Hall for a dinner the weekend of January 26, 27 or 28. We hope to see you there. If you have questions, contact Susie Cole (406-600-8857) or Claudia Yeager Smith (480-387-1973).

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



New Year! New President!

I am honored and privileged to be the new President of the Board of Trustees. I thought it would be apropos to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My husband Jim and I became members of UUCS in April 2010. We are both transplants to Arizona from the mid-west, Iowa for me and Ohio for him. Jim and I have two boys, Jason, 15, and Brayden, 11. I have been a practicing attorney for 22 years with the last 3 years serving as a Deputy County Attorney assigned to the jail court.

Neither Jim nor I were raised in any religious persuasion. After our first son was born, I went in search of a community for spiritual growth and support. I was looking for a place of non-judgment and progressive values. And we found UUCS! And UUCS has become our spiritual home. I have developed deep and lasting friendships here and have expanded my spiritual understanding. I first became active at UUCS as the vice chair and then chair of the Hospitality team (then called Social Activities). I was also a member of the Nominating Committee for a few years. The last 4 years I have been the Board Vice President. Volunteering with a committee or attending a Circle Supper or Questers class are great ways to meet more folks and feel more connected to UUCS.

I am so looking forward to the coming two years and working together to live more fully into our UU values and expand our presence in the community. My focus this year is being fearless; leading the congregation towards decisions that move us closer to our values without letting the fear of change paralyze us. Remember we have monthly board meetings, and you are always welcome to attend. And you can now reach me via email at UUPresident24@gmail.com.

So let's begin!

Brooke Gaunt



Your Social Justice Team is on the Move!

Mark Your Calendars for Saturday March 2.
7a.m.-2:30p.m.

For the first time, we will participate in the City of Peoria Annual Neighborhood Pride Project.

More details will unfold in the coming days but what we know now is:

- ◆ Peoria chooses traditional neighborhoods (not HOAs) in need of a little help from folks like us, and speaks with the homeowners ahead of time.
- ◆ Volunteers will sign people in, staff tables with food and beverages for volunteers and do jobs like spread gravel, paint, trim greenery, and pull weeds.
- ◆ The City will likely give our UU team one (or two) houses to work on.
- ◆ Several hundred people from various faith groups

and other organizations have participated in the past.

- ◆ There are tasks appropriate for all ages.

There is a sign-up sheet which also asks for your specific area of interest/skills, if you have such. A small team will visit the homes where we'll do our work, in advance of March 2. After that we can provide you with more specifics on our tasks. The bottom line is we have a chance to:

- ◆ Work with each other;
- ◆ Work with others in the community;
- ◆ Do good!



Partnership

THE KITCHEN IS READY FOR US!

Homebase Surprise, the shelter and transitional living community for forty homeless 18-24-year-olds, has now received approval to use its kitchen for serving hot foods. One of our goals is to provide weekday meal service prep for either breakfast, lunch or dinner. Please consider helping prepare and/or serve a meal or two per week as you are able. The staff chef

will be present to guide the volunteer helpers. We will submit the volunteer list to Homebase and a schedule will be made based on volunteer preferences. You will find a sign-up sheet for Homebase in the Social Hall. Our assignments will begin sometime in February after we have been trained on how to use the kitchen.



MUSIC NOTES



Luke Stikeleather— Music Director

Hello UUCS! My name is Luke Stikeleather, your new Music Director. I would first like to offer a congratulations and pat on the back to the Music Committee who undertook the task of hiring a Music Director, as well as a big thank you to each of them for deciding to choose me as the best candidate. I look forward to the coming weeks and months as I further get to know the choir, the board, and each member of the congregation.

I moved to the Phoenix area last year from North Carolina, where I served as Music Director of UU Greensboro for 2 years while I completed my undergraduate music degree. As I got settled in the area and began my graduate studies in music at ASU, I searched for UU music positions open in the area and was pleased to see the opening for this position- I knew I had to apply!

In my first few weeks, I am searching for hidden musicians in the congregation! Any singers are more than welcome to join the choir, we rehearse every other Saturday from 2 pm to 4 pm- let me know ahead of time if you are interested! If you play an instrument or love singing, including pop music solo, please reach out to me at my church email (music@uusurpriseaz.org), or approach me in person after a service. I look forward to playing piano or violin with any singers or instrumentalists in the congregation, in any style. I hope to bring everything from Bach to the Beatles to Beyonce to the services!



MEMBERSHIP A FRIENDLY WELCOME

An easy and significant way to support our community . . .

Be a Sunday morning Greeter. We need greeters for the

month of February and beyond. What's involved? From 10:00-10:35am you simply greet people coming in the door. If they are visitors, you offer the opportunity to fill in a visitor sheet and make a nametag. Easy? Yes, but Greeters are the first UUCS impression for most visitors. And we all know how important first impressions are.

If you are interested, please contact Gail Manahan Membership Committee Chair at 509-341-4401 (text or call) or email gailm.UUMembership@gmail.com.

Did you know you can be a member of more than one UU Congregation at a time? That's right. If you have ties with two UU congregations, you can be a member with voting rights in both. Let Pastor Karen know if you would like to learn more about this opportunity!



MONTHLY BOOK REPORT

John Benfield—Librarian



For the next 6 continuing editions of our monthly newsletters I am continuing the "Transformative" quality that is so vividly visible when in the UU Surprise library. Our library is being swarmed by colorful butterflies that have been seen flitting from one section of our collection to another. During the last month we have seen these butterflies landing around the section dealing with volumes regarding Unitarian Universalism itself. This month the butterflies are not only landing around the UU of Surprise library's own Golden Rule collection, but the butterflies themselves are all golden.

My goal for 2024 as librarian is to integrate a donated older Apple computer into the ease of selecting a title or an author and to better track the circulation of our tomes. I am also looking into the possibility of softening the lights in the library, replacing the 2 metal padded chairs and the round table with 2 small but engaging chairs that would beg our attention to sit and peruse a volume or two. Since Christmas 2023 our library has received 17 books by donation from our congregational members. In my processing I have only discovered 3 donations to be unacceptable by our library's standards and these 3 will be available soon on the library cart.

The sole book review for this month is from the Golden Rule collection, "Centering, Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry", Mira Rahnema, Editor.

2017 Skinner House. We are guided to find and remain grounded, to stay connected (as a faith) and to stay whole through 9 discourses and their respective responses which are often surprising. In centering my own spirit, I have a sharper eagerness to stay grounded and authentic.



Questers 2024 got off to a great start with “Befriending our Principles” and “A Book Study – Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth”. If you haven’t yet done so, February and March will be just the time to add a little Questers to your life. And here’s what’s on the menu.

GREAT DECISIONS 2024 w/ Dr. Bonnie Saunders – 8 Monday Sessions starting February 5, 7:00-8:30pm via Zoom.

Jeff London is back for his 16th year of participating in Great Decisions and here’s why in his own words: *Great Decisions helps me stay on top of complex issues that are important to us all. Each November the Foreign Policy Association selects 8 topics that are researched and presented clearly and concisely in about 10 to 12 pages each, filled with maps, charts and clarifying graphics. So once a week for an hour and a half, you can zoom on topics, such as Ukraine, Climate Change, Economic Warfare, and Migration with a skillful discussion facilitator. Give it a try. I think you will find it rewarding.*

(The Foreign Policy Association 2024 Briefing Book is available for purchase, but not required for participation. To receive instructions for Briefing Book purchase and Zoom link, contact Jeff London – jvlondon@yahoo.com or sign up at the Questers table in the Social Hall.)

UNLEASH YOUR IMAGINATION: TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE w/ Dennis Kleidon – Friday, March 15, 10:00-11:30am

Dennis returns with this potentially life-changing offering – a two-part presentation, including a lecture and workshop that takes you through a journey of self-discovery.

Dennis’s Goal - *“I want to help you think through the process of change by using your imagination to unleash your long-standing dreams and desires and create a process for achieving them.”* (Signup & info – Carol Calkins – carolpcalkins@gmail.com)

UUs PRAY? w/ Sharon Moore – Saturday, March 30, 10:00-11:30am

Through the millennia people have conducted/created participated in spiritual rituals. Prayer is a major one of

them. Interestingly, after decades of disregarding prayer, there is an ever-growing call among UUs to pray as well. However, whereas other faith groups pray TO something/someone, most UUs don’t recognize an entity to direct prayer toward. So how can UUs pray? Join Sharon and find out. (Signup and Info – Sharon Moore – leadmore@gmail.com)

AGING CHECKLIST: PLANNING NOW FOR GREATER HEALTHSPAN w/ Libby Christianson – 3 Saturday Sessions—Mar. 9, 16 & 23, 1:00-3:00pm

Here we are together, but none of us is aging in the same way. Come explore different aspects of aging to promote a greater healthspan. Over three workshops participants will review the seven dimensions of wellness, expecting the unexpected, anatomy of a fall, resilience, and brain health. The workshop is interactive, and all ages are encouraged and welcome to attend. It’s never too early to start expanding your healthspan. Why wait? (Signup & Info – Sharon Moore – leadmoore@gmail.com)



CIRCLE SUPPERS

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Circle Suppers are not only enjoyable events. They also help build community. Are you looking for a fun volunteer opportunity with UUCS? Talk to Claudia (480-387-1973) or Susie (406-600-8857) about being a Circle Suppers Coordinator.

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**.

APRIL IN PARIS ANNUAL AUCTION & DINNER

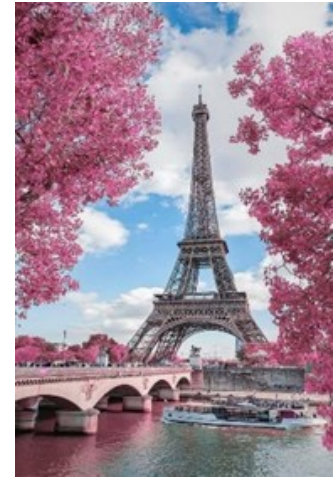
**Please join us for the Annual Auction and Dinner on April 6, 2024
for an evening of great food and conversation.**

Doors open at 4:30pm – appetizers and beverages
Followed by Dinner and Live Auction

Seeking **volunteers** to plan/assist
on April 5th and/or April 6th

- ◆ Food preparation
- ◆ Baking at home
- ◆ Signing people in at the door
- ◆ Taking orders and serving beverages
- ◆ Serving appetizers and/or dinner
- ◆ Room set up and take down
- ◆ Auction spotters
- ◆ Sell 50/50 raffle tickets

You can sign up to volunteer in the Social Hall on Sundays or
email Janet at uucsazstewardship@gmail.com.



Please consider donating to the live auction

Suggested possible items to be auctioned:

- ◆ **HOST an EVENT** – such as a lunch or dinner, tea and conversation, pool party, game night, an evening of bridge, murder mystery.
- ◆ **CREATE a GIFT BASKET** with a theme.
- ◆ **A PIECE OF ARTWORK OR JEWELRY.**
- ◆ **Offer to BAKE or MAKE a DESSERT** for a special event OR your SPECIALITY (non dessert)
You set the timing or negotiate with the purchaser.
- ◆ **DONATE a SERVICE** - such as dog walking, drive to airport or UUSC, coverage of your home while away, computer work, baking cookies several times a year.

Forms will be available on Sundays, OR you can email Janet to receive a form to complete electronically at uucsazstewardship@gmail.com

TICKETS



\$25 for adults and teens (13 years of age or older) and \$10 for children. Purchase on Sundays in March in the Social Hall or online at uusurpriseaz.org/get-involved/#donate. Click on donate and select Auction Ticket Sales You can pay using PayPal up to March 31st. Please consider clicking on “add to pay cost of fee” so your ticket price is paid in full. Please also consider purchasing a ticket for someone who cannot afford to pay for a ticket to the event or donating toward tickets for others. Tickets are required even if you do not want to join us for dinner, as they are for the event (auction and engaging with the congregation). Childcare will be provided.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise NEWSLETTER

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Ph: 623-875-2550

Email: admin@uusurpriseaz.org

February Worship Theme The Gifts of Justice & Equity



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



February 4	Pastor Karen Richter
February 11	Pastor Karen Richter
February 18	Pastor Karen Richter
February 25	Pastor Karen Richter

