From the Minister’s Study

This holiday season, miracles are on my mind. Not the kinds of miracles that defy the laws of nature, but every day miracles that awaken an awareness of the miraculous nature of life itself. Take our bodies, for example, complex mechanical systems made of living flesh. That we are born, that we breathe, that we grow, that we learn, that we heal, that we love – miraculous, when you think about it – all through effort beyond our own. It’s not just human bodies that are miraculous. Animals of all kinds are also complex mechanical systems made of living flesh. Then there are trees, flowers, grasses, grains, fruits, vegetables – all made of living fiber. Everywhere you look, there is life: truly a miracle. Not a one of us caused it to happen. Yet, there it is, a gift of grace. Unearned, undeserved, it is ours to use and enjoy.

This holiday season asks us to pause in wonder before this great miracle. We tell stories from long ago, myths and fables that call us to reverent awe before the miracles of birth, and light, and love. The stories we tell aren’t necessarily true in the capital T way. They do have truth to tell about our lives. The Channukah light burns through even the darkest times. The solstice and the turning wheel of time always brings back the sun. A Christmas child is born to bring hope for peace and joy.

The winter holidays are tender times, especially for those who are grieving or struggling with realities of family, which can sometimes be difficult. Our rich Unitarian Universalist heritage offers the opportunity to engage those celebrations and rituals that bring comfort, healing, peace, and joy.

However you engage this holiday season, remember that you are a precious gift. Take good care of yourself, for your life is nothing short of miraculous.

In the spirit of the season,

Diane

Upcoming Services:

Sunday, December 8, 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
God and Beyond: Spirituality for Today and Beyond
What if we put aside all the religious labels we put on ourselves and others? What if we stopped calling ourselves and each other Christian or Muslim or Jew, -- atheist, agnostic or humanist? What if, instead, we talked with each other about the reality of being alive in this vast and wondrous cosmos? We might just find a spirituality that will sustain us now and into the future.
Worship Associate: Carolyn Saunders
Music: Desert Chorale

Sunday, December 15, 10:30 a.m.
Annual Holiday Pageant
Three Miraculous Births

Friday, December 20, 7:00 p.m.
Winter Solstice Celebration
We’ll gather on this darkest night of the year to celebrate the returning light. Join us on the patio for stories, songs, meditation, and ritual.

Sunday, December 22, 10:30 a.m.
Teach Us All You Can of Saying “YES!”
Each season of life comes with a gift and a calling. When have you said, “YES!” to life’s callings? Where has saying, “YES!” led you? What is calling to you now? How will you respond?
Worship Associate: Steve Kraynak
Music: Desert Chorale

Tuesday, Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, 5: 30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert and Kathleen Hogue
The Light of the World
There is a light within each of us: the light of life, the light of love. The stories of the season remind us to let our lights shine to bring more brightness and joy to the world. The 5:30 service is family-friendly and will include a child dedication, stories, songs, and the lighting of candles.
The 7:00 service will be quieter and more contemplative, with readings, stories, songs, and the lighting of candles
5:30 Music: Holiday Choir; Leeza Beriyeva, Piano
7:00 Music: Celeste Rogers, Harp; Brian Moon, Guitar

Sunday, December 29, 10:30 a.m.
Lay-Led
Worship Associate: Carolyn Saunders
Music: Leeza Beriyeva
Volunteer Round-Up

The Nominating/Leadership Development Team invites you to attend a workshop on either Sunday, December 15th or Sunday, December 29th to learn more about volunteer opportunities at UUCT. The purpose of these brief workshops (12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Holland) is to provide you with more specific information about the elected leadership positions at UUCT, a self-assessment of your strengths and hopefully a clarification of how your skills and interests match with these or other volunteer opportunities. Attendance does not obligate you to anything, but expressing an interest in a particular role or capacity is very much welcomed!

As Unitarian Universalists, we bring our head, our heart and our hands to our journey to fully develop our faith and our identity. Each of us comes with unique gifts, which, when shared, help strengthen and shape our congregation, as well as give meaning to our own lives. We encourage your participation. For more information or to rsvp, please contact Carolyn Saunders (c_saunders1@msn.com) or Janie Foy, (foyjanie@hotmail.com).

OWL Sexuality Education for Young Adults (18-35) and Adults

For the first time in many years, we are planning to offer Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education classes to our adult population. We would like to offer both courses either this spring (beginning in February) or next fall (beginning in September), but we need to hear from you first.

Unlike the courses offered to children and youth, adults have a say in what topics are covered. Our plan is to hold an Introductory Session (in late Jan or Aug) where we will discuss the goals of the class and all of the potential topics. There will be a couple of weeks between the Introductory Session and the first class session so that participants can decide whether the class is right for them, and if so, what topics they are most interested in. The facilitators will use that to draw up a class plan. However, the class won't be offered unless we have at least 10 participants for each class.

If you are interested in taking the class or simply have questions, please contact Heather Reed at hreed@uuctucson.org. For more information on the OWL curriculum, visit their website at: http://www.uua.org/re/owl/index.shtml

Our 2014 UUCT auction will be Saturday, February 1, starting with a delicious Mexican buffet dinner. Your $10 ticket buys you a great meal and a bidding number. In addition to a good time, this event is our largest fundraiser of the year, aside from the annual pledge drive so put it on your calendar now. As always, kids’ meals and child care are provided.

We need your donations of artwork, jewelry, books, household appliances, and other items. The biggest money-makers, though, are services and entertainment. Services could be several hours of tax preparation, or rides to the airport. Entertainment might be a movie night, theater tickets, or the ever-popular dinners. Gift certificates (for example, Target, Fry’s, Frost…) are easy, and we’ll even get them for you.

Beginning December 1, there will be an auction table in Goddard every Sunday after the worship service. Buy tickets, get or leave donation forms, or sign up to help on auction night. For questions, to donate, or to volunteer, contact Bob Gordon, bobgordon66@gmail.com, 329-8242, or Jan Dowling, rubytues98@hotmail.com, 940-7930. Or check us out under the Auction tab on the church website.
FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The following is an excerpt from an article by an internet blogger. (For internet neophytes and Luddites, a blog is a page on the internet where an individual publishes their own personal essays, journal entries, opinion pieces, art, etc.) I found this blog entry through my Facebook page when a fellow UU “liked” it, and although it was written specifically from a Christian perspective it sends a universal, and very relevant, message to us. The future of any society, any community, any church lies in its children. What legacy of our faith will we leave for them? In faith,
Peg Smith, President BOT

To You Who Bring Small Children to Church

Steven Hunter

There you are sitting in worship or Bible study. Your child, or toddler, is restless. Perhaps they’re even a little boisterous. You try to silence them, and nothing. You try to pacify them with food or toys, and nothing. Eventually, you resort to the last thing you wanted to do: you pick them up, and before a watching audience, you make the march out of the auditorium. All the while, you’re a little embarrassed. Maybe you’re a little frustrated too...

I want you — you mothers and/or fathers — to know just how encouraging you are to so many. The little elderly woman who often [feels] alone beams with a smile at the sight of you wrestling with your little one. She’s been there before. She knows how hard it can be, but she smiles because to hear that brings back precious memories. To see young parents and their small children brighten her day, and she may have just received bad news this week about her health, but seeing the vitality of young ones removes — if but for a moment — her fears.

The older man who always seems to be grouchy notices you too. He’s always talking about how children in this day have no respect or sense of good. But, he sees you — a young family — in church, and you don’t miss any gathering. Like clockwork, he can depend on the sight of you and your young family. You give him hope that maybe the church isn’t doomed after all, because there are still young parents who love God enough to bring their restless children to worship.

The family who’s unable to have children notice you too. They’d love to be in your shoes, but for whatever reasons, they are unable to bear children. They’ve thought about adopting, but they’re not sure if that’s what they want to do or if they will keep on trying to have children of their own. They’d love to talk to you for a little while about the joys of your children. They need you.

To You Who Bring Small Children to Church continued

Then there’s everybody else. Some people will honestly become frustrated by noisy children in church. They have this warped idea that reverence includes absolute silence. It doesn’t...

Bring your children to church. If you don’t hear crying, the church is dying. As hard as it might be for you as a parent... keep on doing what you’re doing. You are an encouragement...


From Mountain Vista UU

Standing Your Ground:

Understanding the Arizona law and what it means for you and our communities

Did the Zimmerman trial in Florida leave you with questions and concerns? How does Arizona's Stand Your Ground law ensure or complicate the safety and security of all of the residents in our state? The Mountain Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation invites you to our 3 part panel discussion as an effort to build knowledge and relationships as the antidote to confusion and fear.

(The first discussion already took place.)

The second discussion takes place on December 9 and will have members of law enforcement informing the public on how the law is implemented. The final discussion takes place on January 13, with the panel comprised of community leaders engaged with attendees on what we can do.

These events are free and open to the public. We welcome all perspectives and encourage dialogue as part of our mission to respect differences and celebrate diversity. All panel discussions take place from 7-9 pm at the Mountain Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 3601 W Cromwell Drive, Tucson, Arizona 85741. Church Phone: 520-579-7094. Congregation email: office@mountainvistauu.org. Congregation website: http://www.mountainvistauu.org/

Greeters Still Needed

OK, alla youse. I know you are out there just wondering if there are still openings on the Greeters Team. Well you are in luck! There are still a couple of slots to fill. It’s only one fun Sunday a month so come show our visitors that famous UUCT “radical hospitality” we’re known for. Call Cary White at 825-2235 or email CaryW09090@aol.com.
**Stewardship: What You Can Do For Your Congregation**

By Carolyn Saunders, PIT Crew

At Christiane Heyde’s ordination service, the Rev. Charles Gaines, presenting the “charge to the congregation,” paraphrased a famous John F. Kennedy quote. “Ask not what your congregation can do for you, but what you can do for your congregation!”

This statement has added importance when we pair it with the subject of stewardship.

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of stewardship? I imagine for most of us it is the annual pledge drive which is beginning to get underway here at UUCT.

But stewardship is much more than just the pledge drive. Our minister, Rev. Dowgiert, has proposed a visionary stewardship plan based on establishing a Stewardship Ministries Team (SMT) that would provide support for all aspects of stewardship—pledge drives, endowment/planned giving, capital campaigns, fundraising—at UUCT in order to fulfill the congregationally affirmed mission and vision.

Part of this SMT is already in place: Chris Wallace is the Vice President for Finance who is responsible for keeping the Board of Trustees appraised of the overall financial position of UUCT. Larry Newhouse is our hard-working treasurer, one of the signatories for all checking, savings, money market, and investment accounts held by UUCT. Mary Wiese, the church administrator, has numerous financial record keeping, budgeting and monitoring responsibilities. Tom Macon is chairing the annual canvass.

However, there is so much more that needs to be done to insure the financial health and stability of our church. But this work, this ministry, can not happen unless others from the congregation step forward and say, “Yes, this is what I can do for my congregation.”

The goal of the SMT is to create and sustain a culture of generosity in which congregants are well informed about the finances of the organization, comfortable talking about money, participate actively and joyfully in annual budget drives and capital campaigns, and understand the linkage between the congregation’s mission and its resources.

Within our congregation are people with the talent and ability to make this goal come true. Are you one of the people who will heed the call of stewardship ministry? Your church needs you.

You may read the entire SMT plan on the church website at uuctucson.org.

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**Social Media Workshop**

UUCT is fortunate of have nationally known Peter Bowden, a UU consultant on social media to come to our church for a workshop on “Social Media for Ministry, Outreach and Membership Growth.” Peter Bowden, a life-long Unitarian Universalist, lives in Cambridge, MA and combines his consulting work with being a producer at public television, WGBH in Boston.

The workshop will be held on January 4, 2014 from 9:00 am to 3:30 p.m. Additional information on Peter Bowden and the workshop, along with registering on-line, can be found on his web-site www.uuplanet.organd UUCT web site. You can also register by mail. Make checks for $35.00 payable to UU Church of Tucson with memo Jan 4th event registration (registration includes lunch) and send to Judy Dare, UUCT, 4831 East 22nd Street, Tucson, AZ 85711. Along with your check, please include your name, home address, email address, phone, and any role(s) you have at UUCT.

**Gifts of Love**

Help bring holiday cheer to 3 Tucson families in need! For the past 2 years UUCT has adopted a family for the holidays through the “Gifts of Love” program at Interfaith Community Services (ICS), and this year we’ll be doing it again! There are many ways for you to get involved. Please consider: purchasing a gift or gift card, donating wrapping supplies, or volunteering to deliver the gifts. Please pick up a flyer in the church lobby for specific wish list/clothing size information.

Contact Ashley Davis in the office (748-1551 or office@uuctucson.org) to sign up. Please let Ashley know if you plan to buy a gift, so we can avoid duplication and ensure that each child receives approx. the same number/value of gifts. **Deadline: December 15th**

**UUCT Book Club**

Book Club meets the third Thursday of each month in the Awareness room at 7pm. All are welcome. For questions, or to arrange free childcare, call Lois Atkins 991-5350.

December - The Boy Kings of Texas by Domingo Martinez

**Newsletter Deadline**

The deadline to submit an announcement is the 24th day of the month and the newsletter will be printed and available online the first week of the following month.
Application of the 1st principle in the Life of a U U (Part Three)
By Kathleen Hogue,
Lifespan Faith Development Director

As UUs we need to be mindful and intentional when we volunteer. This means limiting our commitments, remembering that it is not for self that we help others and knowing the right way to do it. Ernesto Sirolli exclaims in his Ted Talk Seminar, “Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!” - Sirolli. We must truly listen or our good intentions will turn out to be harmful to those we are trying to help, thus diminishing their sense of worth and dignity while enhancing our own. Sirolli tells of a volunteer group going into an impoverished area and planting gardens with the natives. All the while the natives are shaking their heads in wonder because they know that in the middle of the night the many wild animals surrounding their village will come and eat the plants. What they really needed was a fence.

Family Life

In our dealings with our immediate family members- our spouses or partners, children, parents, and siblings- it should be easy right? In his sermon titled “Our First Principle, The Inherent Worth and Dignity” Rev. Paul D. Daniel says, “It is easy to respect those we love and care about, but what about the oppressed, the oppressors, victims and perpetrators? Therein lays our challenge, to look within and come to know our own heart and then to open ourselves to the stranger, the other.” – Daniel

In a healthy, loving relationship where both parties value each other it can also be challenging. We do not always agree with those we love and we sometimes have misunderstandings. This is especially true of spouse/partner relationships. Principled Commitment from the UUA offers us some keys to practicing our first principle in these relationships:

- Use “I” statements when expressing our own feelings or talking about a disagreement
- Listen actively and mirror what our partner/spouse is saying
- Be respectful and kind in our words, tone of voice, and body language
- Create a ritual of respect for each other like back rubbing or putting lotion on one another’s feet
- Spend time together alone away from children and other family members at least once a week

For parents of teens there are times when we learn that we do not like some of the things that our children do. We may wonder who these strangers are all of a sudden. They can be downright obnoxious, rude and hateful. At the same time our teens may find us overbearing, controlling and stubborn. What then? Find out in the next Newsletter!