From the Minister’s Study

As I write, the Supreme Court is taking up the question of whether or not corporations can exercise freedom of religion, a freedom granted by the first amendment to the constitution. The issue at hand has to do with the mandate for health insurance plans to include reproductive health benefits for women, that is, access to contraception in all its various forms.

The larger debate evokes deep emotional responses about a woman’s right to exercise autonomy over her own body and different understandings/beliefs about when it is that life begins. There isn’t a universal religious understanding of the fundamental question of the exact moment that human life begins.

I answered the question for myself during my Clinical Pastoral Education training, a hospital chaplaincy. I was assigned to two hospital units: labor and delivery and neo-natal intensive care.

When I got the assignment to labor and delivery, I had romantic visions of being witness to the miracle of birth – blessing babies as they took their first breaths, surrounded by happy families and loving parents. It didn’t happen that way. Instead, I was called when things didn’t go well, when babies were born before their time. Some made their way to the neo-natal unit and were given another chance at life. Others simply came too soon, without sufficient development of the body systems needed for survival outside the womb.

The most tragic was the pregnancy carried to full term and a baby that didn’t survive the birth process. I held the lifeless baby in my arms and wept with the family, fervently wishing that I had the answer to their ragged question. Why, oh why?

Later that same week, I was asked to perform a baptism. I have my own beliefs about baptism. It’s not about the washing away of sin. It’s about blessing and welcoming new life. It’s about dedication and being the village it takes to raise a child.

Once again, I held a lifeless body in my arms, pouring holy water over the precious head of an undeveloped fetus, born four months too soon. The ritual I performed was not for me, but for the bewildered parents trying to make sense of their loss.

I can’t say for sure when human life begins. It’s a mystery. There’s a threshold of viability, when human life can sustain itself beyond the womb. There are always two lives at stake. Who’s to say which is more valuable? It’s a question that can only be answered between a woman and her conscience – her god. Reproductive decisions are best made between a woman, her trusted partner (emphasis on trusted) and her doctor. There’s no room for an employer in these personal decisions.

Persons, human persons, are made of flesh and bones and blood. Corporations are not. They exist on paper. Human persons light candles, pray, meditate, and engage in the practices, traditions, and principles of religious community.

May our prayers be with the Supreme Court as they make this momentous decision.

Rev. Diane
Upcoming Services:

Sunday, April 6 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Deeds not Creeds
This oft repeated phrase means that what we do is more important than what we believe. It can be said that the deepest expression of a Unitarian Universalist faith is to be found in our actions. How we do things is as important as the things we choose to do. Today we’ll examine our social justice ministries in the light of “deeds not creeds.”
Worship Associate: Celeste Rogers
Music: Desert Chorale and Leeza Beriyeva

Sunday, April 13 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Lead, or Follow, but Always Dance
Or, Everything I Know About Congregational Life, I Learned on the Dance Floor
In order to dance with a partner, someone must lead and someone must follow. Neither role is inherently better than the other. What’s important is in knowing the role you are in and moving accordingly.
Worship Associate: Wendy Gordon Weeks
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Sunday, April 20 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert and Kathleen Hogue
Why Easter?
As a holiday, Easter is a little bit Christian, a little bit Pagan, and a little bit secular. What is it that calls us to celebrate on this day?
Worship Associate: Randall Springer
Music: Desert Chorale, Leeza Beriyeva, and Michelle Maliniak

Wednesday, April 23 7:00 p.m.
Mid-week Alternative Worship
Rites of Spring
Come join in a celebration of the season through meditation, ritual, and song.

Sunday, April 27, 10:30 a.m.
No More Deaths 10th Anniversary
Guest Speaker: Rick Ufford-Chase
Join us to commemorate the founding of No More Deaths, a time to look back at what’s been done and to look ahead to what still needs to be done.
Worship Associate: Carolyn Saunders
Music: Desert Chorale and Leeza Beriyeva

Lifespan Faith Development-
submitted by Kathleen Hogue

Credo (Latin)
1. A stated system of principles or beliefs
2. Experience, as in personal experience
3. What I set my heart to (literal translation)
As a non-creedal religion, we don’t ask or expect everyone who calls themselves a Unitarian Universalist to believe the same thing. However, we do share core values and beliefs that have to do with how we live in this world together. Our personal credos reflect those UU values.

As Director of Lifespan Faith Development here at UUCT it gladdens my heart to see our congregants living their credos. I witness it often in the larger community at events such as the Peace Fair, Pride Fest, and our UU Day at the Legislature demonstrating the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large and the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all; I witness it when our middle school youth attend other places of worship and put to practice our belief in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; It is evident when I see so many wonderful volunteers involved in environmental causes and in making our own church property beautiful and green demonstrating respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; Our Covenant Circle members demonstrate acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations through the sharing of deep feelings and experiences in a non-judgmental atmosphere; The Committee on Ministry exercises our belief in justice, equity and compassion in human relations by helping congregants and staff work through differences and misunderstandings; Finally, our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person is evident all around us when congregants welcome in the visitor, smile, offer the hand of friendship and offer a free lunch.

These are all of our principles but are those all of the values we share? I say no. I believe we all share these values as well: love, compassion, connectedness and hope. Our compassion and love are why we have our guiding principles. We value connectedness because we know that none of us can change the world alone and our connectedness creates hope for our work in the world.

Another thing I have noticed here at UUCT is how much we value our children. This is evident when parents bring their kids to church. It is evident when they get involved in what they are learning and talk about it after church. The passion of our teachers demonstrates this as well. You can see it in their eyes and their smiles show…they know that they are making a difference in the world every time they teach.

Want to learn more about credo? Sign up to be a mentor to a sojourner in our Coming of Age program for next year. This is a great way to make a difference and there is no better way to find out what you set your heart to!
‘Artist of the Month’ Gallery’s April Show: Paintings by Joan DiGiovanni

The opening reception for painter, Joan DiGiovanni, will be on April 13th at 11:45 am in Holland Sanctuary. Joan is a UUCT member, Psychologist, Art Therapist and a wonderful, colorful Artist. One of her paintings was recently selected as the cover of the American Psychologist magazine. She is a devoted follower of Post-Impressionist artist, Vincent van Gogh, and herself has been nicknamed, “Joan van Gogh”. Come greet Joan and enjoy the show. Refreshments will be served. The Gallery is open during church office hours, 9-1 pm, Tuesday through Friday and Sunday, 11:30-1 pm. The show runs through Sunday, May 4th.

Call to UUCT Members and Friends Artists:

UUCT Members and Friends Artists may submit work in any two-dimensional media (Except Photography) to be exhibited in the All Member and Friends Show from Sunday, May 11th through Sunday, June 1st in Holland Sanctuary. Bring artwork to church on May 6th at 9:30 AM. For any additional information, email Margot Garcia at mgarcia@vcu.edu.

SHARE THE PLATE

Share the Plate (STP) Sunday is usually the third Sunday of each month. On that day, UUCT shares half of the non-pledge income with a local non-profit organization. However, April’s STP recipient, No More Deaths (NMD), is commemorating its 10th anniversary during the April 27th service, so STP will be collected that day. NMD, which is a ministry of our church, is an organization whose mission is to end death and suffering on the U.S./Mexico border through civil initiative. Their work embraces the Faith-Based Principles for Immigration Reform. You can learn more by going to their website: http://www.nomoredeaths.org/

HEALTH MINISTRY OFFERING: Dance for Fun and Fitness, Sunday, April 27, 2013, 12:30 pm in Goddard after lunch.

Dance is for everyone. It is really nothing more than fancy walking! Learn basic Ballroom, Latin, and Swing dance steps modified to fit a line dance format. No partner required. Please wear comfortable shoes. Facilitated by dancer, Julianne Blackwell

Arizona Legislature Information System (ALIS) And Request to Speak Training

Don’t let lobbyists and special interests have the last word with your legislators. Request to Speak lets you comment on bills right from your home or office. ALIS provides access to bills, amendments, calendars etc. Come learn how to use these systems easily. Friday, April 11th 6:30-7:30 in Holland Sanctuary.

Come to the Cabaret!!!

Cabaret is an annual fundraiser sponsored by the musicians of the church. In addition to music, there has been dancing, comedy and magic . . . each year is a surprise of fun and fellowship! Cabaret will be on Saturday, April 5th at 7:00pm. Childcare will be provided. Light snacks and beverages will be available, and adult beverages provided for an additional fee. Tickets cost $10 per person, or $25 per family.

TUUR

Have you ever wanted to visit the Hopi Mesas? Come with us and not only visit, but stay overnight at the Cultural Center on Second Mesa! We also have a private tour through the heartland of the Zuni reservation! We leave October 11th, returning the 18th. We only have 12 places left. Itineraries and registration forms are available at the office, on website (http://www.uuctucson.org/programs/sponsored-tours.html), or from Julia at perujourney@gainbroadband.com

Wellspring is a small group ministry program that offers a spiritual journey dedicated to claiming, re-imagining, and practicing the ever-evolving living tradition of our faith. Interested, but still have questions? There will be an informational meeting on Thursday, April 10 from 7-8 PM in Awareness. RSVPs appreciated but not required: brennabe@gmail.com

New Ushers Needed

New Ushers are needed beginning the last week in April and continuing all summer until the end of September. Please contact Beth Britton at 928 607-6204 or by email at beth.britton@hotmail.com. You may also contact David Burks.
Opportunities to Serve: Buildings and Grounds
From the PIT Crew—Carolyn Saunders and David Burks

As you hear most Sundays, we are a vital congregation with many ways to become involved. Do you like gardening? Or maybe doing odd jobs around the house? Able volunteers are always needed to assist in work to be done on the buildings and grounds of our campus. However, we all need to sincerely thank a number of wonderful volunteers who have performed some amazing work this year.

Judy Dare and Mike Epperson continue to work on gardening projects around the church, and how lovely all the potted plants look! John Gaudielle, Frank Poland, Paul Bacina, Mickey Dowling, and Mike Epperson have done major pruning and hauling in the last two years and that is a HUGE help. The YRUU Group painted the Awareness Room with paint donated by Cheryl Blake, and Mike Epperson supervised.

Byron Skinner varnished the doors and completed numerous repairs around the church. Also, Bob Samuels and Kay Carlson have supported improvements to buildings and grounds with generous donations. Margo Newhouse chose the paint colors for both Goddard and Awareness and made the beautiful curtains. Thanks to all of you for your dedication and efforts, as well as to others whose names we may have overlooked.

Efforts such as these keep the church facilities in good repair and looking nice for all of us. But there is an added bonus—they also make our facilities more attractive to people who want to rent them and hold functions here.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee could use a chair and more members to help do even more to improve our campus. What about you? Is this an area in which you have talent and skills you could share? Contact Judy Dare if you are interested in working with this group, and thank you in advance.

No More Deaths Food Drive a Success!

A huge THANK YOU goes out to our UUCT community for the very generous donations of food and drinks to fill emergency packs in support of No More Deaths. On Sunday, March 30th at least 20 children and adults assembled over 100 packs after church! This is the work of our church, given in the spirit of universal love.

Register for District Assembly
PSWD’s annual meeting will be upon us before we know it! Register now to take advantage of the lower fees for Early Registration. Another reason to register early: capacity for the Soup and Salad dinner on Friday night is limited to 150.

This will be a very special District Assembly, with the Rev. Meg Riley as our keynote speaker and as one of 17 dynamic workshop presenters. We will have chances to sing together, to share stories and experiences, and make friends. And we will have opportunities to “Gather in peace, gather in thanks, Gather in sympathy now and then. Gather in hope, compassion and strength. Gather to celebrate once again.”

For information and registration, go to http://www.pswduua.org/pages/district-assembly-2014.php

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.