Commentary - Rev. Bethany (minister@uuctucson.org)

"How could anyone ever tell you you are anything less than beautiful? How could anyone ever tell you you were less than whole? How could anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miracle? How deeply you're connected to my soul."

The lilting melodies of this song from our teal hymnal was my signal that I was allowed to come back into the front room of my house. It was the song that ended each of my parents' small group ministry gatherings. For at least ten years a group of 8-10 people met once a month in the front room of my house. They had conversations about a range of spiritual topics. They listened to one another. They agreed to sit in silence.

This small group, which included some of the same people, and a new person every now and then, became a sacred circle of friends for my family. In between the monthly meetings they celebrated with one another, had countless potlucks and mourned together when members of the circle died. Those monthly meetings became a time for my parents to create deeper connections than could have been maintained in our 250+ member congregation.

Quaker author Parker Palmer once wrote, "If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard." This desire to be heard is the need that small group ministry filled for my parents, and countless others across Unitarian Universalism.

As I get to know UUCT better I see, over and over, the need for more small group opportunities. Opportunities for people to really get to know one another. To support one another. To laugh and mourn with one another. This is a need I have heard newcomers and long-timers alike give voice.

In response to this I will be creating and supporting the formation of Small Group Ministry Groups starting this fall. At this point I am looking for 6 - 8 people to be facilitators. The role is to convene a monthly meeting from October through June and to facilitate the conversation using resources that I will provide. This is a one year commitment for the 2019-20 church year. In addition, facilitators will be able to attend their own small group ministry, facilitated by me, once a month. This will be an opportunity to form connections with other facilitators and to get support for your own facilitation. If this sounds like a role you'd like to play, lets chat!

And if you are interested in joining a small group ministry, look out for a sign up list next fall. I'd love to have you!
As you read this newsletter you will obviously note that it is different from the preceding months. In the spirit of creativity and freedom of the press, each newsletter editor has the chance to refashion it along with continuing to bring you longer articles and updates than is possible with the weekly church email. Our new newsletter editor, Eve Hady, will be working to bring you an informative newsletter. We also acknowledge the great job our previous editor, Craig Rock, did. We will miss his touches as he leaves UUCT to pursue a different newsletter passion as well as moving to a new town. The Board of Trustees will also miss Susan Rock's wisdom and contributions to our Board work as she moves on with her husband. Thank you Craig and Susan!

The Board work we have done over the past seven months has several threads that are converging on the need for changes in our worship experience. These threads are:

1. Our goals for future transformation.
2. Growth and crowding in services
3. The changing landscape of children's religious education.

When we were in search of a new settled minister we identified a number of possible transformational goals that we would like to work on for our future. We explored these with Rev. Bethany as she took up her ministry here, to identify which area we had consensus on bringing forward first; since it is important not to bite off too many things at once. (This is not to say that we won't take some small steps on our other goals.) We felt we should look towards the future of our religious education program as our primary emphasis in conjunction with our new minister and talented RE director.

The second thread that came up as a result of our transitional time with Rev. Lyn and our popular new settled minister, was the growth of the congregation, including families with children, that can tax our sanctuary space. So, we engaged in further brainstorming of how to address it and, again, winnowing it to something we might be able to accomplish in the shorter term. This pretty much requires changes in our worship services.

The most recent thread is the denominational realization, as heard from various directions, that children's religious education as practiced by most churches, including ours, needs to change as families and congregations have different needs. These include headlines like "The Death of Traditional Religious Education."

These threads all come together in changes (enhancements) to our worship. We are experimenting with alternative times and modes of worship. Some of these may help families and working members who can't connect with us on Sundays, as well as satisfy a need for different experiences. You will also see a variety of different Sunday worship services, some of which we learn about from other congregations dealing with changes in RE, which will bring our children more fully into Sunday service rather than shuffling them off to a totally separate experience in the RE wing most Sundays where they are less likely to grow up feeling a part of the broader UU community.

I think most of you will enjoy the variety and experimentation, though there will still include services which are more like the ones you currently experience.

Before I sign off I need to put in a plug - if you haven't already, please get in a generous pledge soon so we can plan a budget and continue the great work that UUCT does.

Editors note: Craig Rock leaves large shoes to fill. I am grateful for the opportunity to 'grow' into them. Please feel free to offer comments and suggestions about things that will make the newsletter interesting and inspiring to YOU. My wish is to bring forward news of UUCT, and with diligence and your help, fulfill our fourth principle: *A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.* In joy, Eve Hady
Alternative Worship Experiment includes
BYO Dinner. Thursday, April 25th at 5:30 pm

In February we had 31 people of all ages attend our first alternative worship of the year. A fabulous turnout! For April we will start with a BYO dinner and socializing at 5:30 pm in Goddard. This will be followed by a 45 minute family-friendly worship service followed by time for socializing (around a fire if you so desire!) crafts, and/or deeper discussion of the worship topic. The April 25th worship service will be led by Bryan Nickola. Join us!

And save the date for the final alternative worship of the church year on Sunday, May 19th.
(Note: Because two dogs were part of the gathering previously, beginning March 31st there will be a pet free zone in worship for those with allergies.)

Community Carnival - May 11!
Show off your baking skills in the baking contest! Categories for best youth bake, best tasting, and best Unitarian Universalist theme! Games for everyone, booths and lots of surprises! See Sam Meyer Sunday's for sign-up, or email at: sammeyer13@gmail.com

Pledge Drive Information
We had a successful pledge drive raising $258,891 from 143 pledging units. A pledging unit is an individual or a family who makes a pledge.

Some statistics:
* Pledge amounts were 6% more than last year
* The number of pledging units increased by 16%
* We had 33 first time pledges.
* 38% (52) increased their pledges; a few doubled, many to the asked 12%
* The average annual pledge was $1,864.88
* The median pledge was $800
* This year 8% of pledging units gave 42% of the total amount pledged.

The lessons learned from the numbers is that we increased the number of people entering into stewardship and that is very positive. The worrisome observation is that a few big pledgers carry the church which is a problem in the long run. However, the hopeful sign is the number of people pledging and as they get more involved, experience shows, they will increase their pledges so we have a more even distribution of the amount pledged.

Thank you to our hardworking stewardship committee: Frank Valdes, Margot Garcia, Susan Call and Deb Collinge, with Rev. Bethany as consultant.

The mailing team included: Beth Britton, Silke Hoffman, Clara Pfeifer, Susan Call, Linda French, Shirley McLane, Jan Healey, Rick Meyers, and Deb Collinge participating. Thank you.

Special thanks to Deb Collinge for arranging for and hosting a delightful dinner at Cafe Botanica for our most generous donors.

Thanks to Susan for arranging the 'cottage meetings' and Howard and Nina Tolley, Clara Pfeifer, Margot and JD Garcia, Jan and Mickey Dowling, Carolyn Saunders, Silke and Bill Hoffmann, Bob and Rae Consigli and Darlene Mathews for offering their homes and hosting the meetings.

The all-important clean up telephoning team was Susan Call, Frank Valdes, JD Garcia, Margot Garcia and David Burks. Thank you for making nearly 90 calls to members and friends.

Hope you enjoyed the puzzles. We finished them! Come and join in this important work. See you all next year!
The Stewardship Team - Submitted by Margot Garcia

SAZCUUPS
Two events were held in March including a Labyrinth Walk Field Trip and our Spring Equinox ritual which was attended by 28 people. Looking forward our Annual Meeting will be hel on April 14th from 3-5pm in the Servetus Room. We will elect new officers and vote on changes to our bylaws, followed by a snack potluck social.

Our next worship service is Beltaine on May 1st from 6-8 pm. Druid David Foster will lead us in guided meditation, song, and in making offerings to the Divine Spirits and Kindreds. To request childcare for either event email Jamili at dre.uuct@gmail.com. Please bring a snack to share during the social hour after the meeting and the ritual.

(For the most up to date information on our events check our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/SAZCUUPS/)
Who does what at UUCT
And How to contact them - Mary Wiese

As we all know, the last few years have seen a lot of transitions and change in the type of governance. Along with transition comes change. This can be confusing for all of us, especially those who are new to our congregation. Below is a short list of contacts and some very basic instruction on the "how to' at UUCT. It is an evolving process, but I hope this is helpful.

1. **Room Usage:** Our Congregational Administrator, Mary Wiese is responsible for scheduling all church and outside events. The church calendar is available to view on our church website at: https://www.brownbearsrw.com/cal/tucsonchurch.

2. Mary is also the liaison to the **Children's Center Daycare** which rents a portion of our church campus, including Goddard Kitchen, M-F, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Email Mary at mwiese@uuctucson.org and check https://uuctucson.org/home/facility-rentals.html.

3. **Office supplies:** Please contact Mary if you need to find office supplies or you need something we do not have. (mwiese@uuctucson.org.)

4. Please contact **Jamili, our Religious Education Director, for RE supplies and childcare requests** at dre.uuct@gmail.com. Childcare can be requested any evening or any weekend day for church events.

5. **Custodial Needs:** Jesus Carrillo is our wonderful, longtime custodian and maintenance person. Jesus works Sunday through Friday. Mary is his supervisor so please contact her directly if you have questions or concerns. (mwiese@uuctucson.org)

6. **Music:** Please contact Brian Moon, our Director of Music at bmoom@uuctucson.org

7. **For Committees, Teams and Groups including the Board of Trustees:**
https://uuctucson.org/home/committees-teams-and-groups.html

8. **Committees and Groups Supporting Church Operations/Infrastructure:** This is a list of contacts within the church leadership for various groups and committees.

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**Finance Committee Report - Margot Garcia, V.P for Finance**

During the month of February we deposited $55,621.51 and expended $48,374.17 for a positive net of $7,247.34. The balance in checking on February 28 was $31,352.97. This generous balance is due to the income from the auction and pledges and will carry us through the rest of the church fiscal year. Restricted Funds (Money Market) holds $34,456.12 including $4,700 of prepaid pledges and $9,287.40 in th eOWL account. Savings (Capital Fund) holds $8,317.71. We have $54,129.54 in the UUA managed Endowment Fund. We did not use credit reserve.

The financial statement shows that in general we are on track within budget categories. Pledges are coming in ahead of budget and expenses are generally in line. Due to heavy use of child care and increase in minimum wage, we expect that line to go over budget. But LFD ministry will be within budget overall.

We discovered a problem with people depositing the same check twice. Using the new deposit app of photographing the check to deposit, two checks were deposited twice. We are asking for return of the funds.

The Finance Committee recommended and the Board agreed to the new policy: Any payroll check greater than $25 must be paid through direct deposit. We understand this could be a problem for some young people who don't have a checking or savings account yet, but we felt it would be a good learning experience for them to get one. Or they can have it deposited to their parents account.

The Finance Committee will meet on April 2 instead of the usual day of the 9th, and finalize the budget to recommend to the Board. With a successful pledge drive the reconciliation of income to expenditures should not be too hard.

There will be a Budget Forum on Sunday, April 28 at 12:00 in Holland where the budget will be presented and people can ask all the questions they want and can develop amendments they may want to present at the Annual Meeting on May 5th. All are Welcome! Come dig into the budget detail. All questions are welcome and will be answered to the best of our ability.
TBIRDS' Departing Footprints

Winter members, friends and visitors will close our their season at UUCT with a TBIRD potluck in Goddard at 6 pm on Monday April 1st. The 2019 TBIRD Who's Who Directory, posted on the UUCT website, indicates arrival and departure dates, two addresses, and identifies personal interests for joint activities with others at UUCT, such as books, dining, theatre and volunteer service.

The Who's Who lists 18 couples and 11 singles from 12 states - by far the largest number from Washington. Others from Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, New Hampshire, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Vermont and Wisconsin. Sixteen TBIRDS are members, 21 are friends and 10 visitors. Because the UUA no longer assesses church cues on the number of members, individuals with memberships in two congregations can now be included in the annual total reported to Boston with no head tax.

TBIRDS are an active part of the UUCT Community Life - supporters and volunteers engaged with the Justice Committee in assisting asylum seekers, as Worship Associates, on the care team, in the choir, assisting stewardship and membership. A few homeowners now live in Tucson for six months, nearly as long as UUCT's 'summer leavers. The Board is considering a proposal for absentee voting in the 2019 annual meeting that would extend the franchise not only to seasonal members but to others unable to attend in person.

After two organizing dinners, the seasonal snow, rain, fog and sun birds began holding citywide potlucks at UUCT that will resume in November. Six serve on the group's planning committee including Howard and Nina Tolley, Pat McDaniel, Bette and Jim Harvey and Vicki Diez-Canseco.

If the TBIRD postings https://groups.google.com/d/forum/tbirds-uuct leave questions unanswered, contact Howard Tolley at howard.tolley@gmail.com for more information.

LGBTQAI+ Group

Do you have your pronoun sticker yet? Not sure what that is or why? Ask us!

In February the group hosted a movie night open to the public, called Coming Out Under Fire. A film about the men and women who were gay and lesbian in the military during WWII and included interviews of those who served in hiding or who came out and were persecuted.

Plan to join us for another film in June to honor those who participated in the Stonewall Riots in June 1969 which essentially began the Gay Rights Movement.

In March we offered our second free Sundae on Sunday the day of the Reveille Concert at UUCT. Including providing flowers for the dais and a raffle for gift cards after service in Goddard. Next meeting: April 7, 12:15 - 1:15, Fuller. (Submitted by Bob Lane and Jerry Cuffe - Leadership Team)

Considering Matthew Shepard - Steve Kraynak

Tuesday evening, April 16 in the UA Centennial Hall the University of Arizona Presents Conspirare: A Company of Voices: Considering Matthew Shepard. It is a three part oratorio - Prologue, Passion and Epilogue - composed by Craig Hella Johnson in response to the brutal murder of the young, gay college student, Matthew Shepard near Laramie, Wyoming in 1998.

Reveille Men's Chorus, Desert Voices and some UA choruses will perform the final number with Conspirare. This will be a significant event this year in the Tucson/Pima County GLBTQIA community. Please support this performance as part of being a Welcoming Congregation. Details at: http://uapresents.org/considering-matthew-shepard.

Share the Plate

In February we collected $411.00 to be sent to the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance.
As you read in Frank Valdes’ article this month, the Board has set as a priority for this year visioning the future for Religious Education. I had several wonderful conversations with them as we set out on the path to address some persistent challenges and opportunities we have at UUCT.

First, the opportunities. We have 25-30 children and youth attending Sunday morning RE on a consistent basis. This includes the 8-12 who use the nursery every weekend! The teaching teams we have in place are enthusiastic, creative, and dedicated to their students. Most of the curricula the RE Team selected last spring are working really well with our students.

However, with this large number of children and youth come challenges. Throughout the year, we have seen:

* Nine students show up for the Pre-School class (ages 4-6) which is staffed by only 2 teachers. They are remarkably skilled teachers, but managing this many students put a strain on them.
* One to three students show up for the High School class (YRUU) which is focusing on Coming of Age (COA) activities. The low attendance makes scheduling, discussions, and group activities difficult.
* Occasionally, we were short on teachers due to sickness, schedule conflicts, or other reasons.
* About 15 of our kids are in the Elementary Class --1st to 4th graders. It's a big class with a wide set of interests and needs.
* We have 8-12 children (under age 10) who use the nursery, and frequently at least 6 are toddlers.
* When the Middle School class travels for a service project, a “drop in” or visiting family won't have a place for their Middle School aged youth to participate in RE.

Our first steps after identifying our challenges was to talk with folks about what they see happening in RE and to do some reading of the current literature on national trends in RE. Many of the challenges we face are national. In fact, we are positioned a bit more solidly than some other congregations because we are attracting and retaining families with children/youth. Through discussion with the Board, an electronic survey, and a “Think Tank,” we identified some goals for RE, some things we want to keep, and some areas we can improve. Then on March 28 I met with a group to start to make these ideas concrete.

So, where are these conversations leading us? Like the blooms of the Sonoran Desert, we are leaning towards a mix of things:

* Inter-generational services (about once per month) which would allow families to worship together and for us to model worship for our children/youth. There was significant feedback that this should be our normal mode of worship, and that the advantages of having children in worship on a regular basis is worth it.
* Adult RE. Every time I talk to adults, they ask for some form of education or faith formation opportunities. We love our social justice opportunities, and we are hungry for the faith/educational/intellectual component.
* Hybrid of age-based and non-age-based classrooms. We are still developing this model, but many congregations are experimenting with breaking down strict age-based classrooms. Right now, we are playing with the idea of keeping the youngest kids (ages 4, 5, and 6) grouped together. The rest of the kids and youth would have the option to pick their class each week possibly including:
  * A discussion based class for the oldest (age 12+)? Yes!
  * A quiet reflection and spiritual practices class? Yes!
  * The opportunity to participate in community service? Yes!
  * A story and craft room? Yes!
  * A chance to bring in brilliant, creative, unique people from the congregation to teach on something they are passionate about? Yes, of course!

Are you excited to see how you might fit in these three component areas? Curious about how the Sunday Morning model might come together? Ready to offer a unique skill, talent, or hobby to the rest of the congregation? Let’s talk! I’d love to hear your thoughts and discuss both what you want to learn and what you can offer to teach.
Our Third Principle states that 'spiritual growth is directly tied to our ability to embrace our whole selves.' In nature, matter is neither created or destroyed; it merely takes another form for another purpose(s). Therefore, in God's Economy, nothing is ever wasted. Join us and BLUU Community member Helena Showell as she invites us into reflection about what it means to embrace ALL of who we are!

BLUU's online worship service is Black sacred space in its entirety - by and for Black people, with the words and voices of Black folks across the diaspora - and we hope that Black UUs and Black UU adjacent folks from far and wide will join us.

For our non-Black siblings in faith, please DO share this invitation with Black folks in your life and community. We often hear from people who stumble upon BLUU without having known that we existed. So getting the word out about BLUU is one area where we would appreciate your support.

Come into our Zoom Room as early as 8:45 pm EST, get settled, say hello to the folks who are already gathering, and listen to the music softly playing to prepare for our time together.

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: https://zoom.us/j/5553672588
By iPhone: US: +16465588656,,5553672588#  or  16699006833,,5552672588#
By telephone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location): US: +1 648 558 8656  or +1 669 900 6833
Meeting ID:  555 367  2588
International numbers available at: https://zoom.us/u/cB1RHk0gn

Things to do; places to go; people to help...

Utah TUUR: Arcosanti, Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon, Antelope Canyon--just a few of the exciting places you'll visit on another great UUCT-sponsored tour on October 14-20. For more information, contact Julia Meher, perujourney@gainbroadband.com, or Carolyn Saunders, c_saunders1@msn.com.

Migrants: Inn2America at St. Francis in the Foothills has closed and the monastery will be closing in May/June time frame. Some volunteers are gathering to discuss how to keep the 'Inn' open and running. If you are interested in helping there is a leadership planning meeting being held on April 11, 2019 at St. Francis in the Foothills, Room 50 at 5:00 pm. The contact person at St. Francis is Doris Morris.

Spring Carnival at UUCT, May 11. Spread the word! This is going to be a rousing good time with food, family, games, events and much more! Contact Sam Meyer: smmeyer13@gmail.com. More to come!

Next LGBTQAI+ Monthly Meeting: Sunday April 7, 12:15 - 1:15, Fuller Room. Everyone welcome.
This Is Me: Centering the Stories of Unitarian Universalists of Color - by Steve Kraynak

The This Is Me worship service evolved from participation in the MOSAIC Makers National Conference in October, 2017. Here is the URL for my personal reflection on that MOSAIC conference (https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmx0dWNzb25pdGFyaWFuMTIxMjAxN3xneDo2NTQ0ZDkzZDlhNmE1NmNj)

Following the March 10, 2019 worship service some UUCT members asked for additional information. Here are some resources that may be of assistance. Please direct questions to Steve Kraynak.

The sources of stories:

1. Centering - Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Poser in Ministry
   (https://www.uuabookstore.org/Search.aspx?k=centering)
2. Unitarian Universalists of Color - Stories of struggle, Courage, Love and Faith
   https://www.lulu.com/shop/search.ep?keyWords=unitarian+universalists+of+color&type=
   https://www.uuworld.org/articles/wakanda-or-watts

Organizations cited and definitions of terms:

* UUA Commission on Institutional Change:
  https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/commission-institutional-change
* Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU): https://www.blacklivesuu.com/ It is recommended that all member congregations in the UUA list the BLUU homepage on their church websites as a welcoming gesture to people of color.
* MOSAIC Makers: https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/mosaic-makers
  White supremacy: Systems and institutions enforcing the racial prejudice that white identified persons and their cultural norms are inherently better and more acceptable than non-white racial groups.
* Microaggression: A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.
* Multicultural competency: An appreciation of and sensitivity to the history, current needs, strengths, and resources of communities and individuals who historically have been underserved and underrepresented.
* Race: A 'socio/biological' classification invented by European powers during the colonial expansion to assign social status and human worth based on skin color.
* Racial prejudice: A preconceived opinion based on someone's racial identity or skin color rather than logical reasoning or actual knowledge or experience.
* Racism: A dominant racial group's negative racial prejudices and bias enforced by misuse of power of system and institutions.
* Systemic oppression: Marginalization inflicted through abuse of power or authority relating to forms of social, economic, or political organization or practice.
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520.748.1551     www.uuctucson.org     newsletter@uuct.org

Our Whole Lives