



Celebrating 70 Years of Liberal Religion in Tucson

May 13, 2018

Compiled by Carolyn Saunders

History of the UU Church of Tucson (From the Search Committee Packet of 2004)

David and Ruth Smith planted the seeds of our liberal religious faith in our desert soil in the spring of 1947 at the Santa Rosa Village on the Tohono O'odham Indian reservation.

By February 22, 1948, we had enough people to hold a lay-led service at the YWCA. We were 25 strong. Rabbi Albert Bilgray from Temple Emmanu-El led our fifth Sunday morning service. We had a staggering 46 people present!

On March 19, 1948, a telegram was received from the Rev. Lon Ray Call stating, "Boston Headquarters authorized me to take immediate charge of the Tucson Unitarian project for eight weeks beginning Easter." A follow-up letter explained that we had such great success in our growth that we were having difficulty getting Unitarian speakers. Easter Sunday, March 28, 1948, Rev. Call preached his first sermon.

Organization Day, May 9, 1948: We are a church! This young seedling joined the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and the Pacific Conference. Bylaws were voted, officers and trustees were elected and committees and groups were formed. Rabbi Bilgray offered the use of the facilities of Temple Emmanu-El for Sunday services beginning September 1, 1948. This offer was accepted. On June 9, 1948, the Rev. Robert Henry Holmes accepted a call to the pulpit of the Tucson Unitarian Church. A lease for a three bedroom house at 2122 E. 6th Street was signed on July 27. He arrived with his wife and two young sons on August 20, and formally started September 5, 1948.

Our first annual meeting was January 21, 1949, and we adopted a budget of \$4,039. An excerpt from the Annual Report read, "We had our growing pains of infancy—we had our periods of doubt, we had our breaches. We must have had internal harmony to husband strength and energy for fighting for a free and liberal religion in a solid front of orthodoxy."

The Rev. Holmes' ministry was followed over the next 70 years by the following ministers:

Rev. Dan Huntington Fenn, 1950
Rev. George C. Whitney, 1956
Rev. Russell Lincoln, 1965
Rev. David A. Johnson, 1973
Rev. Alexander "Scotty" Meek, 1988 (interim)
Rev. Philip Zwerling, 1989
Rev. Marjorie Montgomery, 1994 (interim)
Rev. Douglas Morgan Strong, 1994-1996 (interim)
Rev. Stanley Stefancic, 1997
Rev. Nancy Roemheld, 2000 (interim)
Rev. Roy Phillips, 2001
Rev. Robert Latham, 2004 (interim)
Rev. Diane Dowgiert, 2006
Rev. Lyn Oglesby, 2017 (interim)
Rev. Bethany Russell-Lowe called May 6, 2018

Following are testimonials of church members as we celebrate the 70 years in the life and history of UUCT.
From the Board President

A Message from the UUCT President

Dear Friends,

Anniversaries are a time to look back, look forward, and reflect on what the anniversary means to us personally. It can be about history or about the people making the history. This year we have been having some of all of these and I expect we will be focusing more on looking forward as we start the next chapter with our new settled minister. This forward look is what means the most to our many newer members who have not experienced much of our past but are even now making friends here.

But today I want to tell you something I see on this anniversary. I see the ghosts of UUCT members and friends who have touched our church, and me in my 28 years here, but have died or left. I can't name everyone I see but later you can tell me about them.

Over by the front door I see Ray, with Barbara by his side, talking to people as they come in and making them feel so welcome. He is being teased for being a Republican but no one can not like him.

I see a row of seats on the stage in Holland with our many ministers such as Doug, Roy, Stan, and the guy with the suspenders to name a few. At the end of the row of seats is the "ghost of UUCT future", Rev. Bethany. And standing proudly with them is Rosemary with Aston and Christiana with Clarisa and Stephan.

In the office and kitchen are Joanne and Jean with helpers such as April Lynn.

At the keyboard I see Raymond, one of our many great pianists, with Agnes conducting Family Singers and the Brubaker family chamber group. Lyle is bringing in a piece of woodwork accompanied by daughters and granddaughters. In the choir I see Kathy with her beautiful voice and Stretch sitting nearby.

Oh and there's Harry sharing a joke with me and reciting a Haiku.

Over in RE I see Loretta and the others who've worked with our children such as Rolande, Lisa, Sunshine, and Becca. And leading the RE Council is Carlos with Janet and their kids. Of course there is a long line of RE kids starting with Billy and Jerry and extending to the Guatemalan expedition and, tragically, Hannah.

Out there I see Corny and John fighting for justice in the world. At the table just inside Goddard is Marcia with the jewelry she is selling.

Here at social hour I see Joyce with Carolyn, sitting with Marion is Dawn, with Jackie is Walt, with Deanna is Bill holding his harmonica, Bid is with Ed, Bargie with John, and Tom with Rita.

In the distance, hiking down from Mt. Lemmon, I see Chris.

Up here with me are the ghost of past presidents such as the Johns, Joyce, Barbara, Steve, Chaz, and Peggy and Fran. Our organizer in chief and esthetic voice Barbara, whom a friend of my liked to call the “church lady”, is talking with Reah.

Asking me about the latest things he learned about astronomy is Roy, with his love, Francis, next to him. Over there is Paul, Jo, Emily, and Bob talking.

And over by the memorial garden I see Golda with Judy showing one of her watercolors. These ghosts, and the many others unnamed, are here all around us as we celebrate this 70th anniversary.

Frank Valdes



My Memories of UUCT

I found the UU Church by watching TV; we had Johnny Carson on and someone from the UUA was a guest. He said during the interview that there were many UU's out there that were UU's and didn't know it yet. He was talking to me.

When we returned to Tucson from Wisconsin we made our way to the church on 22nd St. The Rev. Russell Lincoln was the minister, and we soon joined UUCT in 1968. He was soon joined by the Rev. Richard Marshall who was the associate minister, and another of UUCT's outstanding ministers.

The Rev. David Johnson came next in 1973 and stayed for the next 15 years. Many say he was our most loved minister. I found Rev. Stefanacic and Rev. Phil Zwerling to be our best orators. The Rev Doug Strong was our most inventive and creative minister.

We have had a number of members of our congregation go into the ministry. Remembering back a number of years there were Doug Riesner and Fran Peck. Rosemarie Carnarius and Lisa McDaniel Hutchings followed. I don't want to forget Walt Staton because of his work with No More Deaths. I am so proud of all of them.

I have stayed with UUCT all these years because I found a home and have formed many lasting friendships. I also have found lots of ways to be involved over the years. I have served on most committees. I am looking forward to the years to come and the projects to get done.

Darlene Mathews **Co-author of the 50th Anniversary History**

My UU History and UUCT

Who would have thought that building a miniature replica of an ancient Egyptian house would be the first step in a journey that has led me here today? That was when I first remember attending the Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C., All Souls Church where A. Powell Davies was the minister.

At my age, then maybe ten, I didn't attend the services, but rather the Sunday school. It was there that I first learned about Akhenaton, or Amenhotep IV, the Egyptian king who was the first ruler to believe in monotheism. That interested me a great deal. And besides I had fun making a model of a typical Egyptian house in our class where we talked about the early peoples on the Nile. So I was hooked into UUism!

My own history at UUCT began after I had been a member at several other Unitarian Universalist churches as well as a fellowship. The first UU church I actually belonged to as an adult was the Unitarian Church of Rochester, New York, designed by Louis Kahn. It had been recently built, and attending this church was rejuvenating. I recall being inspired by sermons of Robert West, who went on to serve as president of the UUA. But the sanctuary there was a cold and gloomy space, built of standing concrete slabs reaching up to the sky, with light coming only through the roof. It was called the "soap factory" by some disgruntled parishioners, but later after acquiring many colorful hangings and decorations, it became more appreciated.

After moving to Tucson and experiencing this Holland Sanctuary, I was impressed by how warm and inviting the space is. At the time I joined here, in 1973, coincidentally this sanctuary was also quite new. It had been designed by a local architect, Bill Goldblatt, who was also a member here. He had earlier designed a Sunday school building for us as well. And almost immediately I became involved in the life of this church.

I probably began in the Sunday school, teaching and serving on the RE Committee, but then went on to many other roles. I eventually was elected President of the Board of Trustees, and I also served on committees in our Pacific Southwest District organization. I am not sure which role was more enjoyable, but I know that I grew and benefitted from them all. In addition, the friends and knowledge gained here helped many times in my "professional" life where I occasionally had to deal with difficult people.

In about 1997 we began to be interested in compiling a history of our church as part of our then upcoming 50th anniversary. Darlene Mathews and I were asked if we would take on this task, and we ignorantly agreed. We had a lot to learn about how records had been stored and where our history might be buried, but after searching through files, old orders of service, newsletters, photographs, newspaper clippings, and drawers, cupboards and boxes, plus hours of writing, we did achieve a modest history.

We acknowledged our 50th anniversary in other ways besides a written history. Margot Garcia, another longtime

member, came up with the slogan “Liberal Light in the Desert,” and our quilting group made the banner which now hangs behind the podium. The banner was designed by Bob Lawrence, the artist husband of one of our quilting group. I added the slogan to the back of the banner so it is two-sided for when it is carried in a parade.

Our church life moved on through the good times and the bad, as Rick Masten, our UU troubadour, says in his song, “Let it Be a Dance,” one constant making the church into a community for many of us. We had found a home here, discovering lifetime friendships with people who could be challenging as well as comforting. I think many of us recognize that this church is as much our family and home as those relatives we grew up with.

Recently I read a book, The Lost City of the Monkey God, by Douglas Preston, which contains this advice: “People need history in order to know themselves, to build a sense of identity and pride, continuity, community and hope for the future.” This exactly explains my interest in history, and especially the history of our church.

Now we are on the threshold of a new period in our home here, and I hope and expect that this will be the beginning of even more friendships, inspiring fellowship, and creating more interesting history together.

May it be so.

Susan Call
Co-author of the 50th Anniversary History

Ideas and Values

A church is a combination of ideas and values, a place and practice of worship, but most of all the church is people. That’s all of us. We are here to move forward into our 71st year in part because we got a lot of things right, and because when we did make mistakes, we were and are resilient. We keep on keeping on.

My parents joined UUCTucson in 1973 and I visited for the first time in 1974. I joined in 1987.

The church they knew, and I knew visiting for 12 years, was part of the fifteen year ministry of David Johnson, by most accounts some of our best years, an important part of our legacy. But we know THAT ministry began inheriting its own 25 year legacy.

The church began with meetings and services at places like Miles School, Temple Emanuel and the YWCA. In 1954 our church built Goddard Hall, in 1967 the religious education building, and in 1970 this beautiful sanctuary. This physical home, built by our church, is an enormous continuing legacy created by our church in the first 25 years.

Of course, our legacy is not all sunshine and roses. During each stage of our history we’ve had occasional stumbles, involving ministers and/or ourselves. Self-governance is not easy and doesn’t always go smoothly. During the 90’s we had multiple ministers but maintained our liberal religious presence for ourselves and the Tucson community.

We're coming out of a one of those difficult times, but we owe it to ourselves to remember and honor successes in the last 10 years. A few I think of are: hosting the UUA national board for a border study trip, strong participation in 2012 Phoenix General Assembly; ordinations of Lisa McDaniels-Hutchings and Christiana Heyde; and a continuing support role in No More Deaths.

We remain resilient. Beginning next Sunday is the final stage of a mutual selection process to form a new ministerial partnership to begin our next 70 years.

Thanks to Reverend Lynn for helping us to sustain. And we're proud of and thankful for Frank Valdes, the board, the search committee, and everyone who's sustaining and building our church a

Walker Smith



UUCT—A Liberal Light in the Desert

70 Years in the Life of the Church

When Frank asked for volunteers to speak on the 70th anniversary, I had a moment thinking he was talking about his wedding anniversary. Then I realized that wasn't possible and he was referring to the church's 70th.

Seventy years.. WOW.

My wife and I have been married 67 years so I have some perspective as to what 7 decades can mean in a marriage or the life of the church. There are definitely some parallels. Both are full of UPS and DOWNS. But, after a while you realize that most, if not all problems, are fixable and you move forward.

We joined the church 19 years ago. We keep coming because it's a bit like listening to the news on NPR. You're pretty sure you're getting the straight scoop.

During the past 19 years we have certainly seen several ups and downs.

But a year and a half ago, something changed. Someone opened the doors and a strong wind blew through here. On short notice, our leadership arranged for an Interim Minister, Margo reorganized the finance committee and presented a balanced budget. The congregation and staff bought in to it. The right people stepped up for Social Concerns and RE. Even the music sounded sweeter. And finally...Reverend Lynn came along and gave us a great gift...INSPIRATION.

So my fondest memory of our experience here is the past year and a half.

In most political speeches the speaker often ends with "our best days are yet to come". I don't know if they believe it but they know it adds an uplifting feeling in their audience.

Seventy years...WOW and I Truly Believe our best days ARE ahead of us.

The U of A has a saying that's like a secret hand shake. "Bear Down Arizona". That's a great way of saying "try harder". But if you are looking for a new direction, I propose we say "Bear Up UUCT" Let's keep the up surge going. Let's make Rev. Lynn feel her time here was well spent. Let's show the incoming Minister that UUCT is serious about paying our way and making our community a better place.

Pledge period is coming up. When those pledge forms come out, fill them in immediately so finance will know what they have to work with. And...

Bear UP UUCT.

Jim Periale

UUCT's Impact on Tucson

I am Margot Garcia. I joined this church in 1967, having just moved here with my husband JD for his first job as an assistant professor of physics with our two children, Athena then 5 years old and Karl 4.

This church, through its members, has had a big impact on the Tucson region over the past 70 years.

We have had political influence through our members being elected officials.

At the state level, there was Senator Lucy Davidson and Senator Morris Farr during the 1970s. Morris Farr, also a past president of this congregation, was County chair of the Democratic Party. Today we proudly support Representative Pamela Powers-Hannley.

Member Ray Weaver served on the Tucson City Council in the early 1960s, and I served 1975-77.

Some of the policy changes I advocated for and that were enacted:

- * newspaper recycling that led eventually to the broad range of recyclables picked up today

- * bicycle routes and lanes that led to the extensive bicycle facilities network of today

- * buying Old Pueblo Bus system and creating the Sun Tran bus system.

* Making housing discrimination illegal against gays and lesbians

* a conservation approach to water rates; the more you use, the more it costs, changing the previous paradigm of the more you use, the cheaper it is. This led to a recall election in which I was defeated, but it changed the nature of the political discourse on water, leading to the Groundwater Management Act of 1980.

The change in water rates also led to people changing their landscaping from lawns to xeriscape, forever altering the way Tucson looks.

*Helped change the attitude that storm water is problem, to one that sees storm water as a resource – recharging the aquifer and by design watering our gardens

I also started a discussion of tax increment financing as a way to encourage redevelopment of the downtown that led to the creation of the Rio Nuevo Special Tax District.

This church, through its members, played a role in teacher pay issues in TUSD:

This church was the nucleus of a group that led to stopping a teacher's strike in 1978. Church member John Stevens, a special education teacher, was active in the teacher's union. After church on Sunday we asked how it was going and he asked if we wanted to be part of a lawsuit to stop the issuing of teacher certificates to anyone who applied. We agreed. The three church families covered GATE, Special Education, Elementary, Junior High and High

School in TUSD. When we went to court the Assistant Attorney General, whom we knew, was very friendly and cocky as she went forward to the bench. By the end of the hearing, when a parade of persons who testified they had received the teacher certificates, but didn't meet teacher qualifications— a high school student, a teacher's aide, and finally a person who could not read - the judge ruled the emergency certificates were void and no more could be issued. The Assistant Attorney General did not even look at us as she left the courtroom. TUSD had no choice but to end the strike so there would be real teachers covering the classes.

Our church members have been active in social justice work.

Another instance of which we can be very proud was the work of Dr. Cornelius Steelink, a longtime member of this church who sadly died two years ago. Corny, as we knew him, started the ACLU here in Tucson, not once, but twice – the second time was a restart after it had died down. A number of years ago, a small group of friends gathered around his kitchen table to talk about the problem their friend Henry Oyama and his fiancée were having getting a marriage license. Hank was a Spanish speaking Japanese who had grown up in Tucson and fought in WWII. He wanted to marry a Caucasian woman and was prevented from doing so since they were of different races. The Tucson ACLU took the case that went all the way to the US Supreme Court, and the decision allowed Hank and his wife to marry.

We were also active in the Sanctuary movement and have scars on the building to show where the FBI would break in trying to find records that would lead to indictments. They never did. But the sign Minister's Study, covers damaged paneling.

And of course, we recognize that NMD is a ministry of this church. That story is for another time.

Be proud to be part of this active and caring congregation where members and friends put the 7 principles to work and we live in a better community because of it.

Margot Garcia



We are varied as the blooms of the Sonoran Desert, yet draw strength from one another.

Why I Attend UUCT

UUCT means the world to me. It has become my second family and the source of my social connections. A friend introduced me to Unitarian Universalism in the mid-80s when I was living in New Mexico. When I read the Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide, I was so excited and happy to have found this faith.

I must say, for many years, I struggled with the diversity of beliefs and even non-belief in our denomination. Having grown up in a Christian church, I was taken aback to find people who didn't believe in God. But I finally came to the conclusion that if God doesn't care whether or not people believe in Her, why should I? It's our values that hold us together, the way we live our lives. I sat at a table at lunch after church last Sunday with several newer, younger members, and I felt right at home with them. It's those values that we have in common that make for easy connections. Our Seven Principles are a firm foundation for this faith.

I've played many roles at UUCT, such as serving on the Board of Trustees twice, being on the membership committee, being secretary of the (now defunct) diversity committee, and now having the honor of being part of the Ministerial Search Committee. And what a great time we've had! What more could I want?

Aston Bloom

A Two Minute Warning

A two minute warning in a football game is a reminder that time is running out. Some of us have experienced a two minute warning in our lives. The warning may be a dreaded and potentially fatal disease or the threat to the life of a loved one. My two minute warning was the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. I felt stunned and anxious. My first reaction was to learn everything I could about the disease and to connect with the network of resources available to Parkinson's patients. I learned that over 50 percent of Parkinson's patients suffer from Anxiety and Depression caused by the loss of brain cells producing Dopamine which is a neurotransmitter.

As a Hospice volunteer I had provided respite care to hospice patients in the end stage of their lives. I had also visited Bill Bland during the course of his battle with Parkinson's. He demonstrated great courage. He died when his body was no longer a friend.

I have also been a member of the Men's Group for several years. Some men in the group have died and the members were caring and supportive to them. I recall Tom Watkins and me sharing ideas about death. He had great courage and determination and said that he wanted to live each day fully and be fully "spent" before he died.

A year ago I suffered a Parkinson's induced depression with anxiety. I turned to my medical team for treatment. It took several weeks for me to resume coming to church. Members of the Men's Group contacted me. They did not try to fix me. Each member told me they missed me. I felt

validated and empowered by their loving concern. Parkinson's cannot be fixed but it can be endured. As members of UUCT we have gifts we can give to each other. One gift in the stewardship brochure is "To encourage each other and lift up every being we encounter".

I am blessed to be a member of this caring faith community. Each one of us can make a difference in the life of someone else.

Roger Steenland



Testimonial for UUCT

I've been a member here for 23 years. How have we changed? I think that in the past, our theology was often defined in terms of the things we don't believe. This resulted in a list of forbidden or suspect words, including prayer, God, worship, even spirituality. Today, we are more inclusive, more tolerant, and more often use the language of traditional theology for our own purposes: thus, "worship" has become a consideration of whatever is worthy, and "God" is understood to be the ultimate reality, whatever that means to each of us.

On the negative side, I think we have a diminished sense of religious community. I don't take this to be a statement about this particular congregation, but rather a symptom of the increasing individualism of today's society. Belonging to a church has become too much like an annually renewable, or dispensable, membership in a club, rather than a commitment to a unique intergenerational body of people.

Where are we likely to be, say, 23 years from now? Many of us won't be around. Who will replace us? Just to maintain a constant membership, we must recruit large numbers of people who are now between 15 and 35. Since fewer of them seem attracted to traditional conservative theologies, there are opportunities here. But there are also two obstacles.

First, younger adults often describe themselves as "spiritual, but not religious." They have no problem with the word God, but they resist appeals to join a congregation.

Second, many young adults are now leaving college with massive student debts. Asking them to give even 3% of their salary to a church will be a very tough sell.

I am committed to liberal religion for various historical and theological reasons. But this issue is also deeply personal for me. There is just one place to which I can go and feel confident that I will receive a respectful hearing for what I have to say: Unitarian Universalist congregations. And the sanctuary within a sanctuary is the choir: a group whose mission is to demonstrate, and embody, the principle that the whole transcends the sum of its individual members. Those things, and many others, make liberal religion an irreplaceable gem. It is worth fighting for.

Therefore, we must redouble our efforts by way of contributions, attendance, and involvement as if the survival of liberal religion depends on it. It does.

Randall Springer

A UU Journey

It is an honor to be able to address you on the 70th anniversary of this church. I am speaking this morning on why I have an active member of this church for the last 19 years.

I invite you to join me on a quick three minute journey.

It will start in the years before the US Civil War when my great grandfather James Lennox came to the US from Scotland and settled in the small town of Rochester in western New York State. He was a printer by trade and was a member of the First Universalist Church of Rochester.

His son, James G. Lennox, also a printer, followed his father's footsteps to the First Universalist Church. My grandfather had a large family, five sons and one daughter, my Mother, the youngest. When the five sons formed themselves into a basketball team, they were not allowed to play at the local YMCA, because they were not Christians. This did not stop my grandfather, as he donated the funds to build an indoor basketball court behind the church, which still stands to this day.

My parents were both members of the First Universalist Church of Rochester. So I grew up as a 4th generation UU.

Just down the street from the First Universalist Church was the Unitarian Church of Rochester. Among its members was Susan B. Anthony. In more recent times, the Unitarian Church moved out of the central city to a location behind

the home where I spent my first 18 years. They built a magnificent structure that now has a membership of over 600. It is located on a large plot of land where I used to play baseball.

And what attracted all of my family members to this religion? I believe it was a series of basic principles: common sense, a deep belief in the concept of justice; acceptance of others; fair play; and service to the community and the world beyond. The church and its ideals also attracted a number of local business leaders and their wives and families.

I might close with a note that when I met MS Carolyn over 56 years ago, she had never heard of my denomination, as she had spent many years as a Methodist. It did not take her long to see the value of the UU principles and since then she has been a tireless worker in many phases of this church and in the larger denomination.

So look around you this morning and note who is sitting there. These are good people. They believe, as my extended family did, and as I do, in the same values that we continue to cherish today; the concept of Justice, acceptance of others, fair play; and service to this church, the neighborhood, and the world beyond.

This is why my past 19 years have been a part of the 70 year history of this church. Thank you for taking this short historical and personal journey with me today.

Bruce Saunders

Looking Forward, Looking Back

At times the past and future merge into the present. The following poem celebrated the installation of a new minister in 1997. The sentiments ring true today as we look forward to the installation of the next minister in the continued life of this church.

On the installation of Stan Stafancic as Minister of the Tucson Unitarian Universalist Church March 9, 1997

For nearly fifty years,
We have been installing ministers;
We being the Tucson UU Church.

We, the congregation, are hopeful;
Pledging to honor and respect
A teacher, pastor, and religious leader.

We place our trust in him
And ask him for guidance
In our most intimate search for the holy,
To stand before him with no defenses,
Naked in our openness,
So that we might heal and grow.

And he stands before us;
Promising his intellect, his wisdom,
To guide us without thought for his self-interest,
But in the interest of the church and wide denomination.

He pledges his professional life and fortune
To our democratic institution, trusting
That we will be honest and fair,
And forgive his human failings,
As we must also forgive our own.
Like the second, or even third marriage,
Some of us make the leap of faith,
That love is right this time
And our trust is well placed.

The institution must go on,
And we need each other.

For others, this is the first time
For the installation of a new minister.
We are full of love and enthusiasm for the covenant.
The future together looks bright and rosy.

Let the blessings begin.



Margot Weaver Garcia