

**Report to the Board of Trustees, Unitarian Universalist Church, Surprise, AZ**  
**Rev. Samuel Schaal, Transition Minister**  
**Dec. 18, 2022**

**Transitional Matters**

- The sudden resignation Nov. 16 of Music Director Paul Yoder was related to a sermon the previous Sunday Nov. 13 where I used a joke as a sermon illustration. That, along with the laughter the joke encouraged, was hurtful to Paul and some others. We responded with an email to members and friends Nov. 16, being transparent on why he resigned. I returned to Surprise from home in Dallas to host a listening circle with the choir that Saturday and to any interested after worship on Sunday, and to be present in the pulpit on Sunday.
- In our ministry review meeting in November and our discussion on conflict avoidance, I mentioned a cartoon in the former Christopher Street Magazine, back in the early gay civil rights movement in the 1970s. I found the cartoon online (right). Congregational cultures can quietly but firmly enforce a guard against talking about uncomfortable issues. Following the resignation of Paul, we ARE talking about things we “shouldn’t” talk about. This is progress.
- A congregation is a living system comprised of the cells of individual people. How the cells relate to the whole is critical. We agreed to have a conversation in a **special meeting in January** about governance, the organization chart, the relationship of the minister to the Board and the congregation, who is accountable for what and whom. I think this is critical to your next ministry to help your new minister feel welcome in all avenues of a professional minister’s work in a congregation that wants to grow ministry and vision. May we schedule that at this meeting?



*"And God bless Uncle Harry and his roommate Jack,  
who we're not supposed to talk about."*

**Community Outreach**

- I've been invited by the secretary of the Arizona Interfaith Movement to write a story for the Arizona Republic on Unitarian Universalism. My copy is due mid-January so I assume it will appear shortly thereafter.

**Pastoral**

- Church member John Marshall died Nov. 21. His wife Anna is planning no local memorial service.
- I officiated at the wedding of church member Evert Adams to Sandra Smalley following worship on Dec. 11.
- Watch for our first-in-a-long-time child dedication Dec. 25 as we dedicate young Frederick Hanan and welcome his parents Liz and Jon. They have not yet joined but have been regular visitors.

## Membership

- On Nov. 13 we welcomed 11 new members to the congregation (since the last new member recognition May 1). The order of worship Nov. 13 showed nine members, and two more signed the book that day who were recognized in service. Since then, three more have joined, each having experience in other UU congregations.

## Worship

- We gather for services Christmas Eve (5 p.m. Dec. 24) and Christmas Day (10:30 a.m. Dec. 25).
- Guest speaker for services on New Year's Day Jan. 1 is Jim Reay, a recent visitor to UUCS, from West Valley UU.

## Programs

- Thanks to Lois Bartel and Liz Thomas for launching our first Covenant Group that meets twice a month. Out of that group it is hoped a few leaders emerge to lead more covenant groups. This is a good program to assist the church in the transition from pastoral- to program-size as it provides an easier way for new people to connect, and provides a good small group experience to connect and go deeper for all.

## Staff Reports

### *Lisa Lawrence, Director of Family Ministry*

- Intergenerational Holiday Service—Collated scripts for everyone, worked with Maggi and Mary Anne to introduce them to music, cast kids and adults in roles, coordinated costumes, decorations and props, rehearsed during class time with children and held one dress rehearsal for the entire cast, advertised in weekly announcements, newsletter and FB pages, created OSV with cast list for the program.
- Holiday Potluck—Following the dress rehearsal Dec. 10, I organized a potluck for families whether or not they were participating in the play. We had appetizers and desserts, played games, made crafts and got to know each other better.
- OWL Facilitator Training—I registered and paid for myself. I registered Annie Converse but haven't been able to pay for her yet. Her fee will be reduced since she is lodging with relatives and they haven't told me the new cost, though I've asked twice. If I can't pay for her before the end of December, I'm worried the money I had in my budget will disappear. I registered Michael Piper, but haven't paid for him yet, since we are waiting to see if the non-Questers Adult RE fee is approved in the budget. If it is, it will pay for his registration fee. I also haven't been told if enough people registered to hold the training. Waiting.
- UUC Surprise Family FB Page—Weekly postings to communicate with families and church members and announce content of classes and events. See <https://www.facebook.com/uucsurprisefamily>
- Classroom—Attendance is up! We have four new regularly attending children. After the holiday play, I will make two classrooms: Preschool-2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades.
- OWL Facilitator Training—For the March training I have scheduled two family ministry volunteers for 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; one adult education volunteer for adult/senior. I am signing up the two for family ministry and the adult volunteer will sign up after the budget is passed.
- Trunk or Treat—We had 22 cars and well over 50 visitors from the community. It was a hit. With more church participation, we could go even bigger next year!

### *Music*

- Maggie Mahan and Mary Anne Poggenburg have masterfully taken up temporary volunteer leadership of the choir and music program following the resignation of Paul Yoder.

- The choir hasn't missed a beat (pun intended) in singing. They continue to rehearse every Sunday. They performed in the Dec. 11 holiday play with Family Ministry and are slated for the special choir service on Dec. 18. They've had several special rehearsals for all this.
- Welcomed new accompanist Rosemary Schreoder who first played in the Dec. 4 service. She will play on the first and third Sundays, with Linda King playing on the second and fourth (on most months).

*Judy Gilmore, Congregational Administrator*

- Helping stewardship efforts on recording pledges, etc.
- Routine tasks along with various special tasks are becoming challenging in only 20 hours a week. In conversation with Sam and Sherry about this.

#### **General**

- I am at home on vacation **Dec. 26-Jan. 2** for the holidays, returning to the office Dec. 27.

In Our Living Tradition,

*Sam*