

The Unitarian
Congregation of
Taos
December 2019
Bulletin Board



Sun., Dec. 1	Service: <i>Original Blessings</i> The Rev. Gary Kowalski Special Music by Elaine Nelson & Chris Burton
Sun., Dec. 8	Sharing Circle: <i>Compassion</i>
Thu., Dec. 12	Women's Group, 4 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 15	Service: <i>Four Hundred Sixty-Three</i> The Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Wed., Dec. 18	Men's Group, 4:30 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 22	Sharing Circle: <i>A Course in Miracles</i>
Sun., Dec. 29	Service: <i>Burning Bowl Ritual</i> The Rev. Christine Robinson

Services & Circles begin at 11 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge, 124 Camino de Santiago, at the intersection with Gusdorf Road

On My Mind
The Rev. Gary Kowalski

While there's lots of Jesus talk, for many black Americans the main story from the Bible comes from the Hebrew book of Exodus: Moses freeing the slaves. Scripture is far from history, which suggests that the "apiru" or *Hebrews* as they later called themselves, were a migrant underclass who filtered slowly into the Nile breadbasket 3,500 years ago in times of drought and famine. And certainly there was no Charlton Heston moment when the Red Sea parted and Moses led his people out of bondage. But it is important, nonetheless, to remember that the takeaway message of the Bible is that Yahweh, Creator of Heaven and Earth, is also a moral God on the side of the oppressed and disenfranchised. Pharaohs, Caesars, führers and even trumped-up American despots ultimately receive their due.

This comes to mind with Hollywood's new portrayal of "Harriet." I haven't seen the film yet, but intend to soon. I understand that critics have taken issue with some historical details. But it's the truth that a slave (named "Minty Ross" after her Maryland masters) renamed and reclaimed her own identity as a free woman who led 13 rescue missions below the Mason-Dixon line to bring over 70 other slaves to safety through the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman continued to work as an armed scout and spy for the Union army during the Civil War. And she then went to work for women's suffrage when that war was won. It's the truth that she was called "Moses" by the men and women she led to freedom . . . even if an historical Moses never existed.

Stories can sometimes be true, even when they are not 100 percent factual. It's a good lesson to remember in this season. Christmas? Wrong date, zero credibility to the gospel accounts of shepherds and angels. But can a poor, out-of-wedlock child

bring help, healing and comfort to the world? Yes indeed. Hanukkah? The myth of the miraculous oil is a fable, but hope endures beyond the limits of what seems possible.

And what about a God of justice, who cares for the least of these? Fellow rationalists—that's another metaphor, a meme for some eternal longing in our own deep nature that invites us to pray and work for a world where women like Harriet are the norm rather than the exception. Until then, we wait, inspired and half-believing . . . listening again to the old stories that contain a prophecy of things that ought to be.

Sunday, December 1
Original Blessings
The Rev. Gary Kowalski

Unitarians versus Trinitarians? What really distinguished religious liberals, originally, was not a quarrel about the Trinity but our doctrine of human nature. Unitarians, following William Ellery Channing, rejected the dogma of original sin and affirmed that all people are stamped with a "likeness to God." This morning, Reverend Kowalski explores the ways in which the claim that we are born with a conscience, moral compass, and love of truth are increasingly supported by scientific research into infants' moral and social development. As the Good Book says, "A little child shall lead them."

Special Music by Elaine Nelson, saxophone and Chris Burton, guitar.

Sunday, December 15
Four Hundred Sixty-Three
The Rev. Munro Sickafoose

The roots of our Unitarian heritage go deep. One of those roots is grounded in Polish Unitarianism, whose followers promoted ideas about social justice that were centuries ahead of their time. But their influence lives on.

Sunday, December 29
Burning Bowl Ritual
The Rev. Christine Robinson

The new year calls us forward, filled with mystery. As we turn toward that new year, we take a final glimpse of the past year, and reckon with all that it held for us.

What parts of our lives—what things, ideas, people, ways of living—have become obstacles to our becoming the people we want to be, the people we need to be? What's holding you back? What's getting in the way of your living as fully as you'd like to? What might you burn away from your current life? What will you relinquish?

Join us on December 29th for the annual Burning Bowl Ritual.

SHARING CIRCLES
December 8, "Compassion"

*The only way to learn compassion
is through our own broken hearts; we have to
back up and pass through our own pain.*

—MATTHEW FOX

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual practices. Merriam-Webster defines compassion as the sympathetic consciousness of another's distress, with a desire to eliminate it. Often we find obstacles to the practice of compassion. If we are unaware of our own pain, we might feel pity for another's suffering. On the other hand, overwhelmed by our own problems we are unable to open our hearts to the needs of others.

The exercise of compassion needs appropriate boundaries—close enough to be helpful but distant enough to be effective. Yet, even if our compassion is imperfect, it enriches both our lives and the lives of those we meet.

Please join our circle as we share our experiences of finding a balance between detachment and involvement. How have your own experiences affected your ability to be compassionate? Think of an experience you had in the past few weeks in giving, receiving, or observing compassion.

December 22, "A Course in Miracles"

Have you wondered what the Course in Miracles is all about? If so, come to an informational meeting in lieu of the sharing circle. Marie Griffith, a longtime student of the spiritual psychology, will describe it and take your questions. If there's enough interest, we may form a covenant group. (*continued next col.*)

The Course in Miracles is a course mainly in Love and Forgiveness. It is a self-study consisting of 1,300 pages of theology, daily lessons, and a manual of terms with instructions for teachers. Its goal is to heal our minds so we can enjoy perfect health and peace. Though difficult to practice, it offers a simple solution to every problem. Also, two more things: (1) It teaches that the world, *the way we conceive of it*, is an illusion, because all is consciousness; our experiences, however, are very real. And (2) All illness is due to a conflicted mind.

ACIM is based on non-dual thinking, perhaps closer to Buddhism than Christianity.

Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists.

Note: the word "real" is your eternal, *unalterable Spirit*, i.e., God/Creator.

What is a Miracle? One of the simplest definitions is that it is a correction for how we perceive and how we think. The miracle is focused on healing our minds so we can think with God/Love. When our minds are healed, via advanced forgiveness, our bodies are not far behind. The world is just **a reflection of our unloving thoughts**. It asks to you look on devastation and remind your mind that what it sees is false.

UCOT Women's Group, December 12

The UU Women will have a Holiday Potluck at Stephanie Yoder's from 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, December 12th.

An email with more information on how to RSVP, directions for obtaining a ride, and directions to Stephanie's home will be sent prior to the meeting. To be added to or deleted from the email list, contact Carol Doughty at lccdoughty@gmail.com.

UCOT Men's Group, December 18

The Men's Group will meet at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 18th. To receive monthly notices and directions, contact Terry Surguine to be added to the email list: tsurguine@gmail.com.

Music Committee News

Join Martha for singing practice at 10:30 a.m. on the first and third Sundays. All are welcome; attend when you can. Special music on December 1st by Elaine Nelson, saxophone and Chris Burton, guitar.

Update on Pledge Drive

You may remember that we are in the midst of our Pledge Drive for 2020. Thus far, 17 households have pledged a little over \$20,000. This is about halfway to our goal of \$36,000. This past year we had pledges from 39 households.

Please fill out the pledge form you received in your pledge letter and return it in the collection basket at a service or sharing circle, or mail it to P.O. Box 510, Taos, NM 87571. Or you can email or call me directly with your pledge information.

Thank you for supporting our wonderful congregation!

Bette Myerson, Treasurer
575-758-3376, bette@taosnet.com

A Note from the President Barbara Scott

Once again, it looks like our website has been hacked and my name used to entice you to send money. Believe me, I would never do that. In person? Maybe during pledge season but online? Never. According to *UU World*, this is a popular tactic of hackers and vandals, because they see it as an opportunity to traffic on the good name of people who are trusted members of a community.

Please never give money to anyone who asks for it online. Even if it looks extremely legitimate. These did *not* look legitimate but that doesn't mean you wouldn't respond from your heart and want to help.

Surprise Good News

In case you haven't already heard, Gary and Dori have decided to stay in New Mexico, and Gary is signing a contract with us for at least another year. Their in-laws made them a generous offer so they could buy them out of the duplex they'd all purchased together when they first moved to New Mexico. So Gary & Dori won't be moving back East after all! I believe it was a confluence of things, perhaps not least of which was that he realized how much we'd all miss having him as our minister. Plus, he's offered to conduct three sharing circles next year, which ought to inject a different kind of life into that part of our ministry.

We'll get the chance to express our gratitude in person at the service on December 1.

Let's Face End-of-Life Issues Together

Being prepared for the end of our life is a gift we can give ourselves and our loved ones. When we can clearly tell our loved ones how we want to approach our death, we achieve some peace of mind, and they have a clear understanding of our wishes. It's important to consider these issues while we have the time and the ability to sort out and state how we want our end-of-life issues to be handled. We will discuss making a will, naming an executor, preparing a power of attorney, and naming an individual to make decisions for us if we should become unable mentally or physically to do so.

Some issues to consider: What is acceptable to us, what will make us comfortable, whether and how to prolong our life. When we can put our desires for these matters down on paper and have conversations about it with our loved ones, we will make their lives easier because they won't be forced to struggle with what they think we want.

More pragmatically, where are your end-of-life documents? Your passwords? What about your pets? The Unitarian Congregation will have a chance to participate in a two-part session on end-of-life preparation in late January and February. Chuck Fawns and Chris Westover will be the facilitators. The cost will be \$10 each, to cover the binders and other materials. Space is limited to 20 people, so it is imperative to reserve your space: first come, first served. If more than 20 people sign up, there will be a wait list and if any of the first 20 respondents can't attend, the space will be filled by going down the wait list. The exact dates and location will be announced.

If you're interested, contact Chuck Fawns by email: Kyspirit@taosnet.com.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

5	Mimi Owensby
9	David Owensby
12	Don Keefe
20	Martha Grossman
23	Emily Gillispie
26	Gary Kowalski