

The Unitarian
Congregation
of Taos
August 2020
Bulletin Board



Sun., Aug. 2	Service: <i>Oh, Olympia!</i> on Zoom Rev. Gary Kowalski
Sun., Aug. 9	Sharing Circle: <i>Judgment</i> (via email)
Sun., Aug. 16	Service: <i>It's a Mystery</i> on Zoom Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Wed., Aug. 19	Men's Group, 4:30 p.m., on Zoom
Sun., Aug. 23	Sharing Circle: <i>Class</i> (on Zoom with Rev. Gary)
Sun., Aug. 30	5th Sunday: Chautauqua discussion

Because of COVID-19, the Unitarian Congregation of Taos has suspended services and sharing circles for an indefinite length of time. We will be meeting online via Zoom for abbreviated services.

On My Mind

The Reverend Gary Kowalski

Years ago, I got an early-morning call to come to church. Quick. A suicidal young man was threatening to walk out into traffic.

When I arrived the police had beaten me to the scene and I discovered the agitated young man was African American. Two white officers in uniform wearing gun belts loaded with handcuffs, tasers, billy clubs and other tools of the trade were doing nothing to calm the situation. I asked them politely to leave. Obviously this stranger had walked into a church because it signified safety and sanctuary. He needed pastoring, not policing. I took him out for pancakes and coffee. A good meal doesn't cure an existential crisis, but it's often a decent palliative.

Current calls to "defund" the police are simply an acknowledgment that law enforcement isn't the answer to every problem. And the assertion that police departments suffer from "systemic racism" doesn't mean that all cops are bigots. Police and sheriffs come in all colors and races and most are undoubtedly doing their best in a very hard job.

Systemic racism means that our judicial process produces tilted outcomes. Blacks, Latinos and native people wind up behind bars far more often than whites, and it's not just cops at fault. It's our underfunded Public Defender system. It's local prosecutors who get rewarded for producing convictions (some DAs actually offer cash bonuses for trials that end in a lockup). It's for-profit prisons that incentivize longer sentences. There's unconscious racism at every level.

My wife is a criminal attorney. She used to defend juveniles. She'd watch surveillance videos from department stores introduced as evidence in court. Two teens would enter the mall, one white, one black. Both were shoplifting but the security cameras always focused on the black girl, who would be charged and convicted. Was she guilty? Yes. Was justice done? You decide.

This past June, our UUA General Assembly passed a resolution to find alternatives to policing. Congress began bipartisan talks to shut down transfers of military-style gear to those patrolling our city streets. I think our whole approach to crime needs an overhaul. Why is it "looting" when a black youth steals a TV but "liquidation" when white-collar crooks take a company into bankruptcy, giving themselves million-dollar bonuses while leaving worker pensions high and dry?

I'm glad the conversation has begun. It's just tragic that it took 8 minutes and 46 seconds to get it started.

-Gary

Sunday, August 2, 11 a.m.

Oh, Olympia!

The Reverend Gary Kowalski

This month marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment. Although Susan B. Anthony said "failure is impossible" when the suffrage movement began, it took three generations of activism to win the vote for women. This morning, Gary celebrates the life of Olympia Brown, whose long career as a Universalist minister and suffrage leader spanned those many decades.

See the weekly email for the Zoom link.

Sunday, August 16, 11 a.m.

It's a Mystery

The Reverend Munro Sickafoose

The subject of my August sermon is still a mystery. With all the craziness and uncertainty, who knows what the next few weeks will bring? Stay tuned for further developments, and thanks for your patience in these troubled times.

See the weekly email for the Zoom link.

SHARING CIRCLES

Judgment/Nonjudgment

August 9, 11 a.m.

When we look “out there” and see something we find reprehensible, we’re afraid *not* to judge it. If we don’t judge it, we think it means we accept it. If we accept it, we fear we might approve of it. If we approve of it, we might actually become it. So judging keeps the object of our judgment at a safe distance from us. We not only don’t feel the threat of being tainted by it, we actually firm up and put a gloss on our own self-image, another word for ego. So judgment strengthens ego. But is that a good thing?

Observe your thoughts and notice any judging you might be engaging in over the next little while. On August 12, be ready to share your insights about your own experiences with judgment.

Thinking About Class

August 23, 11 a.m.

Class arrived in America with the first European settlers. The passengers on the Mayflower included about one-third Pilgrims (religious dissenters), one-third gentlemen of the London Adventurers (financial speculators) and one-third indentured servants (street children and orphans drafted as labor from the slums.) Today, the vast majority of Americans tell pollsters they are “middle class,” but almost half are living paycheck to paycheck and could not handle an unexpected expense of \$400—the cost of a new set of tires or a trip to the dentist.

While the public is intensely focused on racial tension and healing, less attention is paid to class. Is class defined by education? Income? Pedigree? How does it overlap with race or ethnicity? Does class even exist? Our Sharing Circle on August 23 will be on Zoom, moderated by Gary Kowalski.



Music Committee News

We hope you enjoy the music we are now including in our Zoom services and especially as we welcome Martha back!

On Sunday, August 2, we will have pianist Kim Backkum as our musical guest.



UCOT Men’s Group, August 19

The UU Men’s Group will meet Wednesday, August 19 at 4:30 p.m., via Zoom. To receive a Zoom invitation, contact tsurguine@gmail.com.



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Mary McPhail Gray
- 6 Bob Silver
- 8 Wally Cox
- 13 Mary Rodgers
- 14 Sally Savage
- 22 Mya Coursey