

The Unitarian
Congregation
of Taos
October 2020
Bulletin Board



- Sun., Oct. 4 Service: *The Question Box*, on Zoom
Rev. Gary Kowalski
- Sun., Oct. 11 Sharing Circle: *Why I Get Up in the
Morning* (via email)
- Sun., Oct. 18 Service: *October Surprises*, on Zoom
Rev. Munro Sickafoose, special music
by Michael Virga, voice and guitar
- Wed., Oct. 21 Men's Group, 4:30 p.m., on Zoom
- Sun., Oct. 25 Sharing Circle: *Varieties of Religious
Experience* (via email)

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

Lately I have been dreaming about music. I dreamt I was playing scales in the Mixolydian mode from high on the guitar neck down toward the nut. I dreamt that I'd been given notation and lyrics for a Doc Watson piece of traditional bluegrass finger-picking (way beyond my ability). The dreams were surprising. They felt hopeful and assuring. Sometimes in the middle of the night, when I can't sleep, I think about chords and music theory.

Toward the end of my full time career in parish ministry, when I did more counseling, I often found myself telling my congregants to pay attention to their dreams. I didn't have the answers that could help them forgive themselves for having cheated on their husbands. I couldn't advise them about their vocational quandaries or the sorrow of having lost contact with their children. But I believed that, somehow, they possessed the inner wisdom to find their way through the labyrinths of their own devising and be free.

We are living in troubled times. A pandemic. Economic uncertainty. Extreme fires and weather as a result of climate change. A possibly deranged and corrupt president. Most of us, in addition, are coping with the unavoidable and predictable challenges of aging, loss and infirmity.

What are you dreaming about these days? What do your dreams mean? And what do my dreams mean? You tell me. I think that others frequently see us more easily and objectively than we see ourselves. We are puzzles to ourselves, wrapped in obscurity. By contrast, we are transparent to others.

I think my dreams mean that there is an inner harmony in the midst of dissonance. There is an order in what seems random. It is my job to find it. It is my job to stay in tune with the beat and rhythms of life itself. This is not easy. It takes skill and learning, as well as passion.

Yet the music is worth the effort. So practice. Practice kindness. Practice hope. Practice the scales of love. You will never play to perfection. But practice daily.

Sleep on it.

—Gary

Sunday, October 4
The Question Box

The Reverend Gary Kowalski

I love hearing your questions. What historical guests would you invite to a dinner party? Who's your favorite commie? What are you afraid of? Are there limits to tolerance? What happens when we die? Or should we all upload ourselves into an artificially intelligent program where we never die? Unitarian Universalists hold that faith is better at questioning our answers than answering our questions. But this morning is your opportunity to put the preacher on the spot. Please send whatever questions and issues you'd like me to address a week before we Zoom. Email me: gary.kowalski@gmail.com. The sermon will directly address your inquiries. Ask, and ye shall receive!

See the weekly email for the Zoom link.

Sunday, October 18
October Surprises

The Reverend Munro Sickafoose

In American political jargon, an October surprise is a news event deliberately created or timed or sometimes occurring spontaneously to influence the outcome of an election, particularly one for the U.S. presidency. But there are things happening in other spheres that are also surprising, and we should also pay attention to those.

Special music by Michael Virga, voice & guitar.

See the weekly email for the Zoom link.

SHARING CIRCLES

October 11

Why I Get Up in the Morning

It seems everything has changed since March of this year, all routines upended. Pre-pandemic, you might have gotten up early because you had errands to run. Or you might have met a friend for breakfast. Maybe you were one of those who made it to the early spin class at the Taos Spa.

Whatever it was, I imagine it's changed. On Sunday, October 11, you'll be asked to share with us exactly what it is that gets you out of bed in the morning *these* days.

October 25

Varieties of Religious Experience

William James was a Harvard professor from 1872 to 1907. He wrote the first textbook on psychology, then moved over to teach philosophy. From 1901-1902, he gave a famous series of 20 lectures to his colleagues across the pond, at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, as part of the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion. The ultimate result of those lectures was James's classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

William James (coincidentally the brother of novelist Henry and diarist Alice) explains in many ways what constitutes a religious experience. Here's one:

"It is as if there were in the human consciousness a *sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception* of what we may call 'something there'." He says these senses are as reliable as our other senses, except that they excite the sense of awakening our attitude and conduct. "So far as religious conceptions were able to touch this reality-feeling, they would be believed in in spite of criticism..."

In other words, everything James spoke and wrote about in this 500-page book is his collection of different individuals' experiences of touching the divine. He might just as easily have called it "the varieties of mystical experience." But he couldn't, because he was giving his lectures to a group of stodgy philosophers and theologians, and he didn't want to scare them away from listening.

On October 25, the primary questions for the sharing circle will be this: Have you ever had what, under these terms, you would classify as a religious experience? And, if so, how would you describe it?

If you haven't had a religious experience, you might have had one of those unexplainable mystical occurrences. If so, you can share that.



Music Committee News

We are excited to welcome guest musicians back to our Sunday service! The October 18 service will include a performance by Michael Virga from the band Second Wind Endeavor. Michael will sing and play guitar solo.

UCOT Men's Group, October 21

The UU Men's Group will meet Wednesday, October 21, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom. Sign up to receive a Zoom invitation by contacting Dennis Scott at bridge4fun@mac.com.

2021 UCOT Pledge Campaign

A Note from Bob Aubrecht,
Finance & Stewardship Chair

The 2021 pledge campaign will take place during the month of October. Of course, it will be different from previous campaigns due to COVID-19. You will receive a pledge packet in the mail from Bette Myerson in late September. Please take time to read the materials. After that you will receive a phone call from one of the UCOT pledge volunteers. They will answer any questions you may have as well as ask for your input and feedback on UCOT's programs and plans for 2021. Please return your 2021 pledge to Bette Myerson before the end of October.

Your prior support for UCOT is greatly appreciated. I hope that you will continue to pledge your financial support for the Congregation as we continue to adjust to the realities of COVID-19.



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|----|-----------------|
| 4 | Ray Taylor |
| 26 | Dianne Frost |
| 27 | Michael Burney |
| 27 | Robert Spillers |
| 31 | Marsha Fawns |