

The Unitarian  
Congregation  
of Taos  
May 2021  
Bulletin Board



Sun., May 2	Congregation Discussion: <i>'The New Normal'—adjusting to a post-COVID-19 time</i>
Sun., May 9	Sharing Circle: <i>Unfriending Fear</i> (via email)
Sun., May 16	Service: <i>Beatific Beats</i> Rev. Gary Kowalski
Wed., May 19	Men's Group, 4:30 p.m.
Sun., May 23	Sharing Circle: <i>Unfriending Fear</i> (on Zoom)
Sun., May 30	5th Sunday Special Program

***Good Brains, Bad Brains***  
**Rev. Munro Sickafoose**

In her book, *7½ Lessons About the Brain*, Lisa Feldman Barrett relates the story of a man drafted into an army and ordered to hunt down guerilla fighters. He was training with his squad in the forest one morning when he detected movement ahead of him. What he saw was a line of guerilla fighters dressed in camo and carrying guns. He raised his rifle and prepared to fire at the leader, who was carrying an AK-47. Before he could fire, he felt a hand on his shoulder, and the voice of his squad mate saying, "Don't shoot. It's just a boy." He lowered his rifle and looked again, and what he now saw was a young boy leading a line of cows. The AK-47 was just a herding stick.

We can all sympathize—our brains play tricks on us, too, although usually not in such critical circumstances. How can such things happen? Don't we see what is actually right in front of us? Well, yes... and no. We are beginning to understand that our brains didn't evolve for thinking but for predicting what is happening in the world outside our skulls, so that we could survive. Good predictions = survival. Our brain interprets sense data by what it expects to see, based on past experience. These predictions can be wrong, especially when we encounter something unknown, or when our expectations override our senses, like the soldier in the forest. All of this takes place automatically, autonomously, and is out of our conscious control. This is true of everyone we meet. We all have biases and expectations about the world, and beware those who claim not to have any.

The good news is that we can make choices that affect our future predictions about reality, and nudge our automatic reactions in more desirable directions. Just knowing how our brains work is a step in the right direction. We can train our brains! We can stop, or at least slow down, our expected ways of predicting how the world—and other people—will behave. This takes conscious effort over time, and it isn't easy. Some forms of meditation are useful for

this. Exposing ourselves to other ideas, other cultures, other ways of seeing and knowing the world can help. Trying to really inhabit other points of view is a difficult and fruitful exercise. And we must always be ready to tap one another on the shoulder and whisper, "Take another look."

***'The New Normal***  
***Adjusting to a post-COVID-19 time***  
**Congregation Discussion**  
**Sunday, May 2**

Dr. Caryle Zorumski will facilitate a discussion on the steps and strategies we need to consider as we move from the limits and challenges of the past 12 plus months. The thought is to provide an opportunity for members of UCOT to talk about some of the choices and challenges as we each – personally and as families – make the transition to a post-COVID-19 time and place. If you have the opportunity, please take a few moments to read a [recent article in the New York Times](#) on "The New Normal."

*See your weekly email for the Zoom link*

***Beatific Beats***  
**Rev. Gary Kowalski**  
**Sunday, May 16**

The death of Lawrence Ferlinghetti this spring spurred me to take another look at the art, ethos and spirituality of the Beat Generation, a term that Jack Kerouac associated with Beatific (imparting holy bliss) and the Beatitudes. These two, along with others like Allen Ginsburg and Gary Snyder, were offbeat, both ahead of their time and against their time. After all these years, they remain slightly radioactive, with the power to both energize and shock. What do the Beats have to say to us today?

*See your weekly email for the Zoom link*

SHARING CIRCLE\*

*Unfriending Fear*

Sunday, May 9 & 23, 11 a.m.

There are rational fears, and there are irrational fears. Fear is less a response to danger than it is a preparation for danger. And when you prepare well enough, you usually manifest whatever it is you're planning for.

Let's talk about our fears.

For more information, contact Dennis Scott at [bridge4fun@mac.com](mailto:bridge4fun@mac.com), or call 575-224-1055.

**UCOT Men's Group**

May 19

The UU Men's Group will meet Wednesday, May 19, at 4:30 p.m., via Zoom. To receive a Zoom invitation, contact Dennis Scott at [bridge4fun@mac.com](mailto:bridge4fun@mac.com).

**UCOT Treasurer's Report**

Joe Mazza, UCOT Treasurer

The following is a summary of the UCOT First Quarter 2021 financials:

Income

Regular Pledges	Budget \$8,500	Actual \$12,189
Total Income	Budget \$9,560	Actual \$15,274

Expenses

Total	Budgeted \$9,333	Actual \$ 7,730
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Net Operating

\$7,544

Centinel checking account, 3/31/21 .....	\$96,449
UCOT Cares II donations received .....	\$ 5,900
Total short- and long-term reserves .....	\$90,549
2021 operating reserve .....	\$19,000
Net long-term reserve .....	\$71,549

Please don't forget to read the UCOT weekly emails as they contain updated information regarding the UCOT CARES2 and Little Food Pantry campaigns. Thank you for your incredible generosity!



**Music Committee News**

Gael Minton

The oboe is one of my favorite instruments, and it is my privilege and great pleasure to be a friend of oboist [Peggy Pearson](#), who played in 2007 with the Taos Chamber Music Group.

One of the most wonderful classical pieces for oboe is a Trio by Beethoven with variations of a theme by Mozart from the opera Don Giovanni "La ci darem la mano." This trio was originally written for two oboes and English horn. It is also played with oboe, clarinet and bassoon, and oboe, viola and cello. [Here is a link](#) for the original arrangement of "La ci darem."



*Katherine Needleman*

May is the birth month, in 1978, of Katherine Needleman, principal oboist of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. I have chosen a link to one of her solo concerts played last year in May (a Covid sheltered offering) in a raft on a Vermont lake! Katherine is playing [Telemann, Sara Teasdale "Woodsong,"](#) after the song of a wood thrush, and Giles Silvestrini etudes. The wind interferes in parts of the concert but only briefly interrupts the exquisite playing.

Enjoy!



**MAY BIRTHDAYS**

- 3 Chuck Doughty
- 4 Marjorie Luckey
- 18 Madison Taylor
- 22 Barbara Martinez
- 25 Rachel Cohen

## **Fifth Sunday Program** **Land, Water, Forests** **Sunday, May 30**

The Fifth Sunday Planning Group is pleased to announce an important program to kick off UCOT's Fifth Sunday programs for 2021. The Planning Group has used the Chautauqua Institute as a model for our series of programs in 2021. One of Chautauqua's core practices is to satisfy the need for us as citizens to inform ourselves about significant current issues. The goal is to learn about these issues, so we make informed, serious decisions about them.

The Planning Group focused on three local Taos issues as a starting point for the Fifth Sunday series. On Sunday, May 30, at 11 a.m., we will present a Zoom program dealing with land, water and forests as key issues for Taos. We have asked three experienced professionals to join the program to provide an introduction to each of these areas. The three are:

- ~ Sylvia Rodriguez
- ~ Steve Harris
- ~ Renee Romero

**Sylvia Rodríguez** is a native Taoseña, professor emerita of anthropology and former director of the Alfonso A. Ortiz Center for Intercultural Studies at UNM. She is a commissioner on the Acequia de San Antonio in Valdez and a member of the TVAA (Taos Valley Acequia Association) board of directors. She works collaboratively with acequia organizations and researchers. Her publications include two books: *The Matachines Dance: Ritual Symbolism and Interethnic Relations in the Upper Rio Grande Valley* and *Acequia: Water Sharing, Sanctity, and Place*.

A number of years ago, **Steve Harris** started the non-profit advocacy group Rio Grande Restoration. As a river guide and owner of Far Flung Adventures in Taos, a whitewater rafting company, Harris has taken hundreds of people along New Mexico streams and rivers, including U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall, and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. Because of his river advocacy efforts, Harris was named one of the *Santa Fe New Mexican's* "People Who Made a Difference in 2019." If rivers represent the allegorical lifeblood of New Mexico, then Steve Harris has been the state's unofficial cardiologist for the last 35 years, says geologist Paul Bauer. State Sen. Mimi Stewart said a number of bills she has sponsored emerged from conversations she had on multi-day river trips with Harris.

A Native of Taos Pueblo, **Rene Romero** was raised in one of the most pristine watersheds in North America: the Blue Lake Wilderness. This early imprint of the mountains led him to a 20-year career as a Smokejumper, based out of Alaska, and in the north-

ern and southern Rockies as a pro-ski patroller. In Rene's words, "working our way back to a resilient ecosystem, we must utilize fire as a tool and an essential component of the landscape. In my current position as Fuels Coordinator for the Division of Natural Resources at Taos Pueblo, we are working on a Cultural Burn Plan for the Blue Lake Wilderness. I am honored to be working in this role in the mountains of my ancestors and youth." Rene is active with the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition.

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Our own Mya Coursey will serve as moderator for the program, which will consist of 10- to 12-minute presentations by each panelist followed by a 15-minute question and answer session moderated by Mya. You will receive a Zoom link for the program the week of May 24.

The next two Fifth Sundays in August, and later in October, will focus on more detailed explorations of these important local Taos issues.

The Planning Group has met monthly to prepare these Fifth Sunday programs in 2021. The group's members are Yvonne Hayes, Gael Minton, Sally Savage, Rachel Cohen, Sam Richardson and Bob Aubrecht.

*See your weekly email for the Zoom link.*

## **The Human Toll of a Pandemic Year in Taos County** **Marjorie Luckey**

The past year has been unlike any other in our lifetimes. Besieged by a highly contagious and deadly virus about which little was known, we've all experienced a year of loss, isolation, uncertainty, fear, and grief, but also a year of incredibly good luck in having a governor, town, county, and hospital who all believed in the science and worked hard to keep us safe, to lower the rate of spread (Taos county has the seventh lowest Covid case rate of N.M. counties) and now, to have achieved one of the highest vaccination rates in the state and the county. Time to celebrate? Absolutely YES; but also, a time to look around, assess the damage done to our particularly vulnerable community, roll up our sleeves, and start helping our neighbors recover.

A new, recently released report: "Covid-19 in Taos County: Humanitarian Impacts" provides a powerful and often distressing "snapshot" of the human toll of this past year on our community. Because the full picture of the crisis faced by many in our county is not readily visible, the report may shock you, as it did us. *(continued)*

## Human Toll of the Pandemic, *continued*

Since the arrival of COVID-19, the levels of suffering and need in Taos County have exploded. Despite an unprecedented outpouring of generosity from nonprofits, foundations, and individuals, community resources are being exhausted while need continues to grow. As documented in this report, a large portion of our residents are in urgent need of substantial aid from the Town of Taos and Taos County governments to survive and recover from this pandemic. Without sufficient intervention, many in our community will continue to suffer from the compounding impacts of this pandemic far into the future.

Both the executive summary and the full report, “Covid-19 in Taos County: Humanitarian Impacts,” are available [here](#).

Local leaders will soon be deciding how to distribute the 2021 American Rescue Plan dollars coming to the Town of Taos (\$1.3 million) and Taos County (\$6.35 million), funds that can be used to provide relief to households and nonprofits impacted by the economic fallout of the pandemic. The County Commission is already using the report in its discussions of spending priorities. The Town has not yet commented. They all need to hear our voices asking that the majority of ARP funding go to addressing immediate and chronic humanitarian needs.

Other actions you can take:

- ***Share this information with your family, friends, coworkers, neighbors. Have conversations. Encourage action.***
- Sign the [petition](#) to Town and County to prioritize humanitarian needs.
- Contact town and county officials and/or attend meetings and speak up. Contact info is [here](#).
- Consider writing a Letter to the Editor (250 words max) or a My Turn (750 words max) for the [Taos News](#).
- See Appendix B of the full report to read about agencies providing direct services and donate to their work.

For questions or more information, please contact Marjorie Luckey at [luckbend@gmail.com](mailto:luckbend@gmail.com).