

The Unitarian
Congregation
of Taos
January 2023
Bulletin Board



Sun., Jan. 1	Service: <i>Your Year to Live</i> , Rev. Gary Kowalski
Sun., Jan. 8	Sharing Circle: <i>Assumptions</i> (from <i>The Four Agreements</i>)
Sun., Jan. 15	Service: <i>Progress Report</i> Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Wed., Jan. 18	Men's Group, 4:30 p.m.
Sun., Jan. 22	2023 UCOT Annual Meeting
Sun., Jan. 29	Circle: <i>Open Topic</i>

The Second Smooth Stone
Rev. Munro Sickafoose

James Luther Adams was the foremost UU theologian of the 20th century. He helped frame liberal religion with the metaphor of five smooth stones, a metaphor that comes from the Biblical account of David picking five smooth stones for his sling before going up against Goliath. In November of last year, I wrote about the first smooth stone and continue this month with the second: *All relations between persons ought ideally to rest on mutual, free consent and not on coercion.*

Adams was speaking about ALL human relations, not just those in our congregations and fellowships. Most interpretations of this stone focus on the idea of voluntary association as the basis for our coming together in religious community. Some have gone so far as to say that this stone will slay the evil giant called "individualism." What does it mean to be coerced, or to be able to actually freely enter into relationships? These questions hover over all of us.

Ultimately, all human relations are between individuals or groups of individuals, and in order for individuals to freely enter into relationships with other individuals, they must know and understand them enough to trust them. This is often presented as an absolute and binary choice, but trust exists on a spectrum, and many times is a fragile affair.

Coercion takes many forms, some obvious and some subtle and devious. Consent without enough information is not consent that can be freely given. Consent without equality is not consent that can be freely given. The second smooth stone reminds us that mutual flourishing is the goal in all our relationships — human and nonhuman, practical and spiritual. To put it bluntly, we all will rise together, or none shall rise at all.

Your Year to Live
Rev. Gary Kowalski
Sunday, January 1, 11 a.m.

How are you planning to spend the coming year, the next 365 days, 8760 hours, and 31,536,000 seconds? Suppose it was your final year. How would you maximize your appreciation of the moments remaining in this one, wild and precious life? One this New Year's Day, before we are submerged in habit, routine and forgetfulness, Gary invites you to seriously consider the ways and means of carving out a more meaningful and affirming attitude toward our brief passage on the earth, and encourages members to send him their tips for staying awake, engaged, and mindful day-by-day. Email gary.kowalski@gmail.com.

Progress Report
Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Sunday, January 15, 11 a.m.

It's been almost 55 years since Martin Luther King was assassinated. In that time, race relations in the USA have progressed in fits and starts, and sometimes seem to be going backward. It's useful to take stock from time to time to evaluate our progress, and see what still needs work and what needs celebrating.

2023 UCOT Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 22, 11 a.m.

On January 22, 2023, the Unitarian Congregation of Taos will hold its annual meeting at 11 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge. This is our most important business meeting of the year, where we conduct the key business items of the Congregation: a review of 2022, election of officers, 2023 budget approval, and more. There will also be a time for members to ask questions of and make suggestions to the Board.

Please join the Annual Meeting on January 22. Your presence and participation are vital to the ongoing processes of UCOT self-governance.

SHARING CIRCLES*

Assumptions

January 8, 11 a.m.

Don Miguel Ruiz writes in his book *The Four Agreements*: “We create a lot of emotional poison just by making assumptions and taking it personally, because usually we start gossiping about our assumptions. Remember, gossiping is the way we communicate to each other in the dream of hell and transfer poison to one another.”

We humans have the tendency to make assumptions about many things. Can you think of a time when you assumed something that turned out to be incorrect? Or when someone else made an incorrect assumption about you? What was the aftereffect? Join us on January 8 to share your experience with Assumptions.

Open Topic

January 29, 11 a.m.

Using a virtual “talking stick,” each person can speak in turn, sharing whatever is in their hearts or minds in the moment.

The 2nd circle this month, which typically is held on the 4th Sunday, will be held on the 5th Sunday to allow for the 2023 UCOT Annual Meeting.

UCOT Men’s Group

January 18

The UU Men’s Group will meet Wednesday, January 18, at 4:30 p.m. All who are fully vaccinated are invited to meet in person. Those who wish can join by Zoom. Contact Dennis Scott (bridge4fun@mac.com).



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

12 Elaine Taylor

Music Committee News

Gael Minton



Sona Jobarteh, Kora Player

In a [November 2022 60 Minutes interview](#), musician [Sona Jobarteh](#) tells the story of becoming the first female Kora player. The Kora is an ancient 21-string instrument traditionally passed from father to son in Gambia, Africa. Sona’s father is Gambian and agreed to teach her the instrument. Check [this link](#) for a history of this harplike instrument.

Jobarteh is a griot – a musician or poet whose tradition is preserved through the family bloodline. Her native language is Mandinka. Her musical artistry can be heard on the following videos. Hearing her in person is a dream of mine. Sona Jobarteh & Band – Bannaya ([12-minute video](#)), Sona Jobarteh – West African Kora ([one-hour + video](#))



A Note From Bob Aubrecht

As I complete my term as UCOT President in January 2023 I thought I would share a few thoughts.

It has been a challenging couple of years as we have dealt with COVID-19, both individually and as a Congregation. There is a saying that adversity allows us to become stronger and more resilient. I know that I have learned new lessons in these years.

I want to thank members and friends of UCOT for your willingness to adapt to the changes we needed to make – Zoom, lots of emails, etc. As we start to emerge from the ups and downs of the pandemic, I hope that we will be able build on the experiences of shared community and commitment to the Congregation.

I also wish to thank the Board – current and past – for your support, energy and time. As an emerging Unitarian congregation, UCOT depends on the members of the Board to make decisions, plan for our services, Circles and other events and to maintain our spirit of mission and purpose.

I want to encourage our members to take on responsibilities and assignments necessary for the entire range of activities and events. Please be willing to use your talents, time and energy for the benefit of the Congregation.

A Primer on the Proposed Changes to the UU Principles Sara Sautter

There have been many questions about the proposed changes to the seven principles that guide our faith. The first thing to understand is that our principles are embedded in the by-laws of our association, The Unitarian Universalist Association. Known as Article Two, this section states the “Principles and Purposes” (once called the Principles and Objectives”) that form the theological foundation for our Unitarian Universalist faith.

The principles guide our actions and priorities, encouraging us to “affirm and promote” core values, while the Sources provide context and grounding for those Purpose and Principles. The Article also commits us to being inclusive.

As stated in the UUA’s informational web pages on Article Two, “for some religious institutions, the equivalent of Article II would be regarded as a permanent statement of belief. Ours, however, is a Living Tradition. We commit ourselves to

regularly revisiting our Principles revisiting our Principles and Purposes to ensure that we are relevant, that as we grow in understanding, our Principles and Purposes grow, too. Since ‘new occasions teach new duties,’ we must continuously examine our Principles and Purposes to see what is missing, what is no longer important, and whether the language communicates our core values to the current times.”

The first set of six principles was adopted in 1961, when two faiths – the Unitarian church and the Universalist church – merged to become Unitarian Universalism. This first iteration of principles formed the combined beliefs of the two consolidating faiths and was indeed contentious. Some objected to the use of the phrase “love to God and love to man,” while others objected to the reference to “our Judeo-Christian heritage.” Debate continued, but after an all-nighter (that followed an all-dayer), a compromise version was approved in 1961 and can be found [here](#).

In 1985, the women’s movement sought to rid the principles of sexist language. In addition, growing environmental concerns suggested the need for an additional principle to address our interconnectedness with the natural world. Further, some within the faith were concerned about the references to a deity.

The compromise resulted in the removal of sexist language, the addition of a seventh principle, and an entire section devoted to our sources. The 1985 version can be found [here](#).

In 2020, as the denomination does every fifteen years, we set up a process to examine our principles once again. Do they still adequately represent us as a faith? Do we have matters to correct, much as we did in 1985, new learnings embrace?

In 2020, the UUA moderators created a study commission and a [charge](#) that required the commission to review Article Two. The charge required “revisions that will enable our UUA, our member congregations, and our covenanted communities to be a relevant and powerful force for spiritual and moral growth, healing, and justice.”

Further, the UUA “Board believes that one core theological value, shared widely among UUs, is love. The Commission on Appraisal, in its report “Engaging Our Theological Diversity,” cites Robert Miller’s study of Unitarian Univer-

salism, stating that “UUs ranked loving as an instrumental value and mature love as a terminal value more highly than did respondents from other groups, religious and nonreligious.” Dr. Cornel West says that “justice is what love looks like in public.” Our commitment to personal, institutional, and cultural change rooted in anti-oppression, anti-racism, and multiculturalism values and practices is love in action, and should be centered in any revision of Article II.

Armed with this charge, a commission was instructed to bring proposed changes within two years. Due to the pandemic, the commission was not able to fulfill its requirement, and an extension was granted until January of 2023. In January the proposal will be brought to the UUA Board of Trustees with the goal of a first vote at the General Assembly in the summer of 2023.

The **members** of the commission considered a variety of **reports**, including **Widening the Circle of Concern**. The General Assembly committed the UUA to working toward “being an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, and Multicultural Association.” UUs have been charged to “explore more deeply institutional and cultural oppressions that exist in our Association and its member congregations and covenanted communities.”

In November of 2022, a draft proposal was widely distributed, followed by feedback sessions for congregants. The proposed new principles may be viewed **here**.

Time will tell if this first proposal is adopted without change. There will be a mini-assembly in May 2023 for congregational delegates to offer amendments to the proposal. These amendments, approved by the mini-assembly, may be added to the proposal by the Board of Trustees or placed on the General Assembly agenda for consideration.

The final version of Article II, as amended by the Board of Trustees and/or the 2023 General Assembly, must receive a simple majority vote to move forward for a final vote at the 2024 GA. It will take a three-fourths majority vote at the 2024 General Assembly to be adopted as the new Article II of the UUA bylaws. If either vote fails, a similar proposal cannot be considered for two years.

If history is our guide, this will be a process that will take us into fully living our faith in the world.

Sara Sautter
UU Credentialed Religious Educator and member of
the Unitarian Congregation of Taos

