

The Unitarian
Congregation
of Taos
August 2023
Bulletin Board



- Sun., Aug. 6 Service: *Choosing to Choose*,
Rev. Doug Inhofe
Sun., Aug. 13 Sharing Circle: *Animal Allies*
Tue., Aug. 15 UCOT Women's Lunch, 12:15 p.m.
Wed., Aug. 16 UCOT Men's Group, 4:00 p.m.
Sun., Aug. 20 Service: *Searching for Truth*
Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Thurs., Aug. 24 UCOT Book Club, 10:30 a.m.
Sun., Aug. 27 Circle: Open Topic

On My Mind
Rev. Gary Kowalski

A single blue whale can weigh 400,000 pounds. But suppose you could put every kind of mammal on your bathroom scale, not as individual organisms but as a species. Cattle would weigh the most, according to the Weizmann Institute of Science. In a paper titled "[The Global Biomass of Wild Mammals](#)," published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* last March, researchers determined that dogs — our family pets — collectively weigh about as much as all 4,805 wild species of mammals combined.

Watching *Nature* on PBS — with its migrating wildebeests, foraging bears, and wallowing hippos — gives a seriously distorted impression that the earth teems with wildlife. In fact, human beings (weighing in at 390 million tons) and cows (totaling altogether 420 million tons) represent almost all of the globe's mammalian biomass. Adding in sheep, pigs and other animals cultivated for meat or dairy means that livestock outweigh all wild mammals by a factor of thirty to one.

In a related study, the scientists recently determined that what they call "anthropogenic mass" (the total of humanmade artifacts like cars, coke bottles, skyscrapers and disposable diapers) has passed a tipping point. People are producing or consuming the equivalent of their own body weight every week, on average, and this total is doubling roughly every twenty years. In 2020, our species' "anthropogenic mass" outran the sum of all the world's living biomass — not just overtaking the tonnage of mammals but of fish, forests, fungi, and all other lifeforms.

Calculating the human footprint on nature by weight is just one measure of our impact, alongside extinction rates and loss of biodiversity. But "The Global Biomass of Wild Mammals," coming on the heels of demographic reports that the world's population surpassed eight billion late last year, is a shocking indicator that nature's scales have gone seriously out of balance.

Lead author Ron Milo, who holds a PhD in Biological Physics and was the first fellow in Systems Biology at Harvard Medical School before joining the Department of Plant & Environmental Sciences at the Weizmann Institute, says, "It is definitely striking, our disproportionate place on Earth. When I do a puzzle with my daughters, there is usually an elephant next to a giraffe next to a rhino. But if I was trying to give them a more realistic sense of the world, it would be a cow next to a cow next to a cow and then a chicken."

Solving this puzzle starts with what's on our plate.

— Gary

Choosing to Choose
Rev. Doug Inhofe
Sunday, August 6, 11 a.m.

When philosophers mention existentialism, they often prescribe, for living an authentic life, the necessity of making choices. If you delegate your choice, or if you don't choose at all, you've acted in bad faith to yourself. But as free agents, open to the possibilities we create with our choosing to choose, we develop our own test bed for good decision-making, assess responsibility and risk, confront fortune obliquely, and, in all, search for the door to our dreams. One way or the other, it's an escape from a too-buttoned-down world. No existentialism required.

Searching for Truth
Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Sunday, August 20, 11 a.m.

Our 4th Principle states that we affirm and promote "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning." While most of us agree on the "free" part of that statement, there seems to be some dispute as to what "responsible" means in the context of our search for truth. Can the search for truth ever be "irresponsible"?

SHARING CIRCLES*

Animal Allies

August 13, 11 a.m.

“Every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of divinity.” — Hildegard von Bingen

“When religion stops talking about animals it will all be downhill.” — Carl Jung

Whether they come to us as symbols seen in the natural world around us, as characters speaking from our dreamworld, or as life companions journeying with us, animals expand and change us in startling ways. As Carl Jung believed, they can teach us of the deeper spiritual layers of consciousness. Come share the ways that animals have guided, opened, and inspired you.

Open Topic

August 27, 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.

UCOT Men’s Group

August 16, 4:00 p.m.

The UU Men’s Group will meet in person on Wednesday, August 16, at 4:00 p.m. Contact Chuck Fawns kyspirit@taosnet.com for location.

UCOT Women’s Lunch

August 15, 12:15 p.m.

The August Women’s Lunch will be at 12:15 p.m. at Martyrs in their back building. This group is open to all women members, visitors and friends. Kindly RSVP to Sara Sautter slsautter@gmail.com by 10:00 a.m. on August 15.

Walking Tour of Aldo Leopold Cabin

August 5, meet at 9:00 a.m.
to carpool from KTAO

As a follow-on to Dr. Richard Rubin’s July 30 5th Sunday talk on environmentalist Aldo Leopold, Richard will lead a tour of the historic Leopold Cabin in Tres Piedras. Tour of cabin and environs will be about two hours. Meet at the KTAO Blue Bus parking lot at 9:00 a.m. to carpool. Lunch at the Chili Line Depot is an option, as well as a BYO picnic lunch. Sign-up at the Bent Lodge on Sunday July 30, or by emailing Bob Aubrecht aubrecht@taosnet.com.

Music Committee News

Gael Minton

You may remember that last August I featured one of the Taos School of Music Young Artists cellist Tzu Wei Jack Huang. Here we are, a year later, in the middle of the eight-week TSM program: 19 students and four professional string quartets, plus two professional pianists, are the coaches for these extraordinary students. Erik Petersen, Executive Director, sends an informative and fun Sunday Sit-Down news bulletin before the concerts at the TCA.

The [Shanghai Quartet](#) is one of the professional quartets at TSM for two weeks every summer, and they often play Tan Dun compositions of Chinese folk and ritual-inspired music. The cellist Nicholas Tzavaras is a 1999 graduate of Taos School of Music.



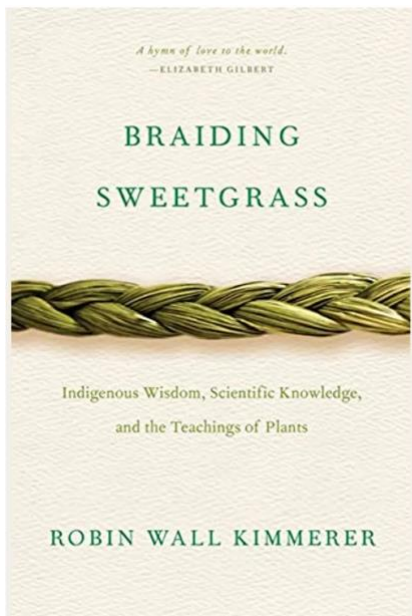
Shanghai Quartet

Also included in the Sunday Sit-Down is humor like that of these two Australian violinists: [You Laugh, You Lose Two Set Violin](#) is a musical comedy duo featuring two Australian violinists that has taken the classical music world by storm.

If you wonder how the Guarneri and Stradivari instruments from the 16th century are kept in perfect shape, you will enjoy this article about [Chicago Luthier John Becker](#).



UCOT Book Club
August 24, 10:30 a.m., SOMOS



The UCOT Book Club will read *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we’ve forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, Kimmerer circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.

This group is open to all! – [Sara](#).

Sack Lunches for the Men’s Shelter
August 20

After the service on August 20, we’ll be assembling lunches for the Men’s Shelter. Please sign up [here](#) for what you’d like to bring. We’ll set up the assembly line to put them together immediately following the service. The shelter has requested that we only bring 25 bags, so it will only take a few minutes. The men were very appreciative. Please email Annette to let her know you’ll be there to help: rubin.annette@gmail.com. Thank you for your kind assistance.

Membership Report
August 2023

Happy news! We are growing!!!

Since returning to in-person worship after COVID, we have added 20 new members. That brings us to a total of 65 members and 35 friends. Friends are those who attend and often pledge but are not members.

While we might say this growth is due to the work of our crack Membership Team — Jo Gall, Annette Rubin, and Sara Sautter — we suspect that it’s actually the increased need for real-time human interaction after a couple of years of distancing. Many of us are seeking new in-person communities after living on Zoom.

Whatever the reason, we’ll take it! So who are these 20 new members? Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn about them. And then take the time to say “welcome!” when you see them on Sundays.



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Mary McPhail Gray
- 8 Wally Cox
- 11 Jill McLoughlin
- 14 Sally Savage
- 16 Jeanne Montclair
- 22 Mya Coursey

