

The Unitarian  
Congregation  
of Taos  
October 2023  
Bulletin Board



Sun., Oct. 1	Service: <i>Interfaith Blessing of the Animals</i> Rev. Gary Kowalski
Sun., Oct. 8	Sharing Circle: <i>The Importance of Laughter, Lightness and Love on the Spiritual Path</i>
Sun., Oct. 15	Service: <i>Pray Without Ceasing</i> Rev. Munro Sickafoose
Tue., Oct. 17	UCOT Women's Lunch, Martyrs, 12:15 p.m.
Wed., Oct. 18	UCOT Men's Group, 4:00 p.m.
Sun., Oct. 22	Sharing Circle: Open Topic
Thu., Oct. 26	UCOT Book Group, SOMOS, 10:30 a.m.

***On My Mind***  
**Rev. Gary Kowalski**

It was a long, hot summer — in fact the hottest on record. Which makes the autumn a welcome respite, as well as a reminder that despite the erratic weather, things do happen on a schedule. The chamisa bloomed. Hummingbirds have departed for the west coast of Mexico. Bears are fattening up, getting ready to hibernate late in October (bring those feeders in at night). For us, it's time to put the fans back in the garage and bring out the flannel-lined trousers. With the fall equinox, Earth's axis is tipping the Northern Hemisphere away from the sun, and not even a fossil-driven economy can change that. Thankfully, some things are just beyond our power to control.

The world is slightly off kilter. If the planet spun perpendicular to its orbit around the sun — if it had no tilt — life would be more boring (if life existed at all). Crops like wheat need cold months to grow, and a good freeze slows down the bark beetles and other pests common to northern New Mexico that might otherwise run rampant. If the earth weren't cock-eyed, there would be no lines from Wordsworth about dancing with the daffodils and no Robert Frost's "nothing gold can stay," because everything would stay pretty much the same, depending on your latitude, for better or worse (and mostly for the worse.)

Why did Ecclesiastes say there's a time for everything under the sun? The standard theory is a wandering asteroid smacked the earth a few billion years ago, chunking off the moon and knocking our own home to the 23 1/2 degree angle that generates the seasons. Accidents happen, and a good thing, too.

So be grateful for the improbable sequence of events that brought you here, the unlikely concatenation of circumstances that will be bringing Orion back to the night sky and juncos instead of hummers to our backyards. What are the odds? Praise our lopsided world.

— Gary

***Interfaith Blessing of the Animals***  
**Rev. Gary Kowalski**  
**Sunday, October 1, 11 a.m.**

Rain or shine, we will meet in the courtyard of the Bent Lodge to celebrate the human-animal bond. Four-legged, feathered, and finny guests are of course invited! (Please be sure critters are leashed, crated, and/or under your supervision at all times.) Because animals have no denomination, and because we hope members of the wider community will feel welcome, this celebration will be multifaith. Rabbi Chavah Carp of B'nai Shalom and a representative of the Ksitigarbha Tibetan Buddhist Center in Taos will both be participating, along with Liam Hughes, director of the Stray Hearts Animal Shelter, which will be the beneficiary of this morning's freewill offering. I'll be sharing some of my favorite prayers and scriptures that honor our kinship with other living beings. Hope to see you there!

***Pray Without Ceasing***  
**Rev. Munro Sickafoose**  
**Sunday, October 15, 11 a.m.**

Two hundred and twenty-two years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson preached his first sermon as a Unitarian minister, "Pray Without Ceasing." While his ministerial career was short-lived, his influence on Unitarian Universalism lives on to this day through his philosophy of Transcendentalism, if we only know where to look.

***Querencia***  
**Fifth Sunday Program**  
**Sunday, October 29, 11 a.m.**

The topic for our 5th Sunday, as voted on by UCOT members, is *Querencia*. This is the Hispanic word for the experience, wisdom and knowledge of the land and water that supports all life and human community in the high, arid country. Our speakers, Patricia Quintana, M.S.,

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and Dabi Garcia, Ph.D., are lifelong members of northern New Mexico generational communities. They are acequia members, farmers and professional community workers in varied capacities. Dabi is also a musician and will sing a few songs with his guitar accompaniment. They look forward to sharing their stories and hearing from us.

### SHARING CIRCLE

#### *The Importance of Laughter, Lightness and Love on The Spiritual Path*

October 8, 11 a.m.

*Laughter is carbonated holiness, and we need those bubbles every day! Laughter and play are as necessary to our well-being as food and shelter.*

— Anne LaMott

Instead of merely talking about laughter, this sharing circle will be a brief opportunity to experience “laughter for no reason” (e.g., no jokes or comedy). Not only is “laughter the best medicine,” it has many benefits: it is a mindfulness-based practice designed to create and sustain positive energy where we choose to laugh spontaneously. It kicks depression and anxiety, produces endorphins, and decreases stress hormones. We will have time in our circle to share after the laughter.

Meredee Vaughn is a certified Laughter Yoga teacher, trained by Dr. Madan Kataria in 2003. She has taught and trained 125 Laughter leaders in Denver, and offered Laughter Yoga for one year in Taos before Covid denied us the opportunity to share hearty laughter. She is ready to laugh wholeheartedly with a fun-loving group again.

### Open Topic

October 22, 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 Women’s Lunch

October 17, 12:15 p.m.

*Meets every Third Tuesday at 12:15 p.m.  
Martyr’s Fireside Room, 146 Paseo Del Norte*

Join other UCOT women and their friends as we enjoy lunch and conversation. RSVP before 10 a.m. on Tuesday, October 17. Contact [Sara](#).

We check in and then let the conversation flow. The company and food are always delightful. Join us and bring a friend!

### UCOT Men’s Group

October 18, 4:00 p.m.

The UU Men’s Group will meet in person on Wednesday, October 18, at 4 p.m. Contact Chuck Fawns, [kyspirit@taosnet.com](mailto:kyspirit@taosnet.com), for location.

### Sack Lunches for the Men’s Shelter

October 15

After the service on October 15, we’ll be assembling lunches for the Men’s Shelter. Please sign up for what you’d like to bring using this [Signup Genius](#) link. The link to sign up will also be available in the weekly email. We’ll set up the assembly line to put them together immediately following the service. The shelter has requested that we only bring 24 bags, so it will only take a few minutes. The men were very appreciative. Please email Sara with questions, [slsautter@gmail.com](mailto:slsautter@gmail.com). Thank you for your kind assistance.

### 🍁 OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS 🍁

4 Gael Minton  
16 Eva Behrens  
26 Dianne Frost  
27 Michael Burney  
31 Marsha Fawns

### UCOT Book Group *Trust*, by Hernan Diaz

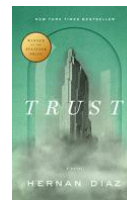
October 26

*Meets the Fourth Thursday, 10:30 a.m.*

*at SOMOS, 108 Civic Plaza Dr B*

*Bring \$1 for space rental fee*

*Contact [Sara](#) for more info*



We will read last year’s Pulitzer Prize winner, *Trust* by Hernan Diaz. “At once an immersive story and a brilliant literary puzzle, TRUST engages the reader in a quest for the truth while confronting the deceptions that often live at the heart of personal relationships, the reality-warping force of capital, and the ease with which power can manipulate facts.”

— Amazon

New and returning UCOT members and friends are always welcome.

## What Else Are We Reading?

*In Which We Provide a Few Ideas for  
Personal Reading Each Month*

By Chris Westover

When I start to feel low about the world situation, I often reread some of my favorite books, the ones that are more like old friends and companions on my journey through life. Here are two I've read again recently.

*Domesday Book*, by Connie Willis, is science fiction, a genre I usually dislike, maybe because it is a male-dominated field where the typical themes are destructive aliens, intergalactic wars or dystopian futures. Willis's books are different. *Doomsday Book* is about a time-traveling Oxford historian sent back to study a Medieval English village but is accidentally sent to the year the Black Death started. The book is about the efforts of her team to rescue her, but mostly the book describes daily life in the village of the family who finds her in the forest and the compassion and unselfishness of some of the people who care for those falling sick and dying to a disease they have never encountered and have no idea how to cure. It is a beautiful book that describes the best of human nature in despairing times.

*Songs for the Open Road, Poems of Travel and Adventure*, a Dover Thrift Editions Anthology, is a slim, 66-page paperback that slips easily into my backpack or suitcase — a must have when I travel. For me, nothing could be better than combining poems about travel with my actual hotfooting it down a new path or exploring a new city.

A book I finished recently that does not fit the category of old friend, but is worth reading to anyone who lives in Taos, is *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*, by Ramon A. Gutierrez. The book, a scholarly, well-researched work of nonfiction, describes Pueblo society before the Spanish invasion and how the conquistadors, administrators, and priests imposed, or tried to impose, their cultural norms, religion and governance on the indigenous people, with extreme intolerance for native beliefs and practices.

## 2024 UCOT Pledge Drive Set for October

The UCOT Board will hold UCOT's annual pledge drive for 2024 in October. As in previous years, Joe Mazza, UCOT's Treasurer will mail out a pledge packet to each UCOT member. The packet will include an introductory letter, a preliminary budget for 2024, a pledge form, and a return envelope. A member of the UCOT Board or another volunteer will contact you individually to discuss your pledge and answer any questions you may have. The other purpose of these personal contacts is to ask you if you have any suggestions, concerns or questions about UCOT as we prepare for 2024. Please plan to return your 2024 pledge to Joe Mazza by October 24, 2023. This will allow Joe to prepare a draft budget for next year. A key starting point of the 2024 budget is the total amount of pledges to support UCOT in the coming year. The Board will then present the final budget for your approvals at the UCOT annual meeting in January 2024.



Happy Halloween

