

**UUA Transitions Office  
Request for a Beyond Categorical Thinking Workshop**

Please complete this form as thoroughly as possible after reviewing the [BCT information on the UUA website](#) and send it as an email attachment to [transitions@uua.org](mailto:transitions@uua.org) **after June 1.**

The cost of this virtual workshop is covered by search support fees your congregation paid to UUA Congregational Life staff. The UUA pays the facilitator an honorarium for the workshop and reimburses facilitators for their travel expenses. The congregation pays the facilitator an honorarium for the worship service according to [UUMA standards](#) but may elect to just have the workshop experience by itself.

If a congregation elects to have the BCT workshop in person, an additional fee based on the size of the congregation will be assessed: \$200 for congregations with up to 99 members, \$300 for congregations with 100-199 members, \$400 for congregations with 200-299 members, and \$500 for congregations with 300 or more members. Please send a check, payable to the UUA Transitions Office, with your congregation name on it and "BCT" in the memo and mail it to UUA General Account, PO Box 843152, Boston, MA 02284-3152.

We strongly encourage as many search committee members and board members as possible to be present for the workshop. We also ask that you designate someone from your congregation to run the technical aspects of the virtual workshop and worship service.

**Application Deadline: 8 weeks prior to your requested workshop dates. That gives us time to schedule trainers.**

***\*\*Please keep a copy of this form to include in your documents packet for interested ministers\*\****

**\*Indicates a required field.**

**Note that the input fields will expand as you type.**

Today's Date: **07/25/21**

\*Full Name of Congregation (no abbreviations, please): **Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

\*City **Chandler** \*State/Province: **Arizona**

\*BCT Contact Name: **Barbara Quijada**

\*Email: [bflemingq@gmail.com](mailto:bflemingq@gmail.com) \*Phone: **480-286-7687**

Search Committee Chair(s): **David Sheh and Barbara Quijada**

Chair email(s): [sdavid471@cox.net](mailto:sdavid471@cox.net) [bflemingq@gmail.com](mailto:bflemingq@gmail.com)

***Workshop Dates***

*An online BCT usually happens in two 90-minute sessions. Leading options are Friday night/Saturday morning and Saturday morning and afternoon. There will also be a separate meeting between the search committee and facilitator(s). Congregations are expected to host/staff the technical aspects of Zoom. There are two breakout sessions and screen shares. An in-person BCT happens on Saturday morning.*

**Are you requesting an in-person BCT workshop and worship service (Saturday morning)?**

In person (but will pivot to virtual if covid conditions warrant).

Please choose dates when the entire search committee and most of the church leadership can attend. We do our best to honor your first choice, but we ask that you submit 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices as well.

**\*1<sup>st</sup> Choice 10/10/21      \*2<sup>nd</sup> Choice 11/7/21      \*3<sup>rd</sup> Choice 10/03/21**

\*For online BCT, do you prefer Friday/Saturday or twice Saturday?    Twice on Saturday

\*Time of workshop: **MST** 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM & 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

**Will workshop participants require accommodations around hearing, vision, movement, lighting, etc.? If so, please describe in detail:** VUU team will provide for this as necessary in our sanctuary if we are able to meet in-person as hoped. None if virtual.

### ***Congregational Information***

\*Interim minister (if applicable):    Rev. Fred Wooden

\*Other ministers serving congregation at present and list length of settlement to date:    None

\*Expected start date (month/year) for new minister:    August 2022

\*Size of congregation:    300

\*Number and time of Sunday services:    One 10:30 AM (MST)

\*Average worship service attendance - if more than one service, feel free to list estimates for each service:

    +/- 250 before Covid closures    +/- 120 (online during covid closures)

    Unsure what it will be when we return to in-person service in the fall (fingers crossed)

\*Is virtual worship service done live or pre-recorded?    Live

**The following information will be extremely valuable to the facilitators and will benefit both the search committee and the congregation. Some of this information might be available in the congregational survey and easy to find. In some cases, it may not be, and you are free to estimate (preferred) or leave blank. Please note, if possible, where the information is from (survey, best estimate, other).**

**Size of search committee:** Seven members

**Does the search committee include anyone under the age of 40?** One

**Does the search committee include any people who identify as BIPOC; Latinx; LGBTQ+; people with a disability (or multiple disabilities)?** No Which identities are represented? None

**How many people in your congregation identify as BIPOC and/or Latinx? (These figures may be given in a lump sum or broken down by different identities. Please note if the figures are for adults or for adults, youth, and children):** From Survey (Adults & Youth): Black 3, Latinex 3, Multiracial 1, Native 1

**How many people in the congregation identify as LGBTQ+? (These figures may be given in a lump sum or broken down by identity. Of particular use here if the figures are given in a lump sum is a notation of how many of these folks identify as Trans\*—transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender nonbinary, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, two spirit, third gender, agender, etc.):** From Survey (Adults & Youth): Trans 3, Gender Queer /Gender Fluid 3, Androgynous 1, Two Sprit 1.

**How many people in the congregation live with one or more disabilities?**

From Survey (Adults & Youth): 59

**Are the above numbers from the congregational survey or an estimate? Please explain:** From June 2021 Survey (216 responses)

**The following questions may affect the way the congregation thinks in terms of calling a minister in both positive and negative ways. Taking a moment to answer these questions will offer invaluable information to the BCT training team.**

**Have any of your previous or current ministers (settled, interim, intern) identified as BIPOC and/or Latinx; LGBTQ+; and/or having some disability? Please list:**

We had a settled woman minister, Lone Jensen, for 9 years, from 2001-2010. We had a Lesbian Interim Minister for one year, Linda Bunyard, 2000-2001. We had a Lesbian Ministerial Intern for one year, Karla Brockie, 2008-09.

**What work around anti-racism has the congregation done? (e.g. White Supremacy Teach-In):**

Members of current staff (Administrator, Music Director, Director of Faith Formation and her assistant) completed "Beloved Conversation, Within" training in Spring-Summer 2021. Staff, Board and many committee chairs completed Beloved Conversation Workshop in 2014 with followup BC adapted workshops (we called them "Difficult Conversations") led by VUU Congregation members (who had completed the UUA led workshop) for members in 2014, 2015, and Film and Book Discussion groups in 2016 and 2017. VUU Page Turners book group has included books by Black authors and on immigration / border issues in their last two years.

**Is there a group for BIPOC/Latinx concerns?** Not at this time.

**What work around disability issues has the congregation addressed?** Before covid closure of our sanctuary we provided hearing loop technology and had added large screens to the front of the worship space.

**What disability issues are currently being addressed?**

During our current Capital Campaign, the Capital Planning Committee has included planning for ADA standards to be met and exceeded if/when we are able to build a new sanctuary. When the Capital Campaign did not meet its original goal, the Capital Campaign was reimagined in June, 2021, and the CPC began working on plans for extensive renovation of our combined worship/fellowship space instead. One member of the committee, who is herself disabled, is strongly advocating for necessary renovations to meet and exceed ADA standards, especially to restrooms, flooring and speakers' / choir platforms at the front of the space. When we were still meeting in person, the room reserved just off the sanctuary for nursing mothers was renamed the Comfort Room and explained to the congregations as a safe space for anyone feeling overwhelmed.

**What disability issues has the congregation said it needs to address but has not?** Members contacted in reference to this application have noted the following needs: buttons for opening doors; classrooms and yard space accessible for wheelchairs when we have gatherings on the office/classroom side of the campus; repairs to our parking lot to increase and reposition disability parking; making the parking lot surface itself less dangerous for wheelchairs and walkers. We need a safe way to cross the parking lot between the sanctuary and classrooms / office.

**Is there a group(s) for disability issues/concerns?** No. Responses to the question above point to a strong need for an Accessibility / Facilities Team at VUU to work on these issues with the Board and the Capital Planning Committee, and others.

**Are you officially recognized as a Welcoming Congregation?** We have been, and are currently working on updating our status.

**Is there an active Interweave or LGBTQ+ group in the congregation?** Yes. "Spectrum"

**Is there other anti-oppression/multicultural work that the congregation is doing that is not covered in the above questions?**

Before the departure of our last settled minister / covid closures, we had an active Immigration Team working to bring issues of DACA and asylum seekers to the congregation's attention. In May and June of 2019, VUU opened our sanctuary for three days on two separate occasions as a temporary shelter for asylum seeking families just released by ICE and awaiting arrangement of transportation to join their sponsors around the country. Members of the congregation gathered clothing, food, cots, toys, backpacks and traveling supplies, coordinated calls to and ticket purchases by sponsors, and provided transportation to the bus station and airport. We were preparing to do this monthly when southern borders were closed and the arrival of asylum seekers slowed. Currently individuals in the congregation are working individually at the IRC Welcome Center, with Refugee Aide, and in other capacities, and donating supplies and money, but there is not an organized VUU effort.

**What challenge(s) have arisen for the congregation in the past surrounding categories of diversity (race, ethnicity, romantic/sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, class, etc.) that may impact the readiness of the congregation for bringing in a new minister?**

Race & Identity: VUU was directly involved in the controversy and eventual restructuring of the UUA Board and other offices that was set off by the 2017 hiring of our former settled minister, the Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette, to the position of UUA's SE District regional director and his resignation as VUU's minister. Rev. Andy subsequently withdrew his resignation, and while our congregation welcomed him back, there were strong feelings about his treatment by the UUA that remain for some members the congregation. Further, the Ecklof controversy at the Spokane GA in 2019 exacerbated negative feelings for some VUU members about the UUA as an organization.

LGBTQ+: Our former minister and his family were very open when their daughter came out as trans. The VUU Congregation embraced them and the establishment of a weekly safe space discussion group for LGBTQ+ youth. In checking in with the VUU Spectrum group (LGBTQ+), their spokesperson says "We are unaware of any challenges in recent memory, and we noted that because of our beliefs that we are accepting it is rare that we have challenges."

Class: Rev. Andy leadership encouraged the VUU Congregation to confront issues class. Primarily we have done so by following our covenant's guidance to "make service our prayer" (see below). As our survey indicates, we have not been especially successful in attracting members in lower income brackets.

**Was a successful strategy implemented to address the challenge(s)?**

Race & Identity: In the case of our relationship with the UUA over issues of race, not really. We did not participate in the Supremacy Teach-Ins—feelings around Rev. Andy's and our congregation's experience at the time felt just too raw, as well as the negative feelings of some of our members who are active at regional and national UUA levels felt over censorship at the 2019 Spokane GA. (We did have a four-week

series of evening meetings with small and full group discussion of materials—not the UUA materials, however— about race, racism, and white supremacy after GA.)

As a congregation we tip-toe around direct discussion of white-supremacy, though we have embraced the BlackLivesMatter movement. We replaced our BLM banner several times when it was defaced and stolen—the last time with a special dedication ceremony attended by representatives from the Chandler NAACP and Muslim, Native, and Jewish congregations from the East Valley. The President of the East Valley NAACP has preached from our pulpit, and we have welcomed speakers from local organizations advocating for immigration reform, especially around DACA and detention of undocumented people in ICE facilities, and some of us have participated in protest actions at ICE offices and detention centers.

Class: For 25+ years, VUU has provided the 2nd Friday crew to prepare and serve dinner at Paz de Cristo in Mesa, where meals and other services are provided to unhoused and food-insecure residents. Rev. Andy and our former Administrator led the congregation agree to our offering our sanctuary for overnight housing through a City of Chandler program called iHelp. Before the pandemic, as part of a consortium of churches, we housed and coordinated dinner and breakfast for local unhoused people four Monday nights a month. When the Covid stopped in-person gatherings, most of the churches stopped welcoming their iHelp guests, but VUU stepped up and from April 2020 to June 2021 turned our sanctuary space over to the group for housing 24/7. Since spring 2021 we have began transitioning back, offering the space for 2 weeks a month and now back to every Monday night. As noted above, VUU members have continued through the pandemic to volunteer at Paz de Cristo and the IRC Welcome Center.

### ***The Wider Community***

**These questions may give some important context to the facilitators who may know little about the wider community you serve.**

**Where do the majority of your members live? For example, they may all come from the suburbs to downtown, be primarily located between the town your congregation is in and a neighboring town, or you may serve people in a 50-mile radius around your congregation.**

VUU members come to our Chandler campus from a large area known locally as the “East Valley” (of the larger Phoenix Metroplex, known as the “Valley of the Sun”). Our cities include Chandler, Mesa, Gilbert, Tempe, Ahwatukee (technically a part of Phoenix), Apache Junction, Gold Canyon, and more. East VUU is a very active group that meets twice a month in the far East Valley, once a month for a social gathering, and once a month for an informative program. Some East VUU members regularly attend VUU Sunday services (in person before covid), others only once in-awhile because of the long drive.

**What are the racial/ethnic communities that are in the area served by or close to your congregation?**

Chandler (VUU’s home city); - White (73.3 percent), Hispanic or Latino (21.9 percent), Asian or Pacific Island (8.2 percent), African American (4.8 percent), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.5 percent) Source: <https://www.chandleraz.gov/explore/living-in-chandler/community-profile-and-demographics>

Mesa: White (73%), Black / African American (4.3%), American Indian (2.6%), Asian (2.6%), Pacific Islander (0.4%), Other Race (13%), Two or More Races (4.1%)

Source: <https://www.selectmesa.com/business-environment/demographics>

Tempe: White (68.3%), Black (6.9%), American Indian and Alaska Native (2.5%), Asian (9.0%), Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander (0.4%), Two or more races (4.6%), Hispanic or Latino (22.2%), White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino ( 56.7%) Source:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tempecityarizona/RHI625219#RHI625219>

Guadalupe: White Alone (30.5%), Black or African American alone (0.6%), American Indian & Alaska Native alone (36.1%), Asian alone (0%), Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone (0%), Two or More Races (2.4%), Hispanic or Latino (71.4%) , White alone, not Hispanic or Latino (4.6%)

Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/guadalupeownarizona>

Ahwatukee Foothills (Suburb of Phoenix) “Based on 2016 estimates, the Ahwatukee Foothills Village has 83,464 residents. 83% of the population are White, 6.5% are Asian, 5.6% are Black or African American, 1.6% are Native American and 3.3% identify as some other race. 12.3% of the population is Hispanic.”

Source: Wikipedia

Phoenix: White (45%), Hispanic (41.3%), Black (6.6%), Asian (3.3%), Native (1.7%), Islander (0.2%), 2 or More Races (1.9%), Other (0.1%) Source: <https://opengov.civicdashboards.com/embed/818c25>

### **How does the congregation interact with these communities/groups?**

VUU has shared holiday meals and other gatherings with the Islamic Community Center in Tempe and their Imam has spoken from the VUU pulpit. Under the leadership of Rev. Andy Burnette VUU initiated a relationship with the East Valley NAACP, attending meetings and inviting their President, Roy Tatum, to speak from our pulpit. VUU members have attended combined Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church and Jewish Community Choir concerts.

### **How do issues of race and ethnicity surface in the wider community?**

Immigration, citizenship, DACA, asylum and refugee issues have long been confronted in the Phoenix metropolitan area, especially after the passage of SB1070 in 2010 and under the reign of Maricopa County Sheriff Arpaio. VUU members participated then and have continued to participate in protests at ICE detention centers in Phoenix and Eloy. Our former minister, Rev. Andy Burnett worked to establish ties with Puente Human Rights Movement, especially leader Carlos Garcia who is now a Phoenix City Council member, on migrant rights and criminal justice reform. Those ties are dormant at the present time.

During the BlackLivesMatter protests following the murder of George Floyd there were protests in Phoenix, and members of VUU organized and participated in car rallies in support of BlackLivesMatter in Chandler and Tempe.

Current controversies over Critical Race Theory are being played out at local school board meetings, and VUU members working with Valley Interfaith Project have spoke in support of teachers and board members at a recent Chandler Unified School District board meeting.

**How accessible to people with disabilities (both visible and invisible) is the wider community of which you are a part?**

Answers from disabled members of VUU: “Tempe is about as good as it gets. Most physically inaccessible places are historical.” “Better than most, but transportation is a hassle. “

As noted before, VUU is located in Chandler, a city in the metropolitan Phoenix area where public transportation is not available in many areas. This appears to be one, if not the, major issue facing members of our congregation in regard to disability and the wider community.

**Has your wider community undertaken any work to make your community more accessible to people with disabilities?**

VUU member: “I advocate and get nowhere: to transportation providers, to Chandler City Council, to the Federal Transportation Administration. I attended a Clean Election event and gave feedback for accessibility for voting at new polling booths / machines.”

**Is there a disability rights group in your community?**

VUU member: “Yes, but they only help with certain things.”

Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) is a non-profit law firm that assists Arizonans with disabilities to promote and protect their legal rights to independence, justice, and equality.

Ability360 is a Center for Independent Living, otherwise known as a CIL, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities to address needs and barriers within the community. Ability360 is located in Phoenix, Arizona and provides services throughout the state of Arizona.

**How has the congregation engaged in this issue in the wider community? No**

**What activities and services exist in your community for LGBTQ+ people/concerns?**

VUU Spectrum states: “Phoenix is a metropolitan area, thus there are many visible LGBTQ+ groups. One-in-Ten has programs for youth. PFLAG has resources for families. Looking under local groups on FaceBook or in a Google search you can find many others. There are groups for seniors (Prime timers that meet at the United Church of Christ); and a member in our group mentioned a Square Dance Club. Rainbow East Valley and Chandler Pride are other organizations in the East/West Valley. The Phoenix Pride Parade is in November. GLSEN is a group that supports LGBTQ+ High School Groups.”

**Do you have people who are out in the congregation but not able to be out in the wider community?**

VUU’s Spectrum (LGBTQ+) states in answer to the question “Statistically, yes.”

**How does the congregation interact with the local LGBTQ+ community (ies)?**

From Spectrum: “It does not currently. We did hold One-in-Ten meetings previously on campus, but since the beginning of the Covid Pandemic, we have not. We would like to look for youth groups and other

resources available to member of the congregation / friends. This may result in a list with others or connections with those groups to which we can informally refer individuals / families.”

**Does the congregation have a relationship with another congregation that serves primarily BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ people?** No.

**In some congregations, issues of gender, romantic/sexual orientation, ability, race, age, and class would warrant some specific time as part of the BCT training. For example, one congregation that was several hundred years old had never had a female minister. Another example is calling a minister from a working class background in a congregation of primarily upper class congregants and there being strife over many issues. If there is a reason why you feel that part of the BCT time should be spent addressing one of these areas due to congregational history, please give a short history of why that should happen below:**

As noted in the demographics of our recent survey, the VUU congregation is mostly White, cisgender, able-bodied, and upper middle class. We are good-intentioned and work to be welcoming and inclusive. Our survey shows we are open to calling a settled minister who does not look like us. From our survey and in personal conversations, we know there is lingering resentment over the 2017 -2019 UUA hiring and GA issues (see earlier answers), though how wide spread that is in the Congregation, we are unsure. We appreciate BCT’s encouragement in helping us to live up to our vision and values.

**What else should we know about your congregation that we haven’t asked?**

In the last year and a half, in addition to dealing the moving on of Rev. Andy and dealing with Covid (like everyone else), VUU lost our longtime and much loved Minister of Music to retirement and also our much admired and counted on Administrator, who moved on to her “dream job” with a non-profit in Tempe (and then contracted cancer and had to resign from that position). It’s been a lot...We’re hanging in there, but there’s a lot of anxiety about how and when we will fully regroup.

**If we need clarification on any part of this form, should we direct questions to the contact person or to someone else (please list name and contact)?**

Barbara Quijada (Contact info above)

***\*\*Please keep a copy of this form to include in your documents packet for interested ministers\*\****