

Courageously Addressing Polarization

Are you concerned by political divisions in society? Does trying to talk with others about what's going on in our nation frustrate you? Do you often have strong emotional reactions when reading social media posts or news articles? Consider joining a study group this Spring to learn ways to find common ground with those whose views differ from yours.

In a 7-week series starting Thursday, March 12 called **Courageously Addressing Polarization**, you and others will explore different perspectives on these troubling divisions happening all around us. Using suggested pre-readings, current news stories, and in-class discussions, you will have opportunity to stretch your perspectives, grow your conversational skills, and deepen your faith.

In these sessions, participants will learn about the causes and consequences of polarization in our communities and our nation. Building on such insights, we will identify strategies for lessening divisions and building bridges across different divides. We will reflect on what we personally can do to make a difference, invite reflection on what triggers us and why, and have opportunity to learn and practice new conversational skills.

Do online posts make you anxious or angry? Even if you do not use social media apps, from time to time consume news that stirs up fears and leaves you shaking your head, this class will help. We will deepen our understanding of how commercial algorithms create media bubbles and echo chambers. We will share tools for fact-checking, taking back control of media forces that bait us, and resisting political messages that seek to divide us.

Wondering if the class will be political? While controversial topics will be discussed, we will do so not to determine which side is right or wrong, but to practice being peacemakers and bridge-builders as we talk with others. In treating one another with dignity and respect, we will expand our curiosity about how others came to hold the views they do. Accepting others deeply and extending conversational hospitality to them through listening and asking caring questions are skills that can be learned and will be practiced.

Class details:

- We will meet at Casas Adobes United Church of Christ's campus at 6801 N Oracle, Tucson AZ 85704, McNear Hall Rooms 9/10.
- Classes will meet on seven of the eight Thursdays starting on March 12th, continuing on March 19th and 26th, then April 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th. (There will be no class April 2nd, Maundy Thursday).
- Sessions will be held from 10:00 am to 12:00 Noon, and a light snack will be provided by CAUCC.
- Class materials (suggested pre-readings, and copies of handouts and slides) will be distributed online and will mostly make use of documents in PDF format.
- Registration is required and is coming soon.

Note: we are asking people to commit to attending as many sessions as possible. We understand people have conflicts, and if you must miss a session or two, no worries - there will be enough continuity that you will not feel lost. If after the first session or two, you feel the class is not serving your needs - we understand, and we ask that you let your facilitator (Jim) know the reason you wish to drop out. That way, adjustments can be made in future offerings of this class so that it can be more inclusive and/or accommodating.

When you register:

In registering for this class you agree to abide by agreements you and others will make about respecting differences in class and protecting the confidentiality of other participants. You affirm you are open to learn from others and to the possibility of gaining new perspectives and skills. Because most weeks will build on prior weeks' presentations and exercises, you will try to attend most sessions (given that "life happens" to us all, we have doctors' appointments, and the unexpected comes up!) - and if you feel you need to drop out, you'll let Jim know the reason(s). Thank you!

About the Facilitator, Jim Ulrich: Jim began his career as an adult educator while serving as a missionary in Kenya in 1977. Since then, he has held positions as an instructional designer, corporate training consultant, and director of executive development and succession planning for several Fortune 500 companies. From 2003 to 2014 he was an Associate Professor in Duquesne University's School of Leadership and Professional Advancement in Pittsburgh. He and his wife, Linda, have lived in Tucson the past six years, have six grandchildren, and enjoy traveling in their retirement. Jim is an avid hobby photographer, rides a recumbent trike for exercise, and loves poetry.

Still have questions? Feel free to email Jim at DrJimUlrich@gmail.com. (Put "CAUCC class" in the subject line.)

Thank you and see you Thursday, March 12th at 10:00 am!