



Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
December 2013



Are We a Soulful People?

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

Part of being a UU is trying to understand and explain ancient concepts that get overlaid with thousands of years' religious doctrine.

Soul is one of those words. Common understanding of soul usually has something to do with the belief that some part of our consciousness and being survives death and continues eternally. Within our congregation, I suspect, we have a lot of different opinions about that definition. However, *soulful* is a word that describes those things that touch our hearts that either perceive as full of emotion, or make us personally brim with emotion. We talk about soulful music as music that we don't just hear, but we feel – music that engages our hearts and memories and feelings. To be soulful is to feel things deeply.

If so, we can make a good case that Unitarian Universalists are pretty soulful. Even as we are curious, critical-thinking questioners, we also put a primary value on how we live rather than on what we believe or think theologically. For us, religion has far more to do with what we value, how we treat others and the work of growing the deepest parts of our character. Our commitments to justice and desire for equity and fairness are born out of a feeling of compassion for all people and a reverence for life – this is a soulful way of viewing life.

But this can also get messy – and the depth of our emotions can run both ways – from elation to deep grief. The month of December is a time of joy for so many. But it can also be a time of sadness – as we are reminded of relationships that are broken, as we miss loved ones who are not here to celebrate

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Rules for Living

Reverend Linda Lawrence

A number of years ago, I came across a book by cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien. She outlined what she called the “Four Ways” or paths to deeper engagement with life – what some of us might call soulfulness. I remember little about Arrien's book as a whole, but those four ways to deeper engagement stuck with me. In fact, I wrote them down and carried them around in my wallet for a long time. I even hung a copy on the bathroom mirror where I'd see them every day. To this day, I often think of them. I call them my “rules for living.” I wonder if you'd consider them worthy of your wallet or mirror?

1. Show up.
2. Pay attention to what has heart and meaning.
3. Tell the truth without blame or judgment.
4. Let go of your attachment to outcomes.

It occurs to me that many sermons could be (and have been) written about the sentiments expressed in these pithy sayings. They do offer considerable wisdom. A person in search of a general roadmap for life could certainly do worse.

It also occurs to me that these guidelines provide a pretty good description of what happens in our Small Group Ministries (SGMs). We show up at the appointed time(s) each month. We do our best to listen, to be fully present to the others in the group. We set aside time to pay attention to our own deep thoughts and feelings, reflecting on the month's worship theme, related questions, and spiritual exercises. We explore many topics together, telling our own stories, sharing our own truths in a nonjudgmental atmosphere of respect and care. We arrive without a personal agenda or an expectation that things will go a certain way (beyond adherence

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The Essence of Religious Community

Linda Bellantoni

President, Board of Trustees

We usually think of “soul” within the context of an individual: the incorporeal essence of a person. But groups of people, such as families, communities, and maybe especially congregations, can have a soul, too. So what is the collective soul of UUCP, the incorporeal essence of *us*? We can see it manifest as culture, the shared values and behavioral norms that drive our interactions. Or, we may describe it as the ‘personality’ of the congregation – what’s it like here? But however we think of it, it undeniably exists, and it is something more than the sum of the individual members.

The etymology of the word *soul* can be traced back to ancient Greek and Hebrew words meaning spirit, life, psyche, and ‘vital breath.’ An additional translation connects it to a German root word for being bound. What is the ‘vital breath’ of UUCP? What is it that binds us together and breathes life into our congregation? I’d suggest that our soul – our vital breath – is our Mission. Mission is why we exist; it’s what makes us unique; it’s what draws us into community; it’s who we are and who we serve; and it’s what we do and why we do it. Without our Mission, and the vision for how we actualize it into the future, we are not “us.”

And perhaps you’re wondering, what does this have to do with the Board? Under our Policy Governance model, the Board provides the strategic leadership of the congregation; our primary role is to set policy and define strategic outcomes. The Board discerns and articulates the mission, vision, and core values. We create strategic ends, define performance expectations, and establish mechanisms for accountability. We delegate operations management to the staff and provide oversight in their execution.

But all of governance is ultimately in service to Mission, our ‘soul’ if you will. It is the Mission that is translated into strategy. Strategic goals – our Ends Statements – are aspirational realizations of elements of our Mission. Proactive strategy formulation and execution enable us to align activities and resources with goals to optimize execution of

the Mission. And developing comprehensive policies, streamlined processes, and robust organizational infrastructure creates the best opportunity for the congregation to continue to successfully execute the Mission in the future.

The Board’s work of governance, then, is to support and realize our Mission, and it nurtures our collective soul. □

Coming in January! Mini-Capital Campaign

Handicap-Accessible Ramp

New Carpet and Chairs

Sound Quality Improvements

Maintenance Reserve Fund



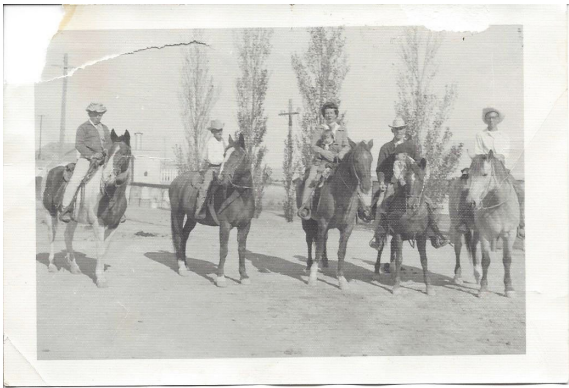
"This is the Real Us!" (Nurture Your Family Soul)

Anne Byrne

Director, Children's Ministries

If you were to look through my family pictures, you would see several pictures of my boys and me on horseback. You would see us physically mature over the years in the pictures, and the casual observer might think we are a horse family. Closer inspection would reveal the truth: none of us were particularly confident horseback riders, and the pictures document our once-a-year ride while on vacation more than a family culture of riding.

I was no doubt the instigator and bankroll for these rides, and I realize now I was trying to replicate a feeling from my own childhood. When I was very young, my family was a horse family. Here we are from about 1961:



On the left are my brothers Pat and Tim, my mom Ruth and I, my Dad and brother Tom and the oldest sibling of the clan, Mike. We lived in Albuquerque and spent a great deal of time at the stables, riding and tending to the horses. My memories of our time at the stables are fairly scarce – I was quite young, but in our collective family identity, I think this period defines the "soul" of my family.

William James wrote:

Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, 'This is the real me,' and when you have found that attitude, follow it.

The soul of a family is the sense of what makes a family feel vitally alive and contributes to a shared sense of identity. So how does a family develop a collective sense of identity? What creates a feeling

of being vitally alive as a family? How do we follow this attitude, as James suggests we should?

Encourage family members to each find what makes them feel alive and energized, including mom and dad. My dad was the one into horses, and he brought my family along "for the ride." Even if the whole family doesn't participate in the activity together, the encouragement to do the thing that makes you feel good is a powerful message of feeding the soul.

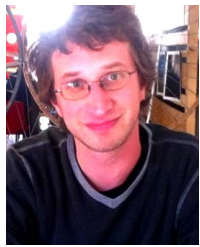
Put intention into everyday rituals and routines. The daily grind can get the best of all of us, so find and rejoice in the small pleasures of spending time together. Many a family finds its soul at the shared dinner table and daily exchange of what happened during everyone's day.

Name and call out what pleases you as a family. "We are a family that likes to laugh," or "We are a family that sings together," or whatever brings you pleasure together. Children (and adults) love the power of naming and sense of identification it can bring.

Facilitate experiences and appreciate the unexpected. The perfectly planned trip to Disneyland may lead to a wonderful family vacation and memories, but so too can an impromptu trip to a nearby park. Family soul is found in the quality of the experience with each other. The activity itself may enhance the experience, but it is its shared nature that will make a family feel alive together.

Share a faith tradition. The values and beliefs within a faith tradition can contribute significantly to a sense of family soul. Our UU Seven Principles are a great framework for a family to explore and express its shared values.

Think of your family soul as the sum that is greater than its individual members. This collective energy is worthy of our care and, most importantly, our attention. Always be on the lookout for experiences that make you feel alive and vital as a family. When you find them, exclaim for all to hear: "This is the real us! This is our family soul." □



Soul Brother

Benjie Messer

Music Director

What is soul? It's like electricity – we don't really know what it is, but it's a force that can light a room.
—Ray Charles

I don't know how the word "soul" became a synonym for "African-American" – as in "soul food," "soul brother," "soul patch," etc. – but when I think about soulfulness in music, I think of the great soul singers of the 1950s and '60s: Etta James, Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin and particularly Ray Charles, often called the "father of soul music." Charles created soul music from many sources, blending aspects of jazz, blues and R&B into music that was direct, warm, catchy and immensely popular. The uniqueness of soul was how heavily it drew on African-American church music's emotional vocal style, vibrant call and response and inspired clapping, without having any religious lyrics. Charles sang about love and sex instead of about God. He sang "I love you, baby" rather than "I love you, Jesus," and he was criticized by many in the African-American Christian community as a Christian who had sold out, a popularizer who made religious music into secular music to line his own wallet.

But Ray Charles wasn't a Christian who had sold out. Raised a Baptist, as an adult he displayed a humble universalism. In an interview with *Esquire* in

2003, Charles said, "I'm a firm believer in God himself, but that's as far as I can go. I'm not any denomination. I'm not Catholic or Presbyterian or Baptist or Methodist or Jewish or Muslim. I'm none of those things. And I'm sure that's just fine with God."

Sounds like someone who would be welcome at UUCP, right? Unitarian Universalism holds that loving each other and making the world better is more important than making sure everyone agrees about God. UUs value individual religious sources without requiring belief in any one of them, which gives us a place to experience religious community without having to commit to a particular doctrine. As someone not inclined to worry much about religious truth, I'm very grateful to Unitarian Universalism for this quality – and in the same vein, I'm grateful to Ray Charles, for giving me gospel music in a way that I can hear and accept. Stripped of Christianity, soul still carries gospel's strength, faith, and loving perspective – its soulfulness. It reminds me of my own strength, and of the strength of the African-Americans who created so much of our country's popular music. Remembering our common strength helps us respect each other as we work together to erase the stain of racism from our world and to truly welcome all. Thanks, Ray! □

Memorial Garden



Pauline Manker Gay, Jr.
Alvena Isobel Cranmer
Barbara Lusby Hise
Elizabeth Wright McNeal
Richard Charles Malmleaf
Rose Elfenbein Egeland
Shirley R. Sarasohn
Walter R. Pepper
William Harold Gooding

Agnes Lenore Hetebrueg Ericson
Anita Farese Silverthorn
Ann Sclater
Archie Huffman Walker
Jane L Baker
Jo Ann Davy
Mary Louise Grobe
Robert Sclater
Steven Knight

*friends whose ashes were interred in the Memorial Garden this season
in past years are still remembered*

Unicare News

Serious illness/hospitalization:

- Sandy Schaffer suffered cracked vertebrae and hospitalization due to a fall on Oct. 19
- Colin Brodd was hospitalized with a severe infection in early Nov.
- Steven Miskell was hospitalized with blood pressure and potassium issues in early Nov.

Births:

- Susan and Richard Goldsmith's second grandchild, Sam Goldsmith, was born on Oct. 15

Other news:

- Susan and Richard Goldsmith celebrated 45 years of marriage on Oct. 13

- Caitlin Tuffin and Mark Gaspar got engaged on Oct. 13
- Laura Reich won the Price Is Right Showcase valued at \$23,233! The show was broadcast on Nov. 5
- Susan Frederick-Gray is grateful for all the cards and emails and loving thoughts she has received from UUCP in response to the passing of her grandmother. She, Brian and Henry have all felt held and comforted by the love and care of this community.

For more information on significant events in the life of UUCP members / friends, sign up to be on our Unicare email list at unicare@phoenixuu.org.

Ceyshe' Napa, Unicare Coordinator



Continued from "Are We..." Rev. Susan, page 1
with us. Even physically, despite the overall warmth of Phoenix winters, we can miss the intensity of the summer sun. The longer nights and shorter days can affect our moods and bring on depression. And for some of us the constant call to be joyful at this time of year has the opposite effect, drawing our attention to where we ourselves are struggling and not feeling particularly jolly.

One of most important reasons for our religious community is that it helps us engage this soulfulness, this emotional and relational quality of our lives. I find that this community helps to keep me hopeful and engaged with life and others. It is easy to become discouraged – and I know I fall short of my best self plenty of times. When this happens, this soulful community helps me keep my heart open and my spirit willing to keep growing, keep trying – and not only that but enjoying the journey of it. With its music, its fellowship, its challenge and its praise, I think it helps us all nurture those deep and soulful parts of our selves so that we might share this richness with others. May this season of holidays and holy days, of lights twinkling in the night and in our homes nurture your spirit and bring you hope and joy. □

Continued from "Rules..." Rev. Linda, page 1
to the covenant established by the group). We do not enter into the SGM session with an intent to control; rather, we open ourselves to the possibility of being changed by the process, of being affected by our interactions with our companions.

For me, Small Group Ministries provide "soulful" experiences. As both leader and participant, I have been deeply moved by others' reflections. I have experienced insights about my own life through our shared conversations. I have been touched by the kindness of group members and profoundly honored by the trust participants place in their group when they risk telling stories from the heart. The connection, the "magic" that happens in SGMs constitutes a far deeper engagement with life than many, if not most, of life's everyday interactions.

Personal and spiritual growth happens in Small Group Ministries. I leave SGM sessions a better person because I showed up, paid attention to the heartfelt and meaningful conversation, spoke my truth, and opened myself to the sacred process of our shared experience. If that isn't soulful, I don't know what is. □

December Worship Theme: **Living a Life of Soulfulness**

Sunday, Dec 1 *The Soul of New Orleans*

Service Leaders: Benjie Messer and Igor Glenn

Sunday, Dec 8 *Soul Searching*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

When it comes to music, I've got a pretty good idea of what soul means, but what about when it comes to theology. What does soulfulness mean in the context of Unitarian Universalism, anyway?

Sunday, Dec 15 *Soul Gym*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

What would it mean if we all, individually and as a society, valued who we are on the inside more than what we look like on the outside? What if invested more in gyms for our characters than for our bodies? Could UUCP be a place where we get our sagging souls in shape?

Sunday, Dec 22 *Soulstice Fires*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

What keeps our spirits hopeful even in times of loss and despair? How do we keep the fires of hope and energy burning during long periods of struggle or grief? The rituals and celebrations of the mid-Winter Solstice are meant to invigorate us in the darkest time of the year.

Tuesday, December 24 *Christmas Eve Services*

5:30 pm Family Service

Service Leaders: Susan Frederick-Gray and Anne Byrne

6:30-7:30 Cookies and Cider – *please bring cookies to share*

7:30 pm Readings, Reflections and Carols Service

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

Child Dedications will be offered at both services

Spend your Christmas Eve with music, community and candlelight at UUCP. Both services will be filled with the singing of carols and lighting of candles. The early service includes a children's play and later service will include the music of the congregational

choir. Everyone is invited to bring cookies and share in fellowship.

Sunday, December 29 *Hymn Sing!*

- **One Service 10:30 am** -

Service Leader: Benjie Messer

This is a season of music and singing! Together we will make a joyful noise as we sing some of our favorite hymns and some especially for the season.

***Child Dedications**

In Unitarian Universalist congregations, child dedications are an opportunity for parents to bring their young children to be blessed and welcomed into community. It is a way, as well, for the community to offer their blessings and support to the parents and children. Child dedications are done with a sprinkling of water and words of blessing for the child. For more information, please contact Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray (susanfrederickgray@phoenixuu.org)

Special December Calendar Announcements:

Only one service on Sunday, December 29th at 10:30 AM

No Community Night on Thursday, December 26th

The UUCP Office will be closed from Wednesday, December 25th through Wednesday, January 1st. Services will be held Christmas Eve and on Sunday after Christmas, but the office will be closed during the week.





The Transforming Power of Love

Donna Featherston

Member

T*True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness. —Albert Einstein*

Like many UUs, I was not raised as a UU – I grew up in a fundamentalist Baptist church, where much of the discussion about souls had to do with saving them. When I moved to Arizona to attend college and be closer to my future husband, there were intellectual challenges to my faith. But in the end, it was my heart that changed. Working as a nurse, I cared for people of many different backgrounds. I saw that suffering did not discriminate and I had an especially hard time with the belief there was a reason for everything. I could no longer accept that there was a loving God who would condemn non-believers to hell. I never intended to lose my religion. I lost the love and security of a whole community. A close friend told me she did not wish to continue our friendship because Christ was no longer the center of my life. I felt lost and spiritually rudderless. I didn't seek out any religious experience for years.

When I had children, I wanted them to have a religious education and be part of a congregation, but I could not go back to my former church. A friend told me about UUCP and I loved the children's curriculum. I appreciated the emphasis on encouraging children to think for themselves and honoring their opinions. It took a little while for me to grasp what "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" meant to me. As a person who grew up in a dogmatic church, it has been life-changing to realize that I can find truth from many sources and leave what I need to leave behind. I can love the words of Jesus without believing that those who don't are going to hell; I can practice Buddhist meditation without worrying about whether I believe in reincarnation; I can even pray, though my own theology is the Spirit of Life in all of us rather than a personal God. I am not confined to find the sacred in places prescribed by others. My minivan can be a sacred space because each trip I make in it holds the potential for me to be in the present

moment with my family. My friends at UUCP have become BUUdhas in my life, friends and teachers – because *love* is the doctrine of this congregation.

To me, living a soulful life means being open to experiencing deep feelings and my authentic self. I am both stretched and supported by our community and this allows me to grow in ways that would not be possible on my own. Even though I had rejected the teachings of my upbringing that homosexuality is wrong, the first year that I marched with the Pride Parade, I felt an old anxiety as someone handed me a sign to carry that read "Come out, come out, wherever you are." It was good to feel the support of my friends in doing what I knew was right. A few years later, one of my sons came out, secure in who he is. One Sunday morning, I was awed to read an essay in the paper by one of my son's classmates who had won a contest. He wrote about how he had changed his mind about marriage equality because he came to understand through his friend, my son, that all people deserve the same rights. That is the transforming power of love in action. I am filled with gratitude that I found my faith as a UU, and that my children have grown up as UUs, nurtured by a loving community where we are accepted and cherished for who we are.

Church is a place where you get to practice what it means to be human. —James Luther Adams

— SOULFUL —

Small Group Ministries

Want to belong?

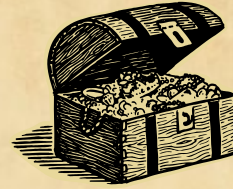
Contact SGM@phoenixuu.org

Treasure Island Auction

Saturday, December 7, 2013

4:30-9:00 pm

Tickets, \$20 per person,



include food, two drink vouchers and childcare. Purchase tickets online, on Sundays and through the office during the week. Tickets are not sold at the door so be sure you buy your tickets by Sunday, December 1!

Thanks to all who have donated, volunteered and purchased a sponsorship for the auction. Hope to see you all on deck and ready to sail for treasure!



Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of Phoenix

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