



# Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix  
February 2014



## The Shape of Loving Kindness

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

**K**indness, it turns out, is hard – it starts out all rainbows and puppy dogs, and expands to include...well, everything. —George Saunders, Commencement Address, Syracuse University, 2013

I don't know if dorm room assignments are randomly generated or if someone matches people. What I do know is the year I spent living with a Buddhist nun in my first year of seminary taught me a great deal about living a life of loving kindness. When we met on that first day, I was 23 years old, beginning my journey into ministry. Le Hang was in her mid-fifties and had first entered the temple near her home in Vietnam when she was 13 years old. My lessons had begun.

Loving kindness is a central principle in Buddhism which describes an attitude of compas-

sion for all life, seeking to benefit of all living beings through a lens of love and actions of kindness. Regular meditation, in particular a loving-kindness meditation, is part of cultivating this perspective in one's life.

I have both an appreciation and tension with loving kindness. It resonates with our first principle, the worth and dignity of all. But love without shape can perpetuate injustice, if it teaches us to be silent in the face of wrong or deny pain for the interest of harmony. Luckily, Le Hang taught me there is more to it.

Le Hang showed compassion for everyone. I always felt valued and loved in her presence. When I was sick, she immediately made homemade soup. She listened and made time to offer counsel to those who were in need. Yet she was also tough and

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## My Religion is Kindness

Richard Plattner

President, UU Foundation

**M**y religion is very simple. My religion is kindness. —Dalai Lama

We come to our beloved religious community for many reasons. High on most of our lists is the desire to make the world a better place. And so we come and we contribute as we can, with time and energy and caring—and sometimes with money.

We give what we can, and wish we could give more. But then the reality of groceries, mortgages, car payments, and a seemingly endless parade of other bills intrudes and we let our giving wishes fly out the window, and remind ourselves to be grateful for what we have to give (when we're blessed enough to have something to give). Charity—and kindness—begin at home and we need to make sure we hold onto enough to care for ourselves and our

families. So, short of winning the lottery or holding up a Circle K, how can we make our giving wishes come true?

One way is to remember the phrase "you can't take it with you." When we're dead and gone and won't need no money no more, UUCP will still be here, still a home for caring, kind people working to make the world a better place. When my lovely and talented wife and I have no more wants, we want UUCP to have a big chunk of whatever is left over.

So, how to define a big chunk? We have two kids whom we hold in the center of our hearts, and they have first dibs on our loving kindness. So we want to be sure we take care of them first. And since we don't know how much will be left when we're gone, we struggled for quite awhile trying to figure out how to make our legacy gift to UUCP without

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## The Responsibilities of Leadership

Linda Bellantoni

President, Board of Trustees

As some of you know, my most recent career has been as a management and organizational consultant in the aerospace and defense industry. Strategic planning, performance management systems, team dynamics, organizational development and culture were all part of it. And so was leadership development. For at least two decades now, *leadership* (as a critical success factor) has been all the rage—the hot topic *de jour*: organizations spend huge amounts of time, money, and effort trying to improve the quality of their leaders and developing leadership competencies in people throughout their ranks. Visit the nearest Barnes & Noble and you'll find shelves teeming with more books on the topic than anyone could ever read. But what does it really mean to be a leader, and specifically what does it mean to be a leader in a covenantal faith community like UUCP?

The most basic (and most facetious) definition of a leader I've heard is that a leader is someone with followers. Not very helpful. And there are people who are 'leaders' simply by virtue of the fact that they occupy a position of leadership—filling a box on an organizational chart. But there are other kinds of leaders, too—the kind that are perhaps most important and most valuable to us in building a strong, healthy, vibrant and loving community. These leaders are the people who inspire us and motivate us to do better, be better, make the world better. People who lead by the example of their integrity. Quiet people who gently challenge us to live up to the aspirational values we espouse. And not-so-quiet people who hold us accountable, individually and collectively,

to our values and our principles and our covenant.

The Congregational theme in January was *Integrity*, and Rev. Susan's sermons on that topic were especially meaningful and thought-provoking for me. I was struck—profoundly—by something she said in her sermon on January 12<sup>th</sup>: she said "I have the best job in the world. When you called me, you called me to speak the truth in love. Most of you all don't have that in your job descriptions." It got a chuckle, of course, because for many of us our 'daytime' jobs may sometimes require the exact opposite! But it started me thinking about our 'job descriptions' as members of our congregation. Aren't we each called, by virtue of our commitment to our covenant and our Mission, to *speak the truth in love*? Aren't we each called to lovingly encourage each other to walk our talk? Aren't we each called to be leaders by holding each other to account for living our principles?

Living up to the expectations we've set for ourselves through our covenant is not always easy. And really fulfilling our Mission is downright *hard*. But being a UU is not about what's easy. Ours are lofty aspirations, and we may not always achieve them. But we try, and when we fall short we learn from it, forgive ourselves, and try again. We support each other with kindness and love, but we do so by being honest with each other. It can be uncomfortable to point out to someone a way in which they may not be living our values. It can be more uncomfortable to have someone tell *us* when we haven't lived our values. But that is our obligation to each other and to our community. It's our responsibility. It's being a leader. □

***Our Mission: Welcoming all in building religious community, called to share journeys, grow in spirit, advance justice.***



## Don't Forget to Receive Loving Kindness

Anne Byrne

Director, Children's Ministries

Love and kindness are well woven through our UU religious language and values. Our Sunday School curriculum includes titles like Love Surrounds Us, Love Will Guide Us and Love Connects Us. We have shirts that proclaim we are Standing on the Side of Love, and we are in the midst of the UUA's Thirty Days of Love, a period of intentional action based on the common belief that love is the ultimate guiding force in our world.

I am not always confident children retain the message from worship and Sunday School, but I am very sure they get the "love" connection. During Together Time, one child will inevitably say "love" as an answer to my queries, regardless of the topic. Generally speaking, this answer works just fine.

We are deliberate in our efforts to encourage our children to treat others with loving kindness, as well we should be. Are we as deliberate in our efforts to encourage our children and adults to receive and appreciate loving kindness from another?

At UUCP, we encourage the expression of gratitude and appreciation and model concern and support for members of our congregation, which are important foundations to helping children understand what it means to receive loving kindness, but there is more we can do.

Think for a moment about where you place your attention. If you are driving to work, are you more likely to feel strong emotion for the driver who yielded to let you into a lane or the one who cut you off? Personally, I have arrived at work many mornings frazzled from my commute and other drivers' lack of kindness, and I am far more aware of these feelings than when I have experienced generosity on the road.

It's true that encountering lack of consideration, anger, cruelty or oppression in any form creates strong feelings. It's easy to let negative experiences evoke strong emotion and it takes practice to shift focus from negative to positive.

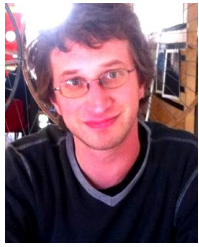
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) offers important insight in patterns of thoughts and feelings that can help us fully appreciate the loving kindness that exists in our lives. CBT suggests that

feelings are hard to change, but the thoughts that create feelings are easier to control. In other words, on that drive to work, instead of allowing my mind to focus on the jerk that cut me off, I could remind myself of the generous soul who yielded to let me in.

Easier said than done, I know. But the more we practice deliberately acknowledging loving kindness, the easier it becomes. This is true for both adults and children, and in addition to modeling a shifted focus from how people can be mean to how they can be kind, we can help facilitate our children's appreciation of the loving kindness they experience every day. Such appreciation could lead to improved optimism and overall appreciation for the lives we lead. Here are some ideas:

- Start a daily ritual of sharing how you and your child demonstrated kindness, as well as how someone was kind to you. Acknowledging both sides of the giving/receiving equation reinforces why it is important to continue giving.
- Pay as much (or more) attention to your children's reports of kindnesses bestowed as you do hardships encountered. Without minimizing the tough stuff, give your full attention to a child's report of another person's kindness. As a parent, I'm excellent at showing concern and indignation if I think my child has been treated unfairly, but I'm not sure I've given equal time, attention, or action to those who have been kind.
- Participation in a religious congregation is a great opportunity to learn and practice both sides of loving kindness: giving and receiving. Attending worship services and religious education will drive the messages home fully.
- There is a nice little song/chant in our hymnal: "From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, and from this we live." (Nathan Segal) Sing this in the car or at home before meals.

We can help our children feel comfortable both giving and receiving, by giving attention to both. Doing so will increase our overall appreciation for everyone in our lives and reinforce the notion that while it may be better to give than receive, receiving can be pretty darn wonderful. □



## Share Journeys & Make Merry

Benjie Messer

Music Director

As adults, part of treating ourselves with kindness is remembering to have fun. Part of learning to “act like adults” means being serious all the time, but luckily, none of us ever learned that completely. Underneath our serious exteriors are goofy, caring, intelligent people who love to joke around, to play, and to have fun with friends. When we agree in our covenant to share journeys, those journeys include supporting each other in our struggles, but they also include celebrating and making merry together—and the UUCP music program has some merriment in store for you!

As you read this, individuals and groups are preparing all sorts of acts for our annual Cabaret show. Mark Twain said, “Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it.” We’re going to prove him wrong. This year’s theme is “The Weather: An Atmospheric Cabaret!” Prepare to be deluged with songs of sunshine, stormy dances and rainy-day blues. Our performers have been literally showering me with ideas for songs, and I can promise that you’ll be blown away by the show. Not to be long-winded, but we’ll have dramatic performances by our choir, intimate numbers by small groups of singers, solos by children and adults,

dances, skits and more—even our own UUCP weatherman, Richard Plattner, doing his best to predict the unpredictable.

This year’s Cabaret is on Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30pm. Childcare is provided for any children who are too young to watch the show (though please confirm ahead of time so that we know how many childcare providers we need). Admission is \$10 per individual or \$25 for a family, and includes popcorn. Dinner will not be served, but desserts and drinks will be available for purchase.

If you’re interested in sponsoring Cabaret (paying a little extra to make sure the show can go on), email me at [benjiemesser@phoenixuu.org](mailto:benjiemesser@phoenixuu.org). I’ll thank you in the program and give you some free tickets too! Sponsorship levels include Anthem (\$50, 2 free tickets), Guest Musician (\$100, 4 free tickets), Piano Tuner’s Pal (\$150, 4 free tickets), Month of Anthems (\$200, 4 free tickets), and Cantata Society (\$300, 4 free tickets).

But most of all, we hope to see you there, ready to make merry and expecting the unexpected. Seriously, snow telling what will happen! (Whoops... sometimes it’s hard to know *weather* these jokes will work...) □

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## Memorial Garden



Lorry A. Blanksma  
Thomas Richard Fritts  
Warren Hastings  
Audrey Ames Kaslo  
Franklin Anthony Klumpe  
Majorie Spear Klumpe

Robert E. Morris  
Dorothy Pollack  
Patricia Maureen Shannon  
Everett Eller Warner  
Margaret Gillespie Harding

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



*Continued from "The Shape..." Rev. Susan, page 1*

honest. If she witnessed unkindness toward others, or even toward oneself, showing disrespect or giving in to bad habits, she would name it clearly. When we lived in an apartment together, she once told me, "Susan, your vegetables are rotting in the fridge. This is wasteful." While on the surface this may not seem like loving kindness, it was true and a good reminder about approaching all things with attention and care.

Love is not just a sympathetic emotion, but one that challenges us to speak truthfully in the face of injustice, and buoy one another toward our best selves. This is never easy. Loving Kindness is also about discipline. It takes practice and only seems easy until you try it. It is far easier to be judgmental, to strike out in anger, to be dismissive. In the practice of loving-kindness meditation, we are

encouraged to invite peace and happiness upon ourselves and our loved ones, but also those who we find challenging. When Le-Hang offered correction, it clearly came from seeing a greater potential in others. This didn't always make it easy to hear—but the lessons and reminders have stayed with me and continue to influence my life actions these many years later.

Following a month of exploring integrity, it is important to remember balance in all things. Honesty and truth telling need loving kindness, otherwise they can turn into pride and judgment (of ourselves or others). The most effective challenge any of us receives is the one that comes with true care—and knowledge of the loving kindness within all of us. May we all support one another in living a life full with this intention. □

Ask yourself: Have you been kind today? Make kindness your daily modus operandi and change your world. — Annie Lennox

*It is only when we can look inside and learn to love deeply that which resembles uncut gravel within ourselves that we will be blessed to find it filled with diamonds.* — Alice Nicholls

I try to use unconditional love in small amounts ... so people really appreciate it.  
The rest of the time, I just try not to yell. — Brian Andreas



## Invitation to Religious Leadership

### Nominating Committee

The UUCP Nominating Committee is busy planning for the upcoming elections in late spring. There are openings on the UUCP Board of Trustees, the UU Foundation, and the Nominating Committee. If you think this might be the opportunity you are looking for to get more involved in achieving the mission of our congregation, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee.

As we have listened to what these groups are looking for in new members, there is a common thread: the ability to communicate well with other members of the congregation, whether it be about

money and fundraising or asking others to volunteer their time. Technical skills like accounting, law, or extensive institutional knowledge are valuable but not required, making these openings a good fit for long-term and newer members alike. We need people who model generous giving of time, talent, and treasure and people of all walks of life and perspectives.

Our deadline for having a complete slate of nominees is April 1. Please contact any Nominating Committee member for more information: Jimmy Leung (chair), Elyse Arring, Dale Fisher, Terry Lockwood, Caroli Peterson, Kim St. Clair Relland. □

## February Worship Theme: **Loving Kindness**

**February 2:** *Kindness Begins at Home (and with Self)*

**Service Leader:** Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

Loving-kindness meditation and practices are used to help turn our minds from fear and anger and resentment to love and openness. The practice encourages greater feelings of calm and peacefulness, a more positive outlook, and greater happiness. But the practice begins with directing this loving kindness first to the self.

**February 9:** *Warm Hearts in a Cold Universe*

**Service Leader:** Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

The theme for this service was chosen by our “Choose the Sermon” auction winner, Richard Plattner.

**February 16:** *Lessons in Love*

**Guest Minister:** Rev. Roger Bertschausen

Drawing on Greek mythology, contemporary plays, movies, and Johnny Cash, Rev. Roger will explore lessons about love.

Rev. Roger is Senior Minister of Fox Valley UU Fellowship of Appleton, Wisconsin since 1990. During his ministry, the congregation has grown from 100 to 675 members. Roger has been involved in numerous roles in his district, the UU Ministers Association, the UU Partner Church Council, and has focused particularly on diversity and multiculturalism organizations in Appleton.

**February 23:** *Loving Kindness as a Spiritual Discipline*

**Service Leader:** Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

In Buddhism, Loving-kindness is an ancient practice of meditation used to encourage a person’s spiritual development and maturity. How can these practices and lessons be useful in our lives and personal growth?

**Share the Plate Sunday:** Offering benefits *Unlimited Potential*

**Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. — Dalai Lama**

## Unicare News

Serious illness/hospitalization:

- David Boecker-Grieme was suffered a mild heart attack and had a cardiac stent installed in January
- Jane Grenard was hospitalized due to a mild stroke in late December

Other news:

- Ariza Kurtz celebrated her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday in late December

- Colin Brodd and Tanya Bergstein were married on December 21

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](mailto:unicare@phoenixuu.org).

Ceyshe' Napa, Unicare Coordinator





## Mini-Campaign Projects Update

News from Your Home & Garden Team (aka Building & Grounds Committee)

Are you aware of the exciting projects underway to make our UUCP campus more inviting, accessible and welcoming? New carpets and chairs, building accessibility and Sanctuary sound improvements will have tremendous impact on all of us and our visitors. This

renewal will show we truly care about our spiritual home and reflects positively on the wonderful people who are part of it. Here's what is happening:

- New carpet is planned for the Sanctuary, hallways and administrative offices. We have samples, which we hope you have now seen, and once we get the go-ahead the carpet can be installed in about four days. The new carpet will add much needed color to the space and will use two foot carpet squares which permit easy repair.
- New, comfortable, colorful Sanctuary chairs will be coming. Final selection of vendor and color is in process but we hope you have already seen the sample. Delivery time will depend on vendor and

material but we expect it to be less than 30 days after we place the order.

- The steep ramp at the door near the kitchen will be replaced with a new accessible design with a gentle slope which will meet or exceed ADA standards. This means that everyone will have full access to both the annex and main buildings from the lower parking lot. Included in the project will be some leveling of the concrete between the main building and the annex and installation of a larger drain, which will prevent the flooding we see in a heavy rain. Architect drawings are in process and the project will be scheduled for minimum interruption of church and school activities.
- We have plans for multiple projects in the Sanctuary to improve the sound quality. These include sound-absorbing panels and a more effective sound-reinforcement system. We expect these will be done over a period of time as we try out the impact of each change.

Thank you all for the support and encouragement and please keep the ideas coming. We are not done! □

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risking depriving the kids. Fortunately, our kids are healthy and capable of making their own way in the world, so we don't have to plan for their old age as well as our own. Finally, we decided to leave UUCP 20% of whatever we leave behind. Each child will get 40% instead of 50%, and if they aren't grateful for 40% then we didn't raise 'em right! (But we did and they will.)

A kindly intention for after we're gone won't cut any ice if we don't take some steps before we go. Some legacy gifts are very simple, and can be enacted by adding UUCP as beneficiary to a life insurance policy or a retirement plan. Other gifts are made through a will, and some gifts designed for tax advantages and/or income during life may

require an accountant and an attorney.

The UU Foundation of Phoenix is UUCP's endowment fund. Information about legacy giving can be found at our link on [www.phoenixuu.org](http://www.phoenixuu.org), and we plan to add more soon. We are also planning a legacy giving seminar for May; stay tuned to this channel for details.

I don't like thinking about dying. The notion is uncomfortable, and, frankly, I harbor a deep conviction that it won't happen to me. But the (small) part of me that is capable of dealing with disquieting thoughts (at least in the face of universal truth), is comforted by knowing that when we're gone UUCP will be doing a little better because of what we left behind. □



# Passing the Torch

Connie Jahrmarkt

Choir Director

Greetings from your Choir Director! It has been a long time since I've sent you greetings in *Horizons*, but this issue is a very special one. If you attend Sunday mornings, Cabaret, All-Music Sunday and the Arizona UU Choral Festival, you might be somewhat able to guess the hours that the choir spends rehearsing and learning music. As with all things, there are people working behind the scenes.

Today we honor Charlotte Carl-Mitchell. You probably have seen her singing in the choir, always there, front row on your right hand side. What you have never seen is her work volunteering as choir librarian for more than eight years.

The music library consists of 32 file drawers each housing 46 copies each of roughly 20 different choral anthems for a total of 29,440 copies of music. Each copy purchased in the last eight years has been lovingly prepared for debut at its first choir rehearsal: stamped with "Property of UU Congregation of Phoenix," numbered, three-hole-punched, and placed in cubbies where choir members find

them for rehearsal. In addition, there are many books of music in the music office and storage room, collections of songs, instrumental music, cantatas, and many works by local composers including Ed Grobe and Jerry Whalin. Our music library is augmented every year. Charlotte has maintained an inventory of this music.

After the choir performs an anthem for Sunday Services, Charlotte has collected them and refilled them for use another year. It would not be possible to estimate the number of hours Charlotte has contributed over these years.

Charlotte is an educated and experienced librarian, by profession. The music staff has truly appreciated the dedication and knowledge she has brought to this important task. This month we thank Charlotte for her work, her dedication and her care for the materials that make it possible for the choir to sing. As she passes the torch to Emily Helton-Riley, we hope Charlotte realizes that her work as choir librarian has been invaluable. Thank you, Charlotte! □

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