



Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix

April 2014



Wisdom Seekers

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

When I was about 15 years old, I came across this reading by the Unitarian Henry David Thoreau in our hymnal (#660). A section of it reads:

I wish to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life...to learn what life has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. I wish to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life...to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms. If it proves to be mean, then to get the whole meanness of it; or if it is sublime, to know it by experience, and to be able to give a true account of it.

The thirst that Thoreau had for life appealed to me greatly at that age. It still does, but the appeal of the forceful language has given way to a gentler approach as I've aged. I still resonate with the desire to fully know life – its essence and its truth, its sublime nature and its meanness. But these days, rather than an image of driving life into a corner, I prefer one of following life into every one of its corners, to know its full and broad extent.

This month, we explore the question *What does it mean to live a life of wisdom?* Do you think that Unitarian Universalism encourages us to be wise? The problem with answering this question is that it isn't very humble to claim oneself wise. Or as Hebrew poet and philosopher Solomon ibn Gabriol says, "We are wise only while in search of wisdom; when we imagine we have attained it, we are fools."

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Centuries' Perfection

Benjie Messer

Music Director

I have to admit a personal bias in choosing music for our Sunday morning services: more than anything, I trust music from oral folk traditions. As much as I enjoy the great variety of music in our hymnals, my favorite songs in the books are those that have no composers' names attached. These songs, whatever oral tradition they come from (African-American, Appalachian, Asian, Native American, European, etc.), have a clarity developed through centuries of singing, a clarity that I rarely find as perfectly in music from classical traditions or in music by individual composers. Societies look to their elders for wisdom, because elders have had the most experiences to inform their thinking, and the most chances to reconsider what they learned when they were young. Similarly, I find wisdom in music that has been rethought and recreated, and that

music is the product of oral traditions.

When a song has been sung for centuries without being written down, thousands upon thousands of people have remembered it and recreated it. Through these thousands of re-teachings and re-hearings, singers make millions of conscious and unconscious musical choices, and in the process, anything difficult, unsteady, or less than perfect about a song gets changed, worn away bit by bit, the way rough edges of stones are smoothed by a river. Also, only the best tunes survive in an oral tradition – any unmemorable changes or variations are quickly forgotten. Because of this, music from oral traditions is perfect and complete in a way that few human creations are.

Though the specifics vary between traditions, this music has some general qualities in common. Melodies are symmetrical, with just enough change

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Building a New Way – 2014 Stewardship Campaign

As the Annual Stewardship Campaign continues, we reflect on how the UUCP impacts our lives, recognizing how participation in the congregation contributes to our growth, joy, health, justice, and vitality. Our pledges provide the capacity to continue our mission and build the foundation for future goals of embracing not only our commitment to each other but also the larger community. During the coming year we plan on revitalizing the justice ministries, and growing small groups and worship themes. These plans will lead into our vision of the following two years in which UUCP becomes a Teaching Congregation and then be turned inside-out to embrace the surrounding community.

To meet these challenging goals, we need to increase our pledges for the coming fiscal year to \$450,000. With this increase, we can address needs in several areas, notably the hiring of a new staff position, an administrative assistant to Rev. Susan – a strong investment, so that Rev. Susan has more

time to focus specifically on missional and ministry priorities, including Justice. In addition, we will continue to increase our payments towards our Debt Service and for the first time make regular payments for a Maintenance Reserve Fund. By now, you should have received a letter from the UUCP detailing our upcoming budget plans and how you can contribute. If you have not received the letter, please contact Heidi in the UUCP office at 602-840-8400.

Together, we can continue making this ministry vibrant and strong. We thank those who have already pledged and ask everyone to contribute as you are able. We are very thankful for the congregation's generosity and to show our appreciation we ask everyone to attend a celebration. On Sunday April 20, we will have a single Worship at 9:30 followed by a Group Photograph at 10:30 and a Brunch at 11:00 am. Please RSVP by April 13, 2014 to 602-840-8400 or info@phoenixuu.org. We look forward to seeing everyone at the Celebration. □



Building a Legacy Richard Plattner

President, UUFP

Our congregation will be here to serve our children, grandchildren, and the wider community long after each of us is gone. The Unitarian Universalist Foundation of Phoenix (UUFP) maintains UUCP's endowment funds and uses the power of time to invest and grow our gifts over generations to ensure that our beloved community grows and prospers into the future.

This year we are pleased to announce the creation of the Unitarian Universalist legacy giving society. The society will be composed of people who have the foresight and wisdom to remember the congregation in their estate plans. Becoming a member of the legacy society is simple: just name UUCP or UUFP in your estate plans and let us know

that you have done so. In May's edition of Horizons we will announcing the name of our new society and the founding members.

Join the UUFP Board and members of the Funeral Consumers Alliance on Thursday, May 8 at 6:30PM in the Sanctuary for an introductory presentation on end of life planning. There will be plenty of free resources on everything from living wills, estate planning, and memorial/funeral planning. Please RSVP to Heidi by calling the office or emailing heidiparmenter@phoenixuu.org.

For more information on the Unitarian Universalist Foundation of Phoenix please visit us at www.phoenixuu.org, email the UUFP Board at uufp@phoenixuu.org or call Richard Plattner at 602-743-6342. □



Parenting Wisdom Learned the Hard Way

Anne Byrne

Director, Children's Ministries

I have all the right stuff to be a good parent. My own parents were loving and supportive. I am well educated and highly motivated to do right by my children. I read books and articles and joined parenting list-serves on the internet. As a mostly working parent, I tried my best to provide quality time with my children and ensured their school and other care was outstanding. And, I love my children beyond measure.

So, I approached parenting with the basic confidence that I would do well at this endeavor, just like I have done well at most things to which I apply myself. My confidence held with my first child, who was smart, charming and typical, without any special issues or needs.

Then my second and third children were born and all bets were off. I used to tease my oldest son Patrick that he did a poor job training me to parent his younger brothers. My youngest son Sean was born with a temper. We would all laugh when he would get mad at something while in his high chair and scream at the top of his lungs while rigidly extending his arms and legs in rage. We quit laughing when his bouts of rage became regular occurrences that would derail our activities, both mundane and special. He demanded and got a lot of my attention.

In the meantime, my middle son Dylan, who appeared fairly easygoing, started to have his own challenges. As a very young adolescent, he started identifying with punk culture and spent many hours working on keeping his Mohawk hairstyle in order. After much trial and error, he learned that white school glue was the best product to keep his bright red Mohawk upright. (Gross, huh?) His appearance drove his dad crazy, but I didn't mind, because after all, I am very open-minded about these sorts of things. His radical appearance, however, was a precursor to what developed into a very strong resistance and downright defiance to conforming to any external expectations, including school and family life.

Without getting into the details of a family in

extreme crisis, the outcome for Dylan is that he left home and started living on his own at 14. Needless to say, he didn't go to school and likely lived in some pretty precarious environments.

I was heartbroken and terrified. I made up a name for my condition, called "parenting interruptis" – typified by the cessation of parental influence and care long before expected. How could things go so terribly wrong? How could my child live on his own? How would he eat and stay safe? What kind of life would he have without an education? "I must be a complete failure as a mother," was the constant monologue that ran through my head.

Throughout this time, I tried every intervention I could. I tried tough love, I sought out expert advice, I read, I joined support groups and I cried. A lot. Ultimately, the intervention that worked, worked on me and not on Dylan. He and I participated in a style of family counseling called Functional Family Therapy. The basic premise is to focus on your individual and collective family assets instead of your problems. Through the process I was able to develop respect for Dylan's ability to take care of himself and his resourcefulness at tending to his own needs.

I learned that Dylan's defiance was a result of the negative impact of conformity for him. Being required to conform literally made Dylan crazy and creating a lifestyle for himself outside of these expectations was a way for him to feel sane and healthy.

Dylan is twenty now. He recently got his GED and is the leader of his own band, which he has taken on a couple of cross-country tours. He is a self-taught drummer and was recently recruited to play for a much higher-profile band than his own. He is a hard worker and was promoted to manager of the greenhouse where he works. Apparently he has quite the green thumb for a very specialized product – medical marijuana. Figures he would do something like this, doesn't it?

My experience with Dylan challenged my perceptions of myself as a good parent, but in the process led me down a path of becoming a much



Home & Garden Team Report

It is a joy to work on the H&G Team! We are especially grateful to everyone who was able to donate to the mini-fundraising campaign. Our goal was to raise \$135,000 and the total is now \$164,000. Also a big thanks to so many of you who are providing feedback and suggestions. Please remember that there is a H&G Suggestion Box on the center counter of Office 2.

We hope you have noticed the terrific work that has been done outside to prune trees and clean up the grounds. Check out the Memorial Garden where there is now a clear view towards Camelback Mountain.

By the time you read this the painters should have finished the ceiling and walls in Offices 1 & 2, the Johnson Room, the Lobby, and the main hallway from the front door to the back. Bonnie Cunningham is a professional artist and is our color expert on H&G. You may remember from our presentations a month ago that the new accent colors come from a wonderful painting in the UUCP collection. After much discussion we decided to paint the some of the brick walls to provide a major facelift and especially to brighten the corridor. We tried washing and steaming but neither were successful. Ceilings and walls are being sprayed and doors and trim rolled or brushed.

In order to paint the walls we had to remove all bulletin boards and other materials on walls and doors. Rev. Susan and staff will decide on what boards will be replaced, their size and location.

Carpet in the sanctuary, lobby, administrative offices and hallway will be replaced with wonderful squares to facilitate future maintenance. Delivery should be about six weeks from now and installation will be scheduled to minimize disruption of ongoing activities.

We are working to finalize a decision on the new sanctuary chairs. Three vendors are being evaluated with the leading contender being a U.S. manufacturer with many installations in the valley. We will be visiting installations in local churches to get a firsthand view of their experience and we will get a sample of the chair selected.

Thanks to a recent suggestion we have installed motion sensor lights at the end of the Annex building overlooking the basketball court. This now allows safe passage to the accessibility ramp entrance to rear Annex building if you are having an evening meeting.

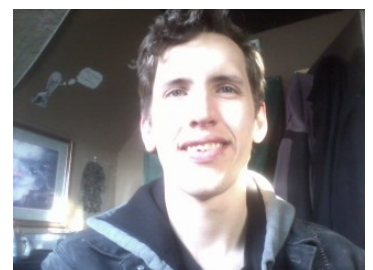
Also coming: the new accessibility modifications to the exterior entrance near the kitchen and improvements to the quality of sound in the sanctuary. Please keep your suggestions, concerns and feedback coming! □

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wiser parent. Most important was learning to let go of my parenting expectations based on conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom did not serve us well, and was actually a significant obstacle to me truly seeing and valuing my child. In reality, conventional wisdom suggests milestones or practices intended to lead to a healthy, happy and successful outcome, or in this case, a healthy, happy, and successful child.

Ultimately, this is what I want for my child, like most parents. Fortunately, I gained the wisdom that while the path for Dylan was much different than expected, the young man he is today embodies

leadership, kindness and compassion with a strong moral sense of right and wrong and a robust work ethic. Most importantly, he knows how to get what he needs and take care of himself. What more could a parent ask for? Maybe I'm not a failure as a parent, after all. □



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On the other hand, wisdom is something that we often recognize in others, and so we do have a sense of what it means to be wise.

When we speak of the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, when we read our covenant every Sunday saying, "the quest for truth is our sacrament" we are naming, like Thoreau, the desire to live intentionally, always seeking a greater understanding and appreciation for life and what is universal. In our search, we look to all religious texts, we look to experience, and to the teachings of science, and the examples of courageous men and women.

Monika Ardelt, a researcher who studies wisdom, says that it has three components. The first is the desire to deeply understand things. The second is a capacity for self-reflection and humility, including awareness for the limits of knowing. And the third is a heart of compassion and empathy, which understands the many ways of looking at something.

Whether or not we can ever say for certain that we have attained wisdom, it is clear that the ingredients are very much a part of our tradition. May we all spend some time this month contemplating what wisdom is and how we might, in our lives and as a community, be seekers of wisdom. □

Unicare News

Serious illness/hospitalization:

- Loretta Isaac suffered a heart attack
- Billye Butler battled pneumonia
- Sally McDade was hospitalized at John C. Lincoln Hospital due to an infection
- Frank Hermann was hospitalized due to low blood pressure and rapid heartbeat

Other news:

- Faye Berger celebrated her 85th birthday March 7
- Congrats to Malcom MacVean who performed with the Paradise Valley District Honors Orchestra
- Colin Lifshitz's Odyssey of the Mind team won 2nd

- place and moved on to the state finals in Tucson!
- Ryan Featherston was chosen to be a Phoenix Sister City Youth Ambassador to Himeji, Japan this summer!
- Van Lockwood departed in February for a semester in Chile and a summer program in Peru!
- Chloe Stelton found a job as a long-term kindergarten sub
- Former UUCP Board President Joan Laurence took 1st place at the Northern California Art's mixed media jewelry category with a piece called "Bisbee Deco Door."

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to be interesting and just enough repetition to be catchy and easy to remember. It is perfectly singable, almost always fitting easily within a small range, with obvious places to breathe at regular intervals. It is melodically motivated, with each note "wanting" to move to the next note more than to any other note, and harmonically evocative, clearly defining simple, iconic chord movement. Lyrics emphasize strong beats in a way that perfectly matches the metric pulse, with the strongest syllables on the strongest beats, so that each phrase speaks easily and naturally.

Individual composers give us inspiration and creativity, but this kind of perfection, this deeper wisdom, is beyond the ability of most individual

composers (though we keep trying!). Many arrangements of folk music are "creative" in a way that disturbs this perfection, of course, but in general, the transcriptions in our hymnal are faithful to the simplicity of the original tunes.

Only a minority of the songs in our hymnal are from oral folk traditions, so don't worry, my bias won't overwhelm our services. But I guarantee that whenever a song lists its composer only as "anonymous," you're in for a treat! If composed music is like a canal, reflecting the intelligence of its creators, music from oral folk traditions is like a river, reflecting much deeper truths in its shape. I can respect a well-built canal – after all, here in Arizona, we depend on canals for all of our water. But I'd still rather swim in a river – wouldn't you? □

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We are happy to welcome fourteen new members to UUCP. Three attended the November Pathway to Membership class, and the others participated in the February program. We are delighted to have this mix of longtime and new Unitarian Universalists find their spiritual home with us. Please welcome them!

Mike Sheffer recently moved to Phoenix from Las Vegas where he was a member of UUCLV. He is in a relationship with a wonderful woman who is a longtime resident of Phoenix. Their plan was to get together when they retired so here Mike is after working as a Structural Engineer for over 40 years, mostly in bridge design. Mike enjoys the liberal, inclusive and ever-growing environment that UUism provides, and he looks forward to getting to know and participating in UUCP.



Linda Vance purposefully moved to Phoenix to live in the desert. She has been here for more than 40 years, raising three children and working as a registered nurse. A graduate of Arizona State University, Linda's interests focus on health care. She says that her life is enriched by theater, music, reading, art, family, and her human and furry friends.



Larry Reed graduated from Indiana University and the Stonier Graduate School. His career was spent in banking where he served as CEO for over 30 years in the New York City and Chicago markets. During his career he was a very successful commercial loan officer and innovator. Since retirement, Larry became active as a breeder of Arabian Show Horses. He is now a counselor to entrepreneurs with the SBA (SCORE) and the International Rescue Committee.

Joseph Benesh is honored to be joining UUCP. He's lived and explored many different philosophies and he perceives UU to be the most inclusive and genuine, by far. Joseph is married to Heather, whom he loves so much he married her twice! She and their two kids keep him in check when he's not running the Phoenix Center for the Arts. Joseph received a Bachelor's in Theatre from ASU and a Master's in Arts Management from NYU.



Curt & Barb Yeager settled in Phoenix 10 years ago after living most of their lives in Ohio. They have three children, and their two daughters and their families live in the valley. Both Curt and Barb are semi-retired. Barb works part time as a nurse and Curt is in management. Barb's interests include gardening, reading, holistic health and learning new things. Curt enjoys history, photography, and occasionally writes poetry. They like to travel and explore nature and have been spiritual seekers. At UUCP they say they have found a welcoming sense of community, inspiring sermons, and spiritual freedom to continue to grow. They look forward to being part of this community.



Edgar Olivo & Paul Taliercio met on St. Patrick's Day in 2009 and proclaimed their love for each other by marrying in 2014. They share their household with two feisty puggles, Versace and Evita. Edgar is a business trainer, author, and professional development coach. He is completing a business communication degree at Arizona State University. Paul is a pet products manager and is an anthropology and history major at ASU. Both share a passion for education, social justice, and the environment., as well as a love for reading, traveling, and culinary experiences.



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Jonny and Carrie Lifschitz were raised with different religious backgrounds: Jonny in the Jewish tradition and Carrie in the Catholic tradition. When they got married, they knew they would need to find a place where they both felt comfortable – a place where their future children would be taught to be themselves and to allow others to be themselves. They found that place in a Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Richmond, VA 10 years ago. They found another amazing UU congregation when they moved to and knew they wanted to live close to UUCP when searching for homes in Phoenix. They say, “This is where our family belongs. This is where our hearts are.”



Chloie Stelton returned to her hometown of Phoenix after graduating from Northern Arizona University with a degree in elementary and special education. It was there that she heard about Unitarian Universalism, and in November began attending Sunday services at UUCP. She has found the congregation to be very welcoming and feels as though she has undergone tremendous spiritual growth in the past few months. UUCP has provided Chloie with a space she feels comfortable in.



Denise Selvey is an Arizona native who grew up not far from UUCP. She is the mother of three adult children: Melissa, who just completed nursing school; Megan, who will be finishing law school this spring; and T.R., a senior at ASU studying geology and business. Denise is a social worker, currently employed at Hospice of the Valley. She enjoys mindfulness practice, music, writing, and spending time with her sweetheart Anne and two poodles, Zoe and Ziggy.



Bryan Jorgenson and Wallis Hardie met at Northern Arizona University. Married 12 years, they’ve lived in Phoenix for 10 years and have three children, Opal, Ronan and Atticus. They started coming to UUCP almost one year ago. After Bryan’s limited visits to churches and Wallis’ nominally Catholic upbringing, they feel fortunate to have found UUCP and to be part of a community that purposely gathers to exercise common values of human decency without the dogma.



<http://www.uua.org/ga/>

April Worship Theme: **Wisdom**

Services bring our community together every Sunday at 9:30 AM and 11:15 AM

April 6: *Wisdom without Easy Answers*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

What is wisdom? Is there a difference between wisdom and knowledge? Many wisdom stories are not about answers or facts, but rather how we look at the questions. Can there be wisdom to be found in uncertainty?

April 13: *Finding Wisdom from Adversity*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

Can we grow wise through adversity? We all face adversity and challenges, and researchers are finding that how we move through difficult situations can affect whether we grow in positive or negative ways.
Share the Plate benefits UUSC.

April 20: *Celebration Sunday: An Atmosphere of Wisdom*

Service Leader: Susan Frederick-Gray

— **One service at 9:30 AM (children will have their own separate service at same time)** —

On this Easter Sunday, we are mindful that Jesus was known as a wisdom teacher. The researcher John Meachum describes something called "a wisdom atmosphere," which makes room for uncertainty, tension and ambiguity. How do we create a wisdom atmosphere in our lives and in our congregation?

Celebration Sunday to close stewardship campaign: 10:30 congregational photo; 11:00 luncheon.

April 27: *TBD*

Service Leader: David Weaver

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

