



Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
December 2015



A People of a Living Tradition

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

We have a made up holiday in my immediate family. It's called Hyphen Day. My husband created it after our son was born.

My husband's birthday is April 13th and our son's is April 15th. Hyphen Day is the day between their two birthdays. The added humor or significance is of course that we all share a hyphenated last name.

My husband created this holiday because he knew that with two ministers as parents, our son would not experience holidays in a traditional way. For example, Mom and Dad always work Christmas Eve night. Easter, a holiday in my husband's home growing up, is for him a really busy week with several extras services. And all of those Monday holidays that make a three-day weekend, well, Monday is already our day off, and weekends are our

busiest work days. There is Father's Day and Mother's Day, of course, but those are always on Sunday! Fortunately, my husband had the foresight to realize that holidays in our household would in most cases not be time off, and so he created a new holiday. Hyphen Day is a day set aside for dad and son to celebrate by doing things they like to do together. It's a special Father-Son holiday and they even let me tag along too!

Unitarian Universalism is referred to as the Living Tradition. This means that ours is a tradition that has a strong past, but which is also always open to new learnings, new discoveries, willing to change in order to respond to the needs of our times and the longings of our spirits. A tradition that reveres the past, but also trusts the dawning future.

The fall and winter are filled with holidays.

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Radically Inclusive

Vince Waldron

Member, UUCP Board of Trustees

When I discovered our theme for this month, *tradition*, I couldn't help but think of Tevye, that compelling but maddening character in *Fiddler on the Roof*. In holding tradition dear, Tevye finds a source of personal sustenance and pride. And yet his resistance to change costs him dearly in the form of broken family bonds.

I suspect many of us UUs have an ambivalent relationship with tradition. I certainly do. Raised Catholic, I still admire threads of that rich tradition, especially those focused on social justice and serving the poorest among us. Passing into adulthood I grew uncomfortable with a spiritual framework grounded in hierarchy and willing to deny women and queer people the rights to full membership. Unlike Tevye, I broke tradition so that my daughters might live

fuller lives in a more welcoming faith.

When our kids were young, Kathleen and I joined a new Methodist church in the Phoenix suburbs. Comprised mostly of young families committed to building a supportive environment for our kids, that community sustained us for quite some time. I have to admit that during those hectic early years, I never put down deep spiritual roots, never really invested the time and effort to understand and absorb Methodist tradition. Later I came to realize that it, too, was too exclusive for my tastes. I drifted into a long period of spiritual aimlessness, rejecting all religious faiths in the mistaken belief that all traditions were defined by whom they excluded, and discomfited by the fact that my family members and friends were often counted in those less worthy groups.

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Tradition in Context

Benjie Messer

Music Director

Let me be clear: I grew up a Christmas grinch. My Jewish family didn't celebrate the holiday when I was a child, and the main thing I remember is that it was a day none of my friends were free to play. As an adult, I've gotten used to celebrating the holiday as a way to be with the Christian and Christian-heritage people I know and love, but I've generally felt like an outsider at Christmas celebrations. Maybe this is part of why I was so moved when I saw the Christmas Revels in 2004.

The Revels is a theatrical company based in Boston. Each December, they put on an elaborate production based on the traditional winter holiday arts of a particular time and place. Recent productions have focused on Victorian England, Renaissance Italy, Armenia and Georgia, Mexico, and the Underground Railway of the 19th century U.S. My first Christmas Revels was a French-Canadian production, which focused on the Christmas and winter traditions of 19th century Quebec. It included music, dance and stories from French, English, Cree, Ojibway and Huron cultures, all wrapped up in a story of voyageurs hunting for beaver pelts in the coldest months of the year, complete with sets, costumes, and lights.

I suppose someone with Québécois heritage might have felt stereotyped—it was theater, after all. But for me, the show was a very unusual and special experience—an invitation to enjoy the rituals and traditions of Christmas with the clear understanding that I, along with the rest of the audience, was an outsider. I felt no more expectation to be Christian than to be a historical French-Canadian. Because none of us in the audience would have understood them otherwise, all of the stories, dances and pieces of music were put in context, even if only simply or indirectly. Without my usual Christmas sense of being a minority, I felt free to fully enjoy the evening, and thus to “include myself.” My girlfriend at the time, who knew how uncomfortable I had always felt about the holiday, was surprised when I

asked that we make the Christmas Revels an annual tradition.

I've heard that many years ago, UUCP's Christmas Eve services had more of a “pagan solstice” tone, but that many members missed singing the Christmas carols that are well-known in the U.S. and that fill our Christmas Eve services today. I love these well-known carols—they're beautiful—and I'm glad to spend a night singing them. But let's do our best to remember, as we drink our hot cider on Christmas Eve, to ask each other what the celebrations of our youth were like, and to not expect that others will have had the same experiences that we did, know the same songs, or find meaning in the same holidays or the same parts of the holiday. And I'll do my best to put our music in context and to not expect anyone to know “how things go” at those services, so that they are welcoming to all, regardless of their background. It's the UU thing to do!

[L]et's do our best to remember, as we drink our hot cider on Christmas Eve, to ask each other what the celebrations of our youth were like, and to not expect that others will have had the same experiences that we did.

P.S. If you enjoy singing Christmas carols and spreading cheer in our congregation, consider joining us for our annual afternoon of caroling! On Saturday, December 12th, we'll meet at UUCP at 1:00 pm, sing a few carols together, and then spend a relaxed afternoon visiting and singing to UUCP elders who are rarely able to attend services. If you'll definitely be attending, please let me know, so that I can estimate how many people we might be able to visit. □



Tension

Katie Resendiz

Acting Director, Children's Ministries

This is a *Traditional* Unitarian Universalist Holiday Story, made up just now, with tongues in cheeks.

Once upon a time... there was a father. This father had two wonderful daughters whom he adored. Each year, as the girls grew, he found he wanted to share more and more of his own childhood with them. As holidays approached, he would remember the preparation, cooking, and celebrations that had marked each season of his youth. It so happens that this father also found himself in the community of a Unitarian Universalist Congregation. He appreciated the social justice orientation, he worked to uphold the Seven Principles, and he learned so much from his fellow congregants. He wanted his daughters to learn and grow in this community.

Each winter, as *The Holidays* approached, the father became tense. He held the tension between wanting to give his daughters a joy-filled season and on the other hand working to encourage spiritual growth, exercise right conscience, work for peace, justice, and compassion, respect the interdependent web of all existence, all while upholding the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

He worried that his children's singing of Silent Night reinforced patriarchal expectations of virginity and perpetual youth. He didn't dare cook

his grandmother's favorite dish, because authentic Hungarian paprika just wasn't sold in his neighborhood. As he hung a ball of mistletoe, a half-recalled lesson on Loki and Hodur's murder of Balder stopped his hand. He had a serious conversation with his girls about epidemic bullying among reindeer. He worried that gifts purchased, while all fair trade, would still increase his daughter's carbon footprint.

All season, as the air filled with the scent of cinnamon and fir trees, three questions circled constantly in his head. What does this holiday mean? Are these traditions meaningful? Why are we doing this?

On Christmas Eve, after three weeks of hectic, and maybe heretic, preparation, the man flopped into his recliner and sipped his favorite locally sourced evening beverage. The gentle sounds of Blaise Lantana's jazzy, bluesy, holiday helpings lulled him to sleep. The house was calm and the rest was welcome.

Suddenly he was awakened by the distinct sound of a gentleman clearing his throat. White hair, white beard, red jacket, and a great pair of Doc Martens, he plopped down on the couch and said, "You know what buddy? In everything, we find and make our own meaning and that's okay for today."

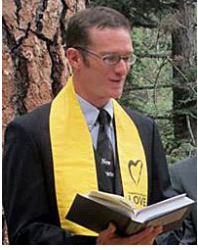
And that's it, that's the whole story, or as they say "The End." □

— TRADITION —

If the future is to remain open and free, we need people who can tolerate the unknown, who will not need the support of traditional blueprints from the past. — Margaret Mead

A living faith must have both roots and wings — UU hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition

We can either emphasize those aspects of our traditions, religious or secular, that speak of hatred, exclusion, and suspicion or work with those that stress the interdependence and equality of all human beings. The choice is yours. — Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*



Prostrations & Practice: Embodying Zen Tradition

Emrys Staton

Ministerial Intern

Two years ago, I started attending a small Buddhist sangha for weekly meditations. It wasn't a decision totally from left field. Since I was a child, I was exposed to Buddhist teachings and stories. I've read, studied, and written papers about Buddhism in both undergrad and graduate school. I had dabbled in meditation of various kinds, but not in any regular or committed way.

It all sounded good in my head, and I was eager to see what a sangha (Buddhist meditation community) was all about. It went well, and after my first several months of showing up for Sunday practice, I registered for a five-day silent retreat led by our sangha's teacher, Frank Jude.

I thought it would be a chance to just do more meditation and reflection, and not have to talk to anyone. My kind of vacation.

What I wasn't anticipating was the reality that I would be stepping into a stream of tradition that had now been flowing for well over 2,000 years.

Day one, Frank woke us up at 5:00 am with the loud clacking of a moktak, a wooden percussion instrument from the Korean Zen tradition, which is the tradition he was ordained in. With hardly a faint wash of dawn twilight rising up from the horizon, I walked to the meditation hall, spread out my mat and cushion in a row with several others, and prepared for my first set of 108 prostrations.

As each day went by, we followed Frank's guidance through bows, bell ringings, chants, prayers, sitting and walking meditations, and mealtime prayers that had all been developed and passed down over what must now be hundreds of human generations.

I imagined Buddhist monastics in far away times and places also thinking to themselves at 5:30 in the morning, "Why am I doing this?" only to be guided to the questions "What is the true nature of the 'this' I am thinking about?" or, more succinctly, "Does 'this' even exist?" Then I looked up and saw the most beautiful sunrise blasting into the sky, and

wondered: How many other practitioners have experienced the joy and beauty of early morning, doing exactly what I'm doing right now? Thousands? Millions?

What I wasn't anticipating was the reality that I would be stepping into a stream of tradition that had now been flowing for well over 2,000 years.

On the surface, the traditional aspects of zen practice seemed superfluous, unnecessary. Many American Buddhist practitioners have stripped away most of the ceremonial elements, in the pursuit of a distilled, purified version of Buddhism. What do 108 full body prostrations have to do with mental clarity, compassion, or enlightenment?

By the end of the retreat, I felt a deep appreciation for the fullness of the tradition I was being invited into. It infused my meditation time and the teachings I was receiving with more meaning, more vibrancy and greater depth.

It, quite literally, led to my embodiment of the tradition. My arms, legs, knees, back, lungs, ears, eyes, nose, heart, and head were all participating in the practice. I could hardly imagine how I thought I had any real understanding of Buddhism before this experience, before fully embracing the tradition. And I wonder, how much more is there still to experience and learn?

Almost every morning, I do 108 prostrations prior to sitting in meditation. Some mornings I feel reluctance or aversion, some mornings ambivalence, and some mornings I'm eager to do the prostrations. Every morning I do them, nonetheless, and while I'm probably no closer to enlightenment, I feel humble and happy to be a part of the tradition. □

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100+ items including:
tickets, dinners, art, passes, professional services, etc!

COMBINED CONGREGATION & PRESCHOOL ONLINE AUCTION

Happening now through Sunday, December 6 at:
<https://www.32auctions.com/UUFUNdraiser2015>

CONGREGATION'S LIVE AUCTION

Sunday, December 6, 2015 at 11:00 am
in the Sanctuary:

There will be one service at 9:30 am with coffee hour
and then the live auction begins.
No tickets are required and childcare will be provided
for children under 12.



Annual Auction



online

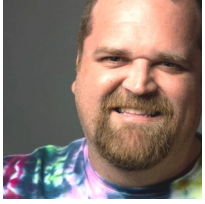
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november 20
through
december 6



live

december 6 at 11 a.m.

*benefits the congregation
& preschool*



Growing Up

Geoff Anderla

Office Assistant

Tradition? I'm sitting here wondering something: What in the world does that word even mean to me? I mean, I know the dictionary definition and all: "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation," yada yada yada. But even when you work from the Webster's version, I'm still not even sure where it fits into my own life.

When I think of tradition, I think being eight years old and going to my grandmother's house on Christmas day to have the big family get-together. I think of playing with cousins, my aunt and uncle and my brothers. We are a very close-knit family so everyone always looked forward to visiting on Christmas.

Things change though. People change, and people move on. Grandparents pass away, and that's when we, the next generation who's all of a sudden "in charge," are supposed to keep things going. We're supposed to keep getting together and continuing our play with each other. But it doesn't always happen. We start our own families and our own traditions, sometimes with each other and sometimes not.

In my case, it's "sometimes not." We didn't keep up the old family traditions when we separated and set off building our own individual lives. For instance, we haven't had my aunt's pre-Christmas party for 20 years. I mean, I know I'm not eight anymore and my favorite thing to get for Christmas is no longer Legos (although maybe it should be—have you *seen* all the cool Legos they make now? There are Legos for *everything*!)

I want to keep up the tradition, though. I miss those times with my family. I miss having my Grandmother make me try sauerkraut and me hating it. I miss playing with my cousins out on my grandparent's big lawn. I miss being young and being able to do what I want most of the time. Growing up is really hard and I hate it.

Tradition, it seems then, means that if I want to feel like a kid again (which I do), then I need to start my own traditions. □

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Rev. Susan, page 1

Across various communities, nations and cultures there are celebrations of feasts and gift giving. From Thanksgiving and harvest festivals, to celebrations of Divali, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Christmas, La Posada, the Winter Solstice, the Feast of St. Nicholas, to the New Year. This is a season filled with tradition.

Interestingly, for some of these holidays, we may hold onto the tradition long after the religious or practical reason for the holiday holds meaning. It can even be the case that the particular ways we celebrate become more important than the reasons. "The way we do it" becomes more important than the why we do it, and when this happens, tradition can lose its meaning, feeling confining, rather than celebratory. But I would caution us against throwing out the idea of tradition entirely. The French writer Antoine de St.-Exupéry describes the role of ceremonies and tradition as a way that we hand down to our children and to the next generation the meaning of our lives, the way we communicate and pass on our values and our ideals.

As we explore the season's holidays and explore our own understanding of our living tradition, I invite you to be especially mindful of the traditions, or lack thereof in your own home, and consider how traditions, even new or made up ones, might help you celebrate, remember and share what is meaningful and important in your life. □

Join our Campus Care Team

A Campus Care Team member is willing and able to help with minor repairs and tasks related to campus maintenance. Issues that don't require highly specialized service will be emailed to the Campus Care Team to see if anyone can volunteer to take care of the issue.

If you would like to be included in our Campus Care Team, contact Heidi at heidiparmenter@phoenixuu.org or 602-840-8400 ext. 202.

All skill levels and experience are welcome—the more team members we have, the more care we can provide!



The UUCP office is looking for a few good people to help Heidi and Geoff in the office during the week. Tasks include answering the phone, light computer work, opening mail, and making phone calls, etc. We have the following shifts available:

Monday: 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Tuesday: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm & 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Thursday: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Friday: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Please call or email Geoff at 602-840-8400 x 201 or GeoffAnderla@phoenixuu.org.

Unicare News

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



In remembrance:

- Caroli Peterson's mother, Barbara DuFresne, passed away unexpectedly at home in Springfield, MA on November 3. She was 85 years old.
- René Apack's friend and mother of their son, Natalie Gale, passed away on November 3 after a short stay in hospice. She was 58 years old.

Milestone celebrations:

- Emily and Doug Helton-Riley welcome their recently adopted one-year-old boy, William, to their family.
- Gary Ezzell's daughter, Leah, became a board-certified general surgeon.
- John Moats and Jenny Jones Moats celebrated 10 years of marriage on October 22.

Other news:

- Lois and Dale Fisher were in a car accident on November 3 and are grateful to be alive and among community at UUCP.

Memorial Garden



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

October:

Roger Davy
Rodney Earl Engelen
William Frank Hall
Evemarie Holl Mosher
Homer M. Sarasohn
Walter Blake Williamson, Jr.
Pauline Manker Gay

November:

Alvena Isobel Cranmer
Rose Elfenbein Egeland
William Harold Gooding
Barbara Lusby Hise
Richard Charles Malmleaf
Elizabeth Wright McNeal
Robert Sheldon Oliver
Joan Lee Oliver
Walter R. Pepper
Shirley R. Sarasohn

December:

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

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So for many years, I felt uncomfortable when conversations turned to the topic of religious orientation. When asked about my religious tradition, I felt the need to offer a complicated recounting of my journey from Catholicism through Methodism to a state of what I came to call hopeful skepticism. "I don't really embrace any tradition," I would say. "But I am still open-minded about the possibilities."

So imagine my surprise when I attended my first UUCP service seven years ago. My then-daughter Laura (now my son, Lucas), joined me that day, somewhat reluctantly. At the age of 17, Lucas was navigating a complicated journey—one that would end some years later in the realization that his biological gender was a poor fit with his male identity, his real identity. In those years he had come to blame religious communities for the rejection that he and other LGBT kids were experiencing at school.

Unbeknownst to us, the service that morning honored National Coming Out Day. It was led by UUCP youth, many of whom shared very personal testimonies of "coming out" in some way. Teenaged "jocks" revealed their secret talents as artists. Apparently serious students owned up to their penchant for frivolous socializing. Seemingly extroverted kids shared secret anxieties about social acceptance. And gay kids revealed they were, well... gay. The congregation responded to all of this revelation first with quiet respect and then with

appreciative applause.

I left that service with tears of joy in my eyes. Now Luc could look to the future secure in the knowledge that he would always be welcomed by the UU community. As a parent, that day gave me great comfort. As a spiritual person, that day revealed my new home. I'd finally found a religious tradition I could believe in—one grounded in radical inclusiveness. I have been attending ever since. And when the topic of religion comes up these days—when someone asks, "Do you identify with a religious tradition?"—my answer is no longer convoluted. I just say, "Yes!"

As a relatively new UU, I am still learning about our rich tradition. As a new member of the board, I work with deep respect for the values that define our community. At the same time, the board's role is to make sure that our traditional commitments remain vital, that we are reimagining our future even as we take pride in our past. What would a radically inclusive UUCP look like in 5, 10, or even 20 years? Where are the daughters and sons who would be here at UUCP if their parents only knew more about us and our traditions? How can we make sure they are included among us? These are the kinds of questions we hope to discuss at board meetings this year. Please accept our warmest invitation to share your thoughts with the board. Join us at 6:00 pm on the fourth Tuesday of every month! □

— TRADITION —

In a house which becomes a home, one hands down and another takes up the heritage of mind and heart, laughter and tears, musings and deeds. Love, like a carefully loaded ship, crosses the gulf between generations. Therefore we do not neglect the ceremonies of our passage; when we wed, when we die, and when we are blessed with a child; when we depart and when we return, when we plant and when we harvest....

Let us build memories in our children, lest they drag out joyless lives, lest they allow treasures to be lost because they have not been given the keys. We live, not by things, but by the meanings of things. It is needful to transmit the passwords from generation to generation.

Antoine de St.-Exupéry

December Worship Theme: **Tradition**

Services bring our community together at 9:30 AM & 11:15 AM

—Please note service time and schedule changes in December—

December 6: The Meaning of Tradition

One Service Only – 9:30 am – followed by the UUCP Annual Auction at 11:00 am!

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

Tradition can sometimes feel like a prison—rote practice disconnected from present meaning. The histories and stories from which tradition arise may not hold any value for us today, or worse, they may do harm. What are the traditions that are worth holding on to? What is the value of tradition in our lives?

December 13: Tradition 2.0 Beta

Service Leader: Emrys Staton, Intern Minister

Unitarian Universalism, like other longstanding faiths, finds itself in the position of examining its own inherited traditions and modifying them to remain relevant for our present time. However, there are other longstanding cultures which had their customs and traditions erased through the violence of colonization. What does it look like to re-create lost traditions that can restore cultural identity and pride, while also contributing to justice movements in the world?

Share the Plate Sunday: This Sunday's offering will benefit Puente Human Rights Movement

December 20: A Living Tradition

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

Unitarian Universalism calls itself a living tradition. This means it is a tradition open to change and new revelation. What does it mean to be part of a living tradition as we enter a season so dominated by religious holidays and capital "T" Tradition?

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve Services

Spend your Christmas Eve with music, community and candlelight at UUCP. Both services will be filled with singing and the lighting of candles. The early service includes a children's play and the later service will include the congregation choir. Everyone is invited to bring cookies to share with fellowship from 6:30-7:30 pm. Child Dedications will be offered at both services. Please contact Rev. Susan if you would like to have your child or children dedicated.

5:30 pm Family Service – A Non-Traditional telling of the Nativity

Service Leaders: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Emrys Staton, Katie Resendiz

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

7:30 pm Lessons and Carols

Service Leaders: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray and Emrys Staton, Benjie Messer

December 27: Hymn Sing!

One Service – 10:30 am

Service Leaders: Igor Glenn and Benjie Messer

To celebrate this season of music and singing, Igor Glenn leads a child-friendly singalong of folk songs, hymns, and gospel. Together we will make a joyful noise as we sing some favorite songs, learn some new ones, and sing some especially for the season. Igor's singalongs draw from his childhood experiences in the Deep South plus current observations as a guide at "The MIM" (Musical Instrument Museum). Come interact as a multi-generational celebration of community!

Special December Calendar Announcements

Sunday, December 7th – One Service at 9:30 am followed by Auction Bonanza at 11:00 am

Wednesday, December 24th – Evening Services at 5:30 and 7:30 pm

Sunday, December 28th – One Service at 10:30 am

UUCP Office closed for holiday Thursday, December 25th – Thursday, January 1st

The Meaning of Child Dedications

One of the recent traditions at UUCP is to offer Child Dedications during the Christmas Eve services (5:30 and 7:30 pm on December 24th).

At this time of year, when we are so aware of the turning of the seasons, the passing of time, we are reminded of the importance of honoring the ceremonies of passage. In Unitarian Universalists communities, we offer child dedications for young children and their families.

The dedication ceremony is an opportunity to welcome and offer our blessings upon young children and their parents. It is not a ritual to remove sin, nor to provide special privilege, but a recognition of the importance of honoring the young lives in our community and their families. It is also a time when parents and the congregation as a whole are asked to dedicate themselves to the fullest unfolding of the growth and personality of the child and to nurturing a community of peace in which all children may grow. It is not that we dedicate our children to the community, but that we dedicate ourselves to the child.

We use water and a rose for the dedication. Water is a symbol of nature's bounty and our own connection to nature as part of the human family. The rose is a symbol of the unique gift that each child is and our hope that each child will, throughout their lives, unfold and blossom just as the rose.

If you are interested in having your child or children dedicated at one of the Christmas Eve services, or have any questions, please email Rev. Susan at susanfrederickgray@phoenixuu.org or call the office at 480-414-2790 ext. 203.

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those who, age after age,
perverse, with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

Adrienne Rich

