Sometimes We Have to Welcome Pain

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

Pain times resistance equals suffering. Or, in mathematical terms: pain × resistance = suffering. I heard this from Unitarian Universalist minister Arvid Straube, who in a sermon shared this teaching he had learned from a Buddhist monk. It made me think of our theme this month of Welcome, which has many facets, one of which is the quality of acceptance.

Experiencing pain comes with living. We stub our toe or cut our finger. Our hearts are broken by love, we live with the pain and grief that comes with death. We hurt ourselves, and others let us down or hurt us. Life brings pain. Thankfully, it also brings joy. But it is more difficult to welcome pain. And when we resist pain, when we try to fight it, deny it or change it, we often make it worse. For example, when we stub our toe, get upset and think of all the things we should have done differently not avoid the pain, it amplifies the emotional feeling of the pain. It makes us suffer.

Try this: the next time you hurt yourself, bang your finger, or get a paper cut, don’t resist. Instead, let all of your attention simply go to where you feel the pain. Welcome it, be mindful of the pain, don’t resist. See what happens. The pain will still be there, yes, but not the added emotional suffering.

Here’s another example. Think of someone who frustrates you. Someone who you feel is always hurting or letting you down. Do you resist the reality of the experience? Do you continually expect the person to be different? Do you get mad every time it happens, as if you are surprised by it again?

Hospitality as a Spiritual Practice

Reverend Linda Lawrence

The spiritual practice of hospitality goes beyond volunteering for our Sunday morning Welcoming Ministry. It requires more than a smile or friendly hello. It must even carry over to the parking lot after services and coffee hour.

The spiritual practice of hospitality asks us to meet other people—whether they are newcomers, family members, or longtime friends—intentionally. When we practice the true art of welcoming, we focus our attention and actions in ways that demonstrate our belief in the inherent dignity and worth of those we encounter—all those we encounter, every time we encounter them.

In the spiritual practice of hospitality, we adopt an attitude of openness. We understand that in meeting another person—whether it’s for the first time or the thousandth time—we have an opportunity to discover something new—about them and about ourselves. This openness to discovery stirs our sense of aliveness and creates possibilities for connection and growth for both of us.

There is no hospitality like understanding.
— Vanna Bonta

While there is no formula or set of techniques to follow when practicing hospitality in the deepest and truest sense of the word, we do have a program in our congregation that offers some suggestions for being more welcoming. The program, known as STARs, was introduced by Dennis Haskins, spouse of former UUCP minister Roberta Haskins. To be a STAR, one simply has to follow these guidelines
You’ll Fit Right In
Benjie Messer

A
n old joke about welcoming all:

A Christian attends a UU congrega-
tion for the first time and is shocked by the atheism in
the sermon. At coffee hour, a UU asks how they
enjoyed the service. “I couldn’t believe half of what I
heard the minister say!” says the Christian.
“Fantastic!” says the UU, “you’ll fit right in!”

A wonderful part of my job is to welcome
members of the congregation, whether by leading a
hymn together in a way that people can follow,
working with a performing group, or just talking
with members after a service. I enjoy this push to be
extroverted and reach out to people, and I see many
of you that have a similar purposeful drive to check
in with each other. Though it’s always valuable to
think about how we could do better and who we
could reach out to more effectively, I’m pleased with
how welcoming we are. We certainly welcome
musicians! Many members who haven’t sung or
played instruments for years have started perform-
ning again at UUCP, largely because they know that
the congregation is a warm and appreciative place to
perform.

A more general way that Unitarian Universal-
ist congregations welcome all is by presenting music
that resonates with people of various faiths, beliefs
and traditions. As UUs, we come together to
appreciate beauty, create justice, care about each
other, and develop meaningful lives, and we do that
without agreeing to share the same beliefs. So rather
than present a singular worldview, our hymnal and
other service music includes secular pop songs,
hymns to God from Unitarianism’s Christian roots,
humanist and earth-centered takes on worship, and
music from many other religious traditions as well. I
do my best to choose music with universal topics, so
that whether the language is religious or atheistic, the
meaning is understandable to anyone.

Sometimes when language is strongly
religious or atheistic enough, it can make us feel
excluded, especially those of us who have been
excluded due to our beliefs. If that happens while
singing or listening to a song at UUCP, I hope that
you have been welcomed thoroughly enough into
our community to enjoy the song simply as an
“alternate way to view reality,” one that allows some
around you to worship. UUCP Choir Director
Connie Jahrmartk’s email signature expresses this
perfectly: “When I am singing lyrics that don’t ring
true for my own personal beliefs, I take joy in
knowing they may for the person standing next to
me.” It truly is a joyful thing to think and care about
each other like this, and I hope you enjoy our focus
on welcoming this month. Let’s do our best to
welcome all into our services, our congregation, and
into our lives.  

Create inclusion—with simple mindfulness
that others might have a different reality
from your own.

— Patti Digh
There was a lovely article in the newspaper on Mother’s Day about a single mom with 10 adopted, special needs children. What an amazing gift this woman is giving her children and our society in parenting these kids. After I finished the article, I thought to myself, maybe I will reach out to this family and invite them to come to UUCP, thinking we could be a welcoming community of support to this special family.

As I thought through this idea, I started to consider the practical implications of this family’s participation in our community. For one thing, the ten children would swell the number of participants in our religious education program by 10%, which is pretty substantial. While the article was not specific on the nature of the children’s special needs, it did mention the biological parents’ drug use and abuse and mood issues among some of the children. How would these children fare in our religious education programs? A couple of them are YRUU age, three are middle school, four are elementary aged and one is two.

As much as I would like to think we would be a welcoming community to this family, it would be naïve to assume it would be a smooth process. Were attitude and beliefs the only requirements to welcoming all, I know our community would rise to the occasion. But in the case of special needs, particularly those that are behavioral, cognitive and/or mood based, we also need information, skills and resources in order to be fully welcoming.

We currently have children in our programs with special needs, and for many, their participation is seamless, without requiring special effort on our part. There are others whose parents participate in Sunday School alongside their child to facilitate their child’s involvement, mostly at their own initiative, but sometimes at my explicit direction. In another case, a congregation member is a “buddy,” to a child attending Sunday School, so the parents can participate in services or support their other children.

All of us have witnessed behaviors from children during worship services, Together Time, on the patio or at other events, that give us pause and for which we may feel judgment about the behavior itself or the lack or type of parental intervention. Some of these behaviors are rooted in special needs and others are not. In some instances, our teachers, outstanding volunteers that they are, feel frustrated in meeting the challenge of difficult behaviors, and I understand this completely. It can be tough to facilitate an engaging lesson while distracted by unruly behavior from one or two children. As tough as it is for us, I cannot even begin to imagine what it might be like for parents who are attempting to manage challenging behaviors 24/7. Serving families with children with challenging behaviors—serving both the parents and the children—is our responsibility if we hope to be an inclusive and welcoming community.

In her book, Welcome Children with Special Needs, A Guidebook for Faith Communities, Sally Patton suggests congregations form support circles around families with members who have special needs, as a way to enhance inclusivity within a faith community. These “circles would include people who want to examine and deepen their own contribution to the faith community as well as explore the spiritual side of inclusion as a healing process.”

Support Circles is a topic that has been discussed within the Children’s Ministry committee, led by Noel Arring, and an effort we would like to initiate within our community. Members of a support circle would provide assistance to the family in a manner defined by the parents and circle. This would likely include serving among a team of volunteer mentors to identified children, attending Sunday School and other activities with the child. Support Circles provide assistance to both the parents and children, providing respite and opportunity for full participation.

Were we to have the Support Circle concept up and running at UUCP, I might very well have reached out to the family described in the Mother’s Day article. With the help and engagement of
As part of my stewardship testimony during our service on Celebration Sunday last month, I recounted my experience of being welcomed into the UUCP community, first as a visitor who had no familiarity with UUism, then gradually becoming more fully integrated into the community as I became more involved in the congregation, and ultimately developing deep and lasting relationships with the people here. If you were present that morning, you may recall that I characterized my being welcomed here as a gift.

Being welcomed is a gift, certainly, but it is also a process. It’s a continuous, dynamic process that takes place in many ways over a long time. And it’s a process that requires the active engagement both of the “welcome” and the “welcomee.” We are rightly proud to be a “welcoming congregation,” but being welcoming is more than being friendly and accepting, it’s an ongoing invitation to continually deepening engagement.

I think we do a great job with the initial, “social” type of welcoming: we greet visitors with a smile and a handshake, we chat with them and get to know them over coffee, we share our ideals and principles, we talk with them about their personal journey and beliefs and aspirations, and we let them know that we are genuinely happy to have them here with us. We invite them into community with us through Small Group Ministries, participation in activity groups or our religious education programs, and social justice causes. And, if we find that we’re mutually compatible, that they want to share their journey and grow in spirit with us, we welcome them into membership in the congregation.

Then what?
Well, for some people, that’s enough. They come to service on Sunday, and perhaps have children enrolled in the RE program. They enjoy being inspired by Rev. Susan and energized by the music; they like the people here and stay for coffee after service—that’s the extent of their engagement. And that’s perfectly OK. People are busy, they have things to do, and perhaps that’s all they’re looking for or all they currently have time for.

But for others, feeling and being welcomed—really welcomed—into community means a deeper kind of engagement. It’s building close and valued relationships. It’s being included and being inclusive. It’s having an impact and being impacted. And it’s being willing to be changed by each other. The meaning and richness of life in our congregation—what’s truly rewarding—comes from being involved and engaged. Participating.

So, the Board invites you, welcomes you, into a deeper engagement with the congregation.

On Sunday, June 1st, we will be holding our Congregational Meeting following service. This is the annual meeting at which we elect new members to the UUCP Board of Trustees, the Board of the Foundation, and the Nominating Committee. We review and approve the budget for the coming program year, which is really the actualization (incrementally) of our Mission and our strategic Ends. We tend to the business of running the congregation, and it is truly our business. It matters to our community that we all engage in this together, and we encourage all members to participate. We welcome your presence.
What would happen if you just accepted the situation and the person, not expecting more? It doesn’t mean the relationship would be fixed or healthy, nor that there would not be pain, but maybe, just maybe, your own suffering over it would diminish if you were able to let go of expecting something different.

The same is true with grief. The pain of grief and loss is the worst thing we experience in life. And grief generally does not go away quickly. Yet trying to push it away, or just get over it, or getting caught in endless thoughts of how you might have avoided or prevented the loss, leads to greater suffering. It sounds strange, but welcoming grief, feeling it, attending to it, making time for it, rather than trying to push it away, is the only way to really heal from grief.

It is easier to welcome the good stuff, but life brings us many things that are not easy to welcome; that we do not want to welcome. Living a life of welcome is about the spiritual discipline and quality of learning to make room for what life brings us—the good and the bad, without resistance. It won’t make life only pleasant. It will not mean we don’t experience pain, but it is an approach that allows us better resilience and less suffering as we develop an attitude of welcome, of openness and receptivity to life and the circumstances of our present.

Each day holds a surprise. But only if we expect it can we see, hear, or feel it when it comes to us. Let’s not be afraid to receive each day’s surprise, whether it comes to us as sorrow or as joy. It will open a new place in our hearts, a place where we can welcome new friends and celebrate more fully our shared humanity.

—Henri Nouwen

Unicare News

In remembrance:
- Marge and Paul Modell’s granddaughter, Brianna, March 26
- Pam Harrison’s father, H. Alton Harrison, April 5
- Belinda Clark’s niece, Connie Venetos, April 27
- Francis Wiget’s father, Francis, May 16—Francis was also Malcolm Wiget’s grandfather and former father-in-law of J. Lynne MacVean
- Lydia Yanak’s aunt, Elizabeth Bartram, May 17

Serious illness/hospitalization:
- Melissa Schwartz had surgery, and thanks everyone for the cards and emails
- Ellie Anderla was hospitalized at John C. Lincoln due to possible pancreatitis
- Helen Votichenko fell and broke her legs
- Sandra Schaffer will be having surgery soon for a possible tumor

Other news:
- Samantha Hayes received the Tesseract Paw Award for playing every sport for four years at her middle school
- David Boecker-Grieme accepted a position at a new law firm
- Laidia Restrepo was promoted to full professor in the Speech Language Department at ASU
- Ceyshe’ Napa received a Bachelor of Science from ASU in Nonprofit Leadership & Management with minor in American Indian Studies
- David Weaver graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry degree
- Emma Farrell is expecting a baby, due November 6

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.
Continued from “Hospitality...” Rev. Linda, page 1
(sometimes called the 7-UUP Creed):

1. **Show UUp**: Your presence on Sunday mornings is important. You can’t be welcoming if you’re not here!

2. **Free UUp**: Commit to spending the first fifteen or twenty minutes after a service greeting guests or newcomers and talking to someone you don’t already know.

3. **Round UUp**: Look for guests/newcomers before a service. Offer to sit with them. Notice anyone with a guest nametag and invite that person to chat during coffee hour.

4. **Chat’em UUp**: Ask open-ended questions to get conversation going, questions that require more than a yes/no answer. Here are some examples: What brought you here today? What did you like about the service? How did you hear about us? What do you know about Unitarian Universalism?

5. **Listen UUp**: Avoid telling newcomers and guests all you know about UUCP and UUism. Instead, listen to what they have to say to get some clues about why they’re here and what they might like to know more about.

6. **Hook’em UUp**: As you learn about their specific interests, consider introducing them to someone with knowledge in that area or similar interests.

7. **Sign’em UUp**: If they have any interest in getting UUCP newsletters, show them to the Welcome Table in the foyer where they can sign up for our mailing list. Invite them to help themselves to any of the materials in the brochure rack that might be of interest to them.

Watch for periodic STARs trainings hosted by the Membership Committee throughout the congregational year. The next STARs training will be offered on Sunday, June 22nd in the Johnson Room after the service. Attend the training and get a shiny star on your nametag to indicate your intention to be a welcoming presence on Sunday mornings.

Finally, to be more welcoming and hospitable to all, please remember these words by the Rev. David Rynkin from the Summer 2007 issue of *UU World*. Practicing hospitality:

is an individual work of intentional action, action that creates the quality of relationships in our churches that will nourish newcomers and longtime members alike... Through our actions of hospitality we move towards creating a world in which we are all treated with justice, equality, and compassion... We may have little control over conflicts in another part of the world, but we can practice truly honoring the preciousness of all human life by how we enter into relationship with each other. If we are serious about creating a more just, equitable, and compassionate world, we have to start with the room we are in.

May each of us make a commitment to the spiritual practice of hospitality within and beyond our religious community. □

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The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.
— Emily Dickinson

*Whether a person is straight or gay, Republican, Democrat, good person, not a good person, they’re all welcome, because to me, church is a place you’re supposed to get healed and whole and loved.*
— Joel Osteen
At the Board Chat with the congregation on Sunday, May 4, Rev. Susan shared that we were looking at a $25,000 shortfall of our Stewardship goal of $450,000 for next year. She explained how that would mean we would not have the resources to revitalize justice ministries. We would have to delay or reconsider a ministerial intern and future work on our campus and facility. It would also mean ending Community Nights.

In response, some members stepped up with a matching gift of up to $15,000 for increased pledges or one-time gifts to the Campaign coming in by Monday, May 12.

We are pleased to report that through this matching gift we received $17,340 in additional fundraising through increased pledges and one-time gifts. With the $15,000 matching one time gift we are now up to $426,806.50 in pledged income. Thank You! to the 13 households who increased their pledges and the five households who offered one-time gifts to meet the full matching funds! We are still waiting to hear from 48 current and active households to turn in their pledges which will hopefully bring in another $20,000 in renewed pledges and bring us very close to our goal.

2013 – 2014 Our Financial Health

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Thanks goes to the 114 households who have paid their current pledge in full! We are anticipating a deficit in this year’s budget and we greatly appreciate those who can pay off their current year pledge by June 30th. You can pay online through our website www.phoenixuu.org by clicking on “Make a Donation.” If you have any questions regarding your recent pledge statement that was sent in April please contact me at heidiparmenter@phoenixuu.org or 602-840-8400 ext. 202. □
Welcome, New Members!

Tom Best & Erica Mayer

Tom and Erica are thrilled to have finally joined UUCP as they have been coming together for more than a year and a half. Tom is from Tennessee and Erica is from Rhode Island and they each came to Phoenix for higher education. Both are healthcare providers and love that service is part of their day-to-day work. Their lives are enriched by meditation, yoga, reading, family, travel, and spending time together. They are very grateful for the liberal, progressive, inclusive environment of the UU community and look forward to Susan’s inspiring sermons each week.

Debbie Gordon

Debbie moved to Phoenix in March from central New Jersey. She’s been a UU since adolescence. A widow of six years with two grown children (one in Phoenix) and three grandchildren (one in Phoenix), Debbie is a singer, thespian, gardener, reader, and liberal, educated at Cornell, Rutgers, and the University of Pennsylvania. You’ll see her in our choir!

Carolyn Lowther

Carolyn says she’s a progressive New Jersey girl. In college she majored in classical music, then went on to receive an MBA from Wharton and a CPA from the State of Pennsylvania. Carolyn enjoyed a lengthy and varied career in the financial world. She most recently ran a financial business offering tax and investment advice. She loves drawing, ballet, symphony, reading, hiking, and biking and looks forward to working with UUCP against social injustice.

Jennifer Prescott

Jennifer is thrilled to be joining UUCP. After graduating from the University of Arizona 22 years ago, she has worked as a writer and editor for online and print publishers, and in the health care industry in many capacities. A vegetarian for nearly three decades, Jennifer is passionate about animal rights issues. She is mother to two sons, ages 14 and 11, and shares her home with several cats.

Jarrett Ransom

Jarrett is the mother of one son who is three (Tanner). Born in Georgia and raised in South Carolina, she has been living in Phoenix for the last thirteen years. Jarrett is the Founder and President of ReAwaken, a nonprofit for women’s empowerment. She is passionate about her work with this organization that empowers adult, professional women to share openly and noncompetitively while learning how to overcome their own life’s obstacles one step at a time.

Pam & Rick Stivers

Pam and Rick come to UUCP from Evansville, Indiana, where they were members of a small, member-led UU church. Rick retired as CFO of a hospital system there and Pam was a pharmacist. They have two grown children, a son in Portland and a daughter in Chicago. Rick is a volunteer mentor with SCORE, an organization that assists small business owners. Pam volunteers at the Mayo Clinic and the Fountain Hills library. Rick’s hobbies are fly fishing and collecting wine, and Pam likes gardening, the arts, and fitness. Together they enjoy hiking and
traveling. They share a love for the unique culture and scenery of the Southwest and are happy to be in Arizona and at UUCP.

**Marshall Valentine**

Marshall moved to Scottsdale, AZ in June of 2000 from Charleston, the capital city of West Virginia. He attended his undergrad at Arizona State University followed by a short global management certificate program at Thunderbird School of Global Management. He currently resides in Phoenix and considers this his permanent home. Marshall’s main interests include: violin, tennis, hiking, rock-hounding, disc golf, social progress and self-spiritual and Earth-spiritual healings.

**Suzanne Walter**

Suzanne returned to her hometown of Phoenix in 2006 after spending several years in Ohio, Florida, New Mexico, and Utah. She works as an education consultant, focusing on curriculum and assessment. Her 12-year-old daughter, Rasa, is finishing sixth grade and plays the viola in two valley youth orchestras. When Suzanne isn’t busy shuttling Rasa from one activity to another, she enjoys mindfulness practice, reading, hiking, and leisurely walks.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the congregation, please check our 2014-15 UUCP Program Catalog which will be published in mid-August. The new Program Catalog will include dates for upcoming Pathway to Membership series. □

— WELCOME —

Welcome anything that comes to you, but do not long for anything else.

— Andre Gide

Welcome the task that makes you go beyond yourself.

— Frank McGee

Welcome the present moment as if you had invited it.

Why?

Because it is all we ever have.

— Pema Chodron
June Worship Theme:

Welcome

Services bring our community together at 10:30 AM

**June 1: Welcome Opens Doors**

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

Living a life of welcome is about curiosity, and a willingness to see what is easy to ignore. When we live a life of welcome, we make room to live in the complexity and difficulty of life and its changes, challenges and injustices. How can this spirit of welcome invite us closer to connecting and impacting our world?

**Congregational Annual Meeting at 11:45am following the service.**

**June 8: Welcoming All: Hospitality as Spiritual Practice**

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

Hospitality as a way of welcoming and meeting others can be a deep expression of our values, because hospitality at its best expresses our recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of all people. How might we live this spirit of hospitality?

*Share the Plate Sunday: Offering benefits AZ QUIP - Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project*

**June 15: Welcoming Fathers and Fatherhood**

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

In honor of Father’s Day, we’ll reflect on the role of fathers in our lives and even how fatherhood has and continues to change. This change brings opportunities, but also its own challenges.

**June 22: A Heart of Welcome**

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

How might we approach daily living with a heart of welcome? How do we learn to develop a greater quality of acceptance for the varied circumstances of our life and world? What benefits might we find to living a life of welcome?

**June 29: Welcoming Diversity**

**Service Leader:** Heidi Singer

People with different cultural identities, experiences and perspectives have much to offer each other, including opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. To welcome diversity in our lives and in our congregation, there is a process of self-reflection and action that can make this easier and more likely to succeed. We will share some highlights from “Daring to Dream,” an Adult Faith Development course this year, as we hope to inspire you to welcome diversity.
truly embracing these challenges is what makes a fully inclusive community.

We have high hopes and expectations of ourselves as a welcoming community at UUCP. In order to live up to these expectations, we need both the attitudes and tools to fully realize our inclusivity. Support Circles are one way to do this, both in providing concrete support and in raising awareness of the diversity of special needs. Please join us in this important endeavor.

If you are interested in being a part of a Support Circle for a family with children with special needs, please let me (annebyrne@phoenixuu.org) or Noel Arring (noel.arring@yahoo.com) know. While it would be helpful to have experience with children with special needs, this is not required. More important is a willingness to be a friend and mentor two or so times a month.

If you are like me, you may have an idealized notion of community. I expect my intentional community, like UUCP, to be composed of people I like and with whom I get along well. When people need support, I like to think I am there to provide it. In reality, true community is a mix and match of people both easy to get along with and others with challenging behavior. Sometimes the support people need is more difficult or different than I am comfortable providing. Welcoming differences and difficulties is the essential work of communities, and one of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing.

— Jean Vanier

Memorial Garden

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

April:
Jess Otis Allen
Lucy Burrell Allen
Irving I. Bezman
Virginia Ann Blicklen
Bruce H. Clayton
Eleanor Dana-Mast
Edward Ellison Davis
Glenn Jay Jackel
Hanna B. Parker
Lucy Buckner Wells

May:
Emma La Duke Ames
Louise Bauer Bercaw
Jean Berry
Ralph P.E. Dickinson
Ki Hermann
Donald J. Jackel
Marcy E. Kiefer
Wilhelmina (Mimi) Muth
Thaxter Robinson
Margaret (Peggy) D. Wilkinson
Kathy Van Kerkwyk (Grobe)

June:
Audrey Hope Engelen
Shannon Lea Garvin
Daniel Raymond McNeal
Jennifer Goyette Raines
John Charles Mitchell
Lenore Caroline Bendheim