



# Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix

June 2015



## The Changing Religious Imagination

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

What role does imagination play in your life? Educator Parker Palmer says that imagination is one of the most vital powers that humans possess. He says this because we all, even unconsciously, use metaphor to name our experience of life. According to Palmer:

*...these personal metaphors do much more than describe reality as we know it. Animated by the imagination, our metaphors often become reality, transmuting themselves from language into the living of our lives.*

As examples, he uses people who look at the world as a game of chance who then create a kind of fatalism about losing or an obsession with beating the odds. Similarly, those who see life as a battlefield end up seeing an enemy around every corner and feel under constant siege.

The same could be said of the religious imagination. As Unitarian Universalists, we are often known more for our commitment to reason and a rational faith than our appreciation for metaphor, mysticism and imagination. But the truth is our tradition has always existed in the tension between these two, with both elements influencing our theology and practice. This is important because scientific discovery has had tremendous influence on the religious imagination. It may even be responsible for radical shifts in theology. In their book *Saving Paradise*, Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock discuss how Paradise, the Garden of Eden, Heaven (all names for a similar ideal place) were often thought to exist on Earth. Paradise was thought to be in the East, in a place not easily found, but still on Earth. To what extent did the navigation and mapping of the world shift the religious

imagination such that people could no longer conceive of heaven as a yet undiscovered place on Earth? In the same way, notions of a physical celestial realm of saints, angels and God(s) just above Earth has faded from the religious imagination as we have explored the skies, our eyes and telescopes always reaching further into space.

Perhaps this is one reason that our religious imagination as UUs so often delves inside the human spirit. Imagery celebrating the stardust in our veins, metaphors of beauty, imagery of the interdependent web of creation of which we are a part – all of these turn our religious attention not to the skies, not to paradise or deity apart from us, but rather to the quality of our living. Our religious imagination invites metaphors that describe life as a gift, an opportunity to experience meaning, to grow in love, or “a chance to grow a soul,” as UU Minister A. Powell Davies once said.

Imagination is a powerful and fascinating gift. We like to think of ourselves as always rational, but imagination is a touch point between our experiences and how we make meaning of them. We celebrate the importance of science and reason as one source of our faith and we adorn the walls of our sanctuary with art and weave our services around poetry and music. I suspect that as we explore imagination this month, we will discover that it plays a much larger role in our lives than we realize. □

What lies behind us and what lies  
before us are tiny matters  
compared to what lies within us.  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson



## “There is Always That Space...”

Benjie Messer

Music Director

Daydreaming, contemplation, play, imagination, creativity – our minds do such wonderful things when they are idle and relaxed! For many of us, these things are true freedom – letting our minds go where they will. This kind of free, undirected time is what we worry about losing as we grow up, forced to stop playing and start working, both in school and in our adult lives. But no matter how focused we are or how busy our lives become, our minds will always find chances to imagine and dream.

In his poem “It’s Ours,” Charles Bukowski writes about these quiet, idle moments:

there is always that space there  
just before they get to us  
that space  
that fine relaxer  
the breather  
while say  
flopping on a bed  
thinking of nothing  
or say  
pouring a glass of water from the  
spigot  
while entranced by  
nothing.

We find that space, that chance to breathe, because it’s important. Our minds are not simply tools that we use to make and stick to decisions, though they do that beautifully and well. They are also spontaneous fun-makers, irresistible sources of imagination and play. We adults can learn to play again, to let our minds be free, and maybe focusing on imagination this month will help us do that.

One way for us to learn to play again as adults is to notice what we love. Carl Jung writes:

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.

Those of us who love sounds spend our play time listening and singing, drumming and dancing,

composing and producing. I know that others play with words, images, concepts, movement, spaces, foods – whatever you love. In this way, each of us is a creative artist, even if our creative play is only in our mind, and even if we only play now and then.

Without a community, our creative lives feel very individual, very much “our own.” Maybe one reason for this isolation is that our creative expressions are so varied. And for professional artists, it doesn’t help that making a living often requires highlighting your uniqueness rather than your understanding of tradition. But I think ultimately, creative isolation happens because our society doesn’t support artists – that letting your mind run free and be idle isn’t something many of us are taught by our parents, our schools, or our jobs. Bukowski ends “It’s Ours” thus:

that space  
there  
before they get to us  
ensures  
that  
when they do  
they won’t  
get it all

ever.

But our UUCP community is healthier than that. Our artists have many chances to play, to share their work, and to be appreciated. Music is central to all of our services, and to many of our members’ lives in other ways. I’m a little less in touch with our members who are photographers, painters, writers, poets, mathematicians, architects, cooks, designers, sculptors – but I know that they’re getting chances to play too! I’ve read the UUCP literary magazine *Poikilos*, tasted the food of our cooks at Thursday community nights, enjoyed solutions of our home and garden team, seen the art in our sanctuary and the design of our publicity materials, and more. I hope you enjoy the arts that are part of the UUCP community, and that you find a chance this month, as Jung says, to play with the objects you love. □



## Play On! Anne Byrne

Director, Children's Ministries

**R**itual grew up in sacred play; poetry was born in play and nourished on play; music and dancing were pure play.... We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come from play...it arises in and as play, and never leaves it. —Johan Huizinga

The quickest way to access your imagination is through play. In our “hurry up and succeed” society, the value of play can be underestimated, but for young children, play is their most important life work. Our congregation's preschool, the UU Early Education Cooperative, is a play-based preschool. We take the business of playing very seriously by providing a rich environment for children to explore, manipulate, create and imagine.

A play-based preschool takes full advantage of and expands on the natural imaginations of young children. In addition to sensory play with play dough or sand, arts through painting and coloring, and exposure to music and stories, our preschoolers engage in extensive pretend play. Costumes and caricatures, puppets and dolls, blocks and structures and their many imagined purposes build skills and perspective for children in profound ways.

Pretend and imaginary play provides an outlet for children to work through emotions. When my son Dylan was three, he had an extensive set of imaginary friends and family. We lived in Denver at the time and he referred to his imaginary family as his Colorado, Denver family. His dad traveled a lot, and Dylan played many games with his Colorado, Denver dad in his real dad's absence. There was a news story about an attack by a mountain lion in Colorado that distressed Dylan, and he coped by telling me a story about his Colorado, Denver mom that was killed by a mountain lion when she was a little girl. Of course, he often held up his Colorado, Denver family as vastly superior to his real family when things did not go his way.

Imaginary play helps children develop empathy. When orchestrating a “classroom” of stuffed animals, a child imagines all the roles from teacher

to good student to class clown, trading roles as the mood fits. Research has shown imaginary play develops “theory of mind” – an awareness that one's thoughts may differ from those of other persons, and that there are a variety of perspectives of which each of us is capable – is closely related to imaginative play.

Anyone who has attempted to enter into a pretend tea party knows that there are likely a number of “rules” about who sits where, what you can eat when, who you can talk to and how you behave. It is likely your tea party host is exercising his or her imagination to develop autonomy and planning skills while learning to self regulate within the rules at home and elsewhere.

Not surprisingly, engaging in imaginary play as a child leads to creativity later in life. Research with clearly creative individuals, such as Nobel Prize winners and MacArthur “Genius” grant awardees, indicated that early childhood games about make-believe worlds were more frequent in such individuals than in control participants in their fields (Root-Bernstein, 2012).

The value of imagination is well known. As Albert Einstein said,

*Imagination* is more important  
than knowledge.

For knowledge is limited  
to all we now know and understand,  
while imagination embraces

*the entire world,*

and all there ever will be  
to know and understand.

Imaginary play in children is something to encourage and support, as it helps develop many important intellectual and emotional skills. If you are seeking ways to better access your own imagination, follow the lead of a three-year-old child and play on! □



## Summer at Camp de Benneville Pines

Geoff Anderla

Camping Ministries Director, Pacific Southwest District

Summer camp season is almost upon us at Camp de Benneville Pines – the home of UU camps for the Pacific Southwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association (of which UUCP is a member) – and there are a couple of camps that still have room for more youth.

Our Elementary Camp is for youth who are completing 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and runs July 5-11. The theme of the camp is “Come As You Are” and is deaned by the talented Celeste Plumlee. We really need many more youth to attend this particular camp to make it financially feasible, so please consider sending your child.

Some parents worry about sending a child as young as seven years old to a week-long overnight camp. Rest assured we have well-trained and loving staff and counselors who specialize in working with children in this age range.

Our Junior High Camp is for youth who are completing 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and runs July 12-18. The theme of this camp is “Express Yourself” and we have two wonderful adult deans, Kathleen Kaun Moscato and Marianne Swift Gifford.

Our most popular camp, for high school youth, is already sold out with a hefty waiting list.

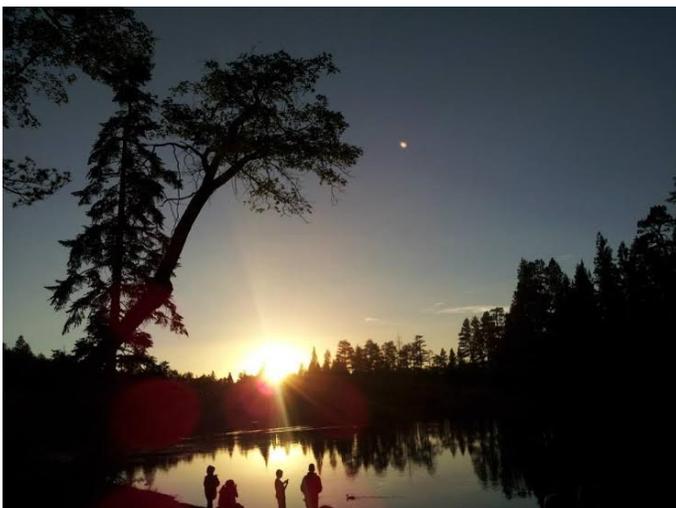
You can register for any of our camps by visiting the camp website: <http://www.uucamp.org>.

Attending camp can be one of the most rewarding experiences of a youth’s life and it is so important to send them to camp. If camp is cost prohibitive, there are scholarships available by downloading the form that is linked below. Scholarship applications are due June 1<sup>st</sup>.

*The Mission of PSWD Camping Ministries is to create an evolving, safe, and affirming community that encourages the exploration of Unitarian Universalist values through intentional programming and sacred connections that enrich mind, body and spirit. Our Vision is for our children, youth and adults to leave camp transformed and empowered to carry out loving action in the world. □*

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

—Marcel Proust



## SUMMER COMMUNITY NIGHTS

6:00 PM ▪ Potluck ▪ Multigenerational (no Chalice Kids) ▪ Special Activities!

*Everyone is welcome!*

Thursday, June 4<sup>th</sup> - *Games Night*  
Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> - *Ice Cream Social*  
Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup> - *Variety Hour*

---

## Budget Info Meeting

Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>  
11:45 AM, UUCP Sanctuary

Rev. Susan will host an informational presentation on next year's budget, which Congregation members will vote on during our

### **Annual Meeting – Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>**

Budget will be emailed to members prior to the budget meeting.

---



### **UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

## General Assembly 2015 June 24-28, Portland, OR

General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Attendees worship, witness, learn, connect, and make policy for the Association through democratic process. Anyone may attend. The theme for GA 2015 is *Building a New Way*. Most events will be held in the Oregon Convention Center, 777

NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Portland, OR 97232. To view the program of events and to register please visit [www.uua.org/GA](http://www.uua.org/GA).

## Unicare News

### In remembrance:

- Margo Reed, singer in our congregation during Ray Manker's ministry, passed away in April.
- Doloris Reiss, sister of Beverly Spiars, passed away on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Harry Frederick, grandfather of Brian Frederick-Gray, passed away on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Tom Wiley, Brian Speed, and Duane Pell, all friends of Benny Butt, passed away recently.
- Perry Wilson, friend of David and Uli Boecker-Grieme passed away in April.
- Tom Byrne, brother of Anne Byrne, passed away on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### Milestone celebrations:

- Ray Manker, our Minister Emeritus, celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in April.

### Other news:

- Shanon, daughter of Michele Morgan and Sam Kirkland, graduated from Wayne State University.
- Michael, son of Robert Back and Laurie Folsom, received his Master of Education degree.
- Ryan Featherston, son of Donna Featherston, received a state department sponsored scholarship to study Mandarin in Beijing.

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).

Maureen Jeffries,  
Unicare Coordinator



## New Member



Welcome new UUCP member **Caroline Joy Adams**, who teaches at Paradise Valley Community College and is the author of three books, including *A Woman of Wisdom*. She is currently working on a new book, *Your Life is a Sacred Journey*, and she has one daughter, Christie. Caroline has lived in AZ for seven years, and loves to photograph its natural beauty, especially its flowers, butterflies, and inspiring landscapes. She looks forward to connecting with this wonderful UU community!

### — IMAGINATION —

Imagine all the people, living  
life in peace.  
— John Lennon

*Sometimes I have believed as many as  
six impossible things before breakfast.*  
— Lewis Carroll

The man who has no imagination  
has no wings.  
— Muhammad Ali

## June Worship Theme: **Living a Life of Imagination**

*Services bring our community together at 10:30 AM*

June 7: *Children's Ministry Sunday*

Service Leader: Anne Byrne

Share in the celebration of our Children's Ministry program and all of the wisdom and gifts that our teachers and the young people of the congregation bring to our Unitarian Universalist faith and community.

June 14: (Auction Sermon!) *The Religious Imagination of Justice and Equity: From the Levelers to Dr. King*

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

Francis Wiget, the auction winner, requested an exploration of the Christian Socialists of 17<sup>th</sup> century England, the Levelers and the work and theology of Dr. King. The religious imagination informs how we view an ideal world and there are similarities in the views of the Levelers and Dr. King, as well as in the Hebrew Prophets, Jesus and religious leaders today.

June 21: *Re-imagining Fatherhood*

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

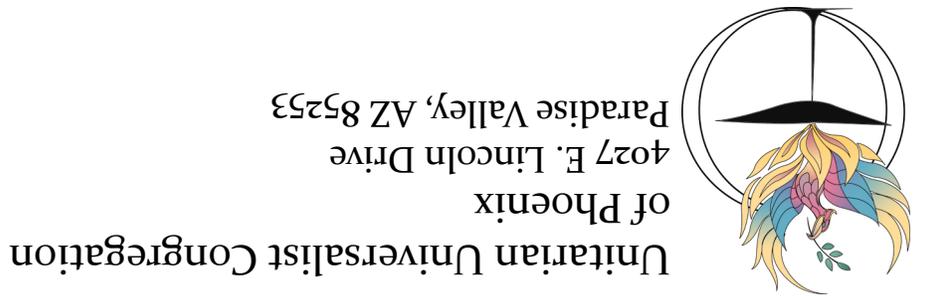
The metaphors we use to understand our experiences actually shape our reality. It is exciting to see the ways that images of fatherhood are changing, as that opens up new opportunities and appreciations for fatherhood in all its forms. There is even a place for imagination in creating strong bonds between dads and their children.

June 28: *"Use your imagination!"*

Service Leader: Heidi Singer

Imagination is more than just a daydream. It's a dynamic tool that can be, and should be, used to improve your life and our world. Heidi Singer is a UUCP member and Worship Associate.





Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
of Phoenix  
4027 E. Lincoln Drive  
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
SCOTTSDALE, AZ  
PERMIT NO. 13