



Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix

September 2015



A People of Covenant, Not Creed

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

Every week, at the beginning of our Sunday services, we say these words together:

*Love is the doctrine of this congregation
The quest for truth is our sacrament
And service is our prayer.
To dwell together in peace
To seek knowledge in freedom
To share our strength in fellowship,
Thus do we covenant.*

This is the covenant of our congregation—words that connect us in fellowship and common purpose. James Luther Adams is one of most prominent Unitarian scholars of recent times. He was one of the most distinguished liberal religious ethicists,

and taught ethics and theology at University of Chicago Divinity School and Harvard Divinity School. Adams defines Covenant as one of the cornerstones of Unitarian Universalism and argues that human beings become human by making commitments and promises, both individually and collectively. Covenant reminds us we are not alone. It connects us to others in relationship, but also connects to the creative and sustaining power of life, and to the earth itself.

The reason that covenant is so foundational to Unitarian Universalism is because we are not a creedal religion. Creeds are statements of belief, religious doctrine explaining religious teaching and beliefs. Unitarian Universalists do not have a creed. There is no profession of faith, no particular belief to which one has to subscribe in order to be a UU or to

Continued page 6



Let's Make Some Joyful Noise!

Benjie Messer

Music Director

Welcome back to UUCP for another year! If you're new to our community, please introduce yourself to me, particularly if you want to be part of our music program. Our September worship theme is "covenant"—as in a promise, agreement, or commitment. Many of us struggle to live up to our most important promises, whether they are to ourselves, to other people, or to the world, but have no fear—both of UUCP's big musical events in September are completely commitment-free!

The first of these events is an "all-sing" choir that marks the opening of our choir season. Our rehearsal on Wednesday, September 9th for our Ingathering Water Communion service on Sunday, September 13th is open to anyone, without any need to commit to being part of the choir for the rest of our season. People who have never sung in a group,

singers who are too busy for weekly rehearsals, people who want to try us out, choir alumni who no longer sing with us, non-UU friends and family members—all are welcome! We can provide childcare during rehearsal; singing parents, please let me know in advance how many children you'll be bringing, so that I can have enough childcare providers available.

The second musical event is a concert in our sanctuary on the evening of Saturday, September 26th. I'm calling it the "Big Fall Show." The first set, at 7:00 PM, will feature UUCP musical groups reprising some of my favorite music from our last year of services, and the second set, at 8:00 PM, will feature my New Orleans group, Bad Cactus Brass Band. Childcare will be provided, and I'm hoping that it's a fun, joyous evening for everyone who attends. Tickets for adults will be on a sliding scale

Continued page 2



UUCP Welcomes New Intern Minister Ministerial Internship Committee

On Sunday, September 13, we will welcome Emrys Staton as our Intern Minister for 2015-2016!

Emrys is an Arizona native—he grew up in Prescott where he attended the UU fellowship. In his twenties he joined the UU Church of Tucson, where he volunteered as advisor to YRUU and then became involved in Camp DeBenville Pines. He completed a Master of Divinity at Claremont School of Theology in 2012 and a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education in 2013. He tells us that it was his activism that led him to pursue a call to ministry. He has been involved with social movements centered on immigration justice, poverty and homelessness, indigenous and environmental issues. He has held leadership roles in BorderLinks and No More Deaths. We are excited to have Emrys' knowledge, experiences and energy with us for the coming year!

And we are excited that UUCP has the opportunity to serve as a teaching congregation—teaching an intern, learning ourselves and serving the whole UU movement. As a teaching congregation, each member and committee has something to

share with Emrys—both successes and challenges—and all will learn from his perspective of recent seminary experience and dreams for the future of our denomination. It's a wonderful opportunity to continue to grow into our covenant—especially our promise to “share our strength in fellowship”!

Reverend Susan will be his supervisor. Over the course of the year, the Ministerial Internship Committee will be meeting with Emrys monthly to support, listen, advise, give feedback and offer guidance. We will begin by working together on a formal “Learning and Service Agreement” that will spell out expectations for both Emrys and UUCP. Throughout the year, we will be looking for input from all of you about ways that you or a committee might engage with Emrys—please talk with any of us about your ideas! Committee members are: Paula Chang, Gary Ezzell, Dale Fisher, Susan Goldsmith (chair), Janet Jenkins, and Jan Kaplan.

Be with us on Sunday the 13th to welcome Emrys Staton and to embark on our new adventure as a teaching congregation! □

Continued from “Let's...” page 1

from \$10-40; anyone 18 years old or younger gets in free. I would like to receive an average of \$20/adult, so feel free to pay less than \$20 if you are in financial hardship, and please pay more than \$20 if you are able, so that others may attend. Any income after expenses will go to UUCP. Speaking of expenses, I am not paying myself as a band member, but the other members of Bad Cactus Brass Band will be paid at their usual rates.

If you're one of the many UUCP'ers who have asked me to bring Bad Cactus Brass Band to the congregation, don't miss this show, because the band is about to end! For seven years, we've been one of the busiest groups in town, playing 100-150 shows each year in the Phoenix area. I'm proud of what the band has contributed to Phoenix life, and I'm sentimental about the musicians I worked with and the experiences we shared. But I'm also ready

to let it go, and to be free of the responsibilities of bandleading.

Part of covenant, after all, is figuring out how to move on from it. What else can we do when we don't want to live up to our agreements any longer? How else can we make sense of those times when we find ourselves burdened with multiple, contradictory commitments? Sometimes we have to break old promises before we can recommit ourselves to something new, and that's not always easy. Bad Cactus Brass Band's mission was to be a unique musical voice of Phoenix, and I took that seriously— so seriously that now I have to commit to giving it up!

I hope you enjoy the concert, that some of you join us for our all-sing choir, and that this month of meditating on covenant helps you notice what you really want to be committed to. □



Covenant with Me

Katie Resendiz

Acting Director, Children's Ministries

In a recent meeting of the Children's Ministry Committee, we were talking about classroom management, building up our roster of teachers, and creating intergenerational opportunities. The idea of commitment kept coming up. How do we get artists to commit to two weeks of lessons? How do we get families to commit to a season's worth of Sunday School attendance? How do we get kids to commit to their seats? (OK, that last one isn't really important, but you see where I'm going with this.)

As we moved through these typical beginning-of-year topics it became very clear that the issue of "commitment" we kept circling, was actually an issue of agreement and understanding. In trying to get all the details down, we had positioned ourselves slightly off tilt from our actual goal. This became blazingly clear when we approached lesson plans for September's theme of "Covenant."

Asking members of a community to "commit to" something is hard. Getting a commitment out of them is even harder. It feels like begging, schedules have to be checked, we start to feel a sense of debt, and woe be to her that can't follow through on what she said she would do.

But, what about asking someone to "covenant with" you in your efforts? It has a much different quality to the action and I don't think it's just the shift in prepositions. To "covenant with," we enter into relationship and we find understanding and agreement to move toward a shared vision. It becomes less about an exchange of time or commodity and more about moving together as one entity.

In my new role of Acting Children's Ministry Director, I have requests to make to the congregation. I need to fill teaching spots, I need storytellers to inspire creativity, I need mentors for individual kids, I need history buffs to share tales, I need someone to sweep up the pretzel crumbs. But really, what I'm asking is to covenant with you. I want us to come together to find that place where

talent, curiosity, and excitement can fulfill need.

I know it is hard to enter an honest agreement with an unknown quantity. Or, as was put in our Children's Ministry Committee meeting, "They need to know each other at least a little bit, before they start making promises." I'm new to UUCP. My family only started attending this past January. So, maybe the first step in agreement and understanding is letting you know a bit about me.

I am a nerd. I love to study and read and debate and listen. For the past ten years most of my "nerding" has been around the issue of Human Trafficking. My professional life was focused on developing service models for those who have been forced to work against their will. I spent most hours thinking about victim support, legislation, and safe communities. When that didn't occupy my brain, I built passion for education, peacebuilding, and multigenerational communities. Since the beginning of the year, I've given myself the freedom to expand my nerd tendencies to include: children's literature, water rights, old horror movies, and costuming. I'm an activist, a learner, a wife, a mom, a daughter, an educator, and a horrible speller. I'd love to get to know you.

Some thoughts and ideas on Covenant:

- Please come find me! I want to get to know you whether or not you have children in Sunday School.
- Talk to your children about agreements they make—what kind of understandings do you make in your home? What agreements do they make with teachers? What promises have they made to their friends?
- Play a game without rules. Simon Says or TicTacToe with no rules! What works and what doesn't when there are no rules?
- Similarly, talk to young drivers about the "social contract" aspects of driving. Which traffic laws do we follow because we don't want to get caught? What rules do we follow because it just makes driving easier?

Have an honest discussion about our congregation's covenant. Who are we making this

Continued page 5



A Promise to One Another

Kristina Benner

Membership Volunteer Coordinator

We have seen many staffing changes recently at UUCP, and I am pleased to announce that I will be taking on new responsibilities as your Membership Volunteer Coordinator, in addition to continuing to assist Rev. Susan in administrative duties. One of the quirky things about working for a congregation is that September feels more like the new year than January does. I am excited to start thinking about membership engagement in this “new year” and discover ways that I can help visitors and friends find what they have been seeking in a religious community.

Here at UUCP, September is a time to renew our covenant to one another. To be a member of this community means that we make certain promises to one another, and we renew those promises time and time again. Through my years of serving on the Membership Committee, I am well-versed in what Rev. Susan calls the Six Pillars of Membership. If you imagine our congregation being supported by these pillars, and if you imagine that each of these pillars is comprised of its members, then you can see that if one pillar falls, surely the entire structure will crumble. The pillars are: your presence on Sunday, a commitment of time and leadership to the congregation, a commitment of financial support to the congregation, a commitment to exploring your own spiritual growth, a commitment to the larger Unitarian Universalist community, and, finally, service to our world with your gifts and your passions.

Whew, that seems like a lot of commitment! And yet, taken as a whole, these pillars of UUCP’s membership boil down to one promise that we make. We promise to grow with each other, both personally and collectively, in order to make UUCP strong with our gifts and our talents so we can, in turn, be a beacon of compassion and justice in the world.

Three times a year, we teach these pillars of membership in our Pathway to Membership class. The class participants who decide to become members affirm that they will uphold the pillars to the

best of their ability, and we as a congregation covenant with the new members to share in fellowship and welcome the gifts and talents that these new members bring. This commitment, however, doesn’t end once the ink is dry on the membership book. We are a living tradition: constantly evolving, constantly adjusting, constantly reaffirming our covenant to one another.

As your new Membership Volunteer Coordinator, my promise to you is that I will help you find a way to be engaged in activities at UUCP through every phase of your membership, whether you are new to our community or you have been a member since our doors opened. I invite you to talk to me about ways you would like to be involved. I want to know what your interests are, and I want to help you feel connected to our congregation. You can find me on Sundays at the Welcome Table in the lobby, at upcoming Community Night dinners in October, or leading Pathway to Membership classes in November. Feel free to contact me at 602-840-8400 ext. 204 or kristinabenner@phoenixuu.org. I look forward to getting to collaborate with you as the Membership Volunteer Coordinator and together we’ll find ways to strengthen those pillars of membership—I promise. □

Welcome Marion Holt, who became a UUCP member in April. Her UU membership began in Eugene, OR in 1954 and has continued, unbroken, since then. A move to Ann Arbor, MI in 1970 brought her into more active participation which included board service, RE teaching, Planned Giving Committee, Caring Committee, Book Shop work, teaching adult seniors and many, many other venues. Her main career was as an Extension Agent (Home Economist) with Michigan State University. This year, she will celebrate 25 years of marriage to Nicholas Holt, and she has five children and four grandchildren.



Continued from "Covenant..." page 3
promise to? What does it mean if we don't know each of those people individually? Are there parts of the covenant that seem odd or uncomfortable? Where do you see the values of the covenant expressed in the community?

- Check out these stories and resources:
 - "A Promise is a Promise" by Robert Munsch
 - Any retelling of Aesop's *The Lion and the Mouse*
 - 2015 Children's movie "Home"
 - "Making Promises, Making Covenants" by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session2/118157.shtml>. □



New Office Assistant



What a welcome I have received from many people when it was announced I was going to be the new office assistant. Thank you so much for welcoming me with open arms to the team of wonderful people who work here. I have been coming to UUCP for my entire life, since 1976. I attended RE as a child and was very active in my high school group, YRUU. More recently I have been an adult advisor for the next generation of YRUU here at UUCP and I am also the Camping Ministries Director for the Pacific Southwest District. It is an honor to be on the staff and I look forward to getting to know everyone better. My hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 3:15 PM and I can be reached at GeoffAnderla@phoenixuuu.org or by calling the office at 602-840-8400 ext. 201. □

FALL COMMUNITY NIGHTS

Thursday, September 3rd

6:00 PM - *Potluck* ▪ *Multigenerational (no Chalice Kids)*

October & November

Weekly Community Nights every Thursday

6:00 PM - *Prepared meals, vegetarian options*

*Suggested donation: \$5/adult, \$2/child under 10, \$10/family
or bring your own sack supper*

6:30 PM - *Chalice Kids*

Continued from "A People..." Rev. Susan, page 1

be a member of the congregation. Instead, we are a covenantal tradition and covenanted community. Members of our congregation identify as humanist, theist, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, atheist, agnostic, pagan, and more. But covenant connects us across our differences. Through covenant, we make promises to each other of how we will try to dwell together in peace, in service, seeking truth and living out love for one another and the world.

This can seem a little strange, if you are new to Unitarian Universalism. Many people still want to know "what we believe," or "how we can be a religion if we don't all believe the same thing." One of the things I treasure most about our tradition is that, while doctrine and dogma are generally fixed, covenant is based on relationship and it allows for growth and change and new wisdom and insight to develop. Being in covenant means learning together, growing together and helping one another. It also

means working together on things that reach beyond our own lives. There is an old and familiar saying in UUism, "We need not think alike to love alike." Covenant helps us find more authentic ways of living in diverse community, discovering deeper truths by learning together through and from our differences, and honoring each other in the process.

Throughout this year, we will look more closely at our covenant. We will look at the values in our covenant—for instance: love, truth, peace, freedom—and what it means to be a people who covenant to live these promises. This month as we explore what it means to be a people of covenant, we will investigate the various promises and covenants we have in our lives, from those within our families, to these very words we promise each other every Sunday. □

Unicare News

In remembrance:

- Karen Meeks, paralegal of 24 years to Robert Back, passed away.
- Tia, sister of Chellie, passed away.

Milestone celebrations:

- Benny Butt retired from the Phoenix Fire Department after 31 years there.

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.

Maureen Jeffries,
Unicare Coordinator



Couples Enrichment Retreat

All couples committed to their relationship are welcome—married or unmarried, new relationships or golden anniversary celebrants—all have opportunities for growth and will benefit from this event. Couples will take a closer look at common issues such as communication, finances and sexuality. Workshops are designed and led by volunteer couples from the VUU Couples Enrichment Group.

Sept 25-27, 2015

- Friday 7:00 PM through Sunday 11:00 AM
- \$270 per couple includes two nights lodging at beautiful Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center in Carefree, AZ
- Space limited to first 10 couples
- www.vuu.org/couplesretreat or call Byon and Lara at 480-274-7234

September Worship Theme: **Covenant**

September 5 & 13 - One Service at 10:30 AM

September 6: *Harmony Singing*

Service Leader: Benjie Messer

Join us for a journey through some of our hymnals' rare musical treasures. By singing, we become more aware of ourselves, and by listening to each other sing, we become more aware of each other.

September 13: *Multigenerational Water Communion Service*

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

This all-ages service celebrates community. It's also our annual ingathering, a kick-off to the year. Everyone is invited to bring water from a place that holds personal significance. We mingle these waters together as a symbol of how our lives are woven together in covenant and community.

Beginning of Two-Service Schedule, 9:30 AM & 11:15 AM

September 20: *When Covenant is Broken*

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

A covenant is a promise we make to each other. Because we are human, we break our promises sometimes and so a critical part of covenant is learning how to forgive and repair our relationships when we fall short of our promises.

September 27: *To Be a People of Covenant*

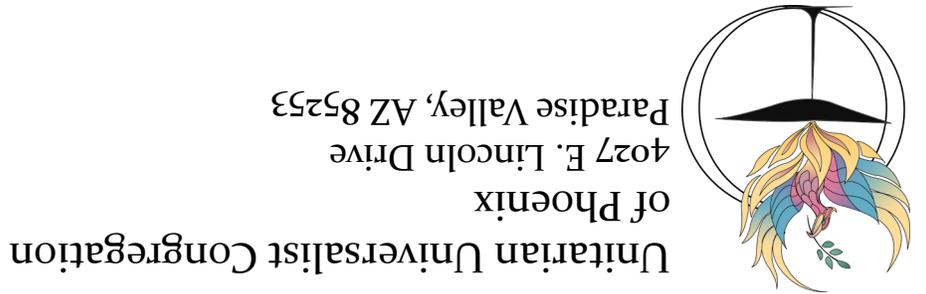
Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

For Unitarian Universalists, covenant is a cornerstone of our tradition. Our religious practice is not about subscription to creed, but an agreement to grow together in the ways of love. Similarly, religious community is not about obligation, but about commitment.

When we live in covenanted communities of support and accountability, we live deeper, more authentic, more creative lives. —Walter P. Herz

The central task of a religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others.
—Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed

It is easier to understand the moral constraints on action when we believe that there is someone to whom we owe responsibility, that we are not owners of the planet, and that we are covenantally linked to those who will come after us. —Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



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