



Horizons Journal

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
November 2015



Gratitude is the Foundation

Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

Gratitude is the foundation for so many of the values and qualities we hope to nurture in our lives. Gratitude is a foundation for turning our thoughts from unrealized desires to an appreciation of what we already have. Gratitude is a foundation for appreciating our loved ones and bringing more love and care to the relationships that matter to us. Gratitude is a foundation for building more joy and happiness in life. It helps us turn anxiety, worry and fear, into acceptance and recognition of the good we know in life. Gratitude is a foundation for touching this earth with reverence, a foundation for seeing life and the beauty of creation as a gift, and treating it as such.

Practicing gratitude, however, takes discipline and practice. Sure, we are grateful when

something really unexpected and positive happens, but what about the thousands of small things that are a part of each day that we often take for granted. The sun rising, the breaths we take, the friends we have. These give us life and give our lives meaning and connection. And then, of course, there are things like clean water from the tap (if we have it, because not everyone does), enough food to eat and shelter (if we have it), a car that starts (when it does), a pet that is happy to see us, a stranger who smiles at us when we feel alone.

A dozen years ago, I read a newsletter article from a Unitarian Universalist minister who shared that he had created a regular practice of taking time each time he walk through the doorway to his home (going out and going in) to stop and take a moment to be grateful, to think of something or several

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Music for All Ages

Benjie Messer

Music Director

Three of our services in November are designed to be multigenerational, fully open to the children in our community as well as the adults: Dia de los Muertos, our Thursday night Pet Blessing, and Thanksgiving. That puts my mind on the children, parents and caregivers of children in our community, particularly those that I've been lucky enough to know through our music program.

I've done my best to include children in UUCP music whenever possible. This fall, a parent with musical experience is collaborating with our Acting Director of Children's Ministries, Katie Resendiz, to bring UU music into our classrooms on Sunday mornings. We currently have two youth members in our choir and one in our brass

ensemble. Our ukelele song circle, which meets on the patio between services on many Sundays, is a drop-in group that welcomes all (regardless whether they have a ukelele!) and often includes both children and adults. Children also perform music in the annual spring services that celebrate them: our elementary school / religious education service, our high school / "Young Religious Unitarian Universalists" service, and in alternate years, our middle school / Coming of Age service. I'm certainly grateful for the enthusiasm of all of the adults, youth, parents and caregivers involved!

I love the sound of children singing, and with all of these connections, inviting our children and youth to sing together in our multigenerational services should be easier than ever this year. In the Dia de los Muertos service on November 1st, any

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A Challenging Vision for Our Collective Future

Caitlin Tuffin Gaspar

Member, UUCP Board of Trustees

Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going? These three questions, from Hymn 1003, are questions I've grappled with much of my life. As I age, these questions take on different meanings and new significance. Right now, as I serve on the Board, I can't help but wonder, *Where are we, the Congregation, going?*

As Glen Lockwood discussed in last month's *Horizons*, the Board is in the process of considering a new Vision for the Congregation. We never know what the future will bring but we have great hope for who we can become.

We are so grateful for the Vision Task Force. Through many difficult iterations, which required deep listening and energy, they created the statement found in last month's *Horizons*. Discerning what our Congregation may aspire to in the next 10 or 20 years is not an easy task. We offer our heartfelt thanks to the members of the Vision Task Force and those who have shared their visions for our Congregation with the Task Force.

Some Vision Task Force members visited our September board meeting and shared how they deeply connected with the Congregation through this process. Through meetings, innovative activities, and a congregational survey, the Vision Task Force engaged with members and drafted a picture of where the Congregation envisions going.

Hearing from these Vision Task Force members energized the Board with the possibilities for our future. As they broke down the draft Vision Statement, we too sensed and understood the power within it. They envisioned a future where our space is filled with activities and action. They shared congregational members' desire for a profoundly inclusive UUCP where we are a voice for love and justice.

Still, the board seeks further discernment before presenting a proposed vision to the Congregation. As a board, we've spent time discerning what we mean by a Vision that challenges, i.e., one

that is bold and something more than to become the best version of our current self—the Board seeks a vision that pushes us beyond where we are now. We've shared this with the Vision Task Force to provide more clarity around this idea of a Vision that is more concise and courageous. That is, a statement that captures the excitement of Vision Task Force members describing their journey. A vision that creates a clearer picture for the UUCP future and fires up members and friends about what may, and can, come. The Vision Task Force has graciously assented to reconvene to further discern and refine a draft vision—a vision that challenges. The work that the Vision Task Force has already done has primed it for the effort to come and could be in no better or more capable hands!

When I joined the Board, I didn't think it would be this exciting. It is rewarding to be a part of these important, and sometimes difficult, conversations because it pushes me to grow. I am thankful for the privilege to serve. I am also filled with gratitude for the many other volunteers who make our Congregation such a special place, one where we can respectfully challenge and change one another. I look forward to the future and seeing where we, the Congregation, go. □

Pathway to Membership

Thursdays, November 5 & 12, 6:45 PM
after Community Night Dinner

Pathway to Membership is a two-part class that invites you to meet with others considering UUCP membership, hear more from ministers and leaders about what it means to be a member, ask questions, learn about the history of Unitarian Universalism and UUCP and ends with an invitation to join by signing the membership book and pledging your support. There is no pressure to join. We recognize membership is a commitment and we hope people will take their time before joining.



I Am So Happy That You Are Here

Katie Resendiz

Acting Director, Children's Ministries

There is no such thing as gratitude unexpressed. If it is unexpressed, it is plain, old-fashioned ingratitude. —Robert Brault

Let's start somewhere else: let's begin with sarcasm. The habit of using satire to respond to a situation, once considered rude, is now commonplace. Sarcasm is a powerful tool within conversation. It can be very funny, it can create a sense of camaraderie, it can establish a casual tone in an otherwise tense conversation. But, just as with over-exuberant joy, we should be mindful of when it is used and when it dominates a conversation or a relationship.

By its nature sarcasm gives duplicitous meaning and can get in the way of sincerity. How many times have you tried to say something over email or in a conversation online and had to worry if it sounded sarcastic? This can be especially true in expressions of gratitude. A quick "Thanks!" might be interpreted as a perky "Wow! What you did was really great and made my day so much easier." Or could as easily sound like "Thanks for nothing, ya' big pain." The same measure of wit it takes to make a sarcastic remark cleverly ironic, can also make it cruel.

As children learn to navigate emotions, sarcasm can be very confusing. Knowing if the person is trying to make a joke or is truly feeling bitter can be hard to interpret. Moreover, sarcastic remarks can make it nearly impossible for the younger child to know the actual effects of their actions toward someone.

It may be that many children are clever enough to understand the intricacies of irony and our adult wit and it may be that sarcasm is indeed a full part of our culture of communication. But what would it mean to also give gratitude a space? To go beyond the general "please and thank you" and fill our conversations with "I am so glad you are here" and the million different ways to tell someone they are valued?

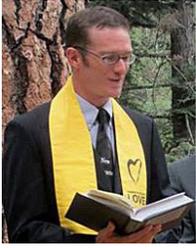
Sarcasm: satirical wit depending for its effect on bitter, caustic, and often ironic language that is usually directed against an individual. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sarcasm>)

If we hold *sarcasm* in opposition to *gratitude*, the following definition can be extrapolated: **Gratitude:** expression of acknowledgment depending for its effect on joy, contentment, and the often straightforward language that is usually directed toward an individual.

Our linguistic culture is complex and amazing. Sharp wit and the humor of a perfectly timed bitter comment can make hard days bearable. So can a sincere and loving "Thank You." As a community, let's practice both.

Here are some ideas for practicing a language of gratitude with children:

- **Say it like you mean it**—practice saying *thank you*, spend two minutes saying *thank you* for the littlest things, work to make it specific, true, and timely.
- **Question Sarcasm**—I'm not a fan of total bans, as I don't think they encourage balance and teach us the discipline of moderation (a topic for another day). But, if we work to be aware of sarcasm and when we hear it, what will our response be? "Did you mean you actually love to eat roasted rat livers?" or "Mama doesn't really want you to 'go ahead, make a huge mess,' does she?"
- **Exaggerate Sarcasm**—if it's for humor, make it funny, make it really funny (not just for subtle adults, but make it funny for the little ones who love physical humor and over the top antics).
- **Yes, do that**—there are so many different practices for training yourself toward gratitude: thanking the animals and workers who contributed to your dinner, writing thank you cards each week, creating a gratitude list. These work! Give it a try, see what happens.
- **"I am so happy that you are here."**—Put aside worries about being too cloying or dorky. Be willing to say "the things you do make me glad" and be willing to hear it. □



But What if I Don't Want That? Gratitude in Context

Emrys Staton

Ministerial Intern

I have an uncle who lives in Italy, so I rarely get to see him. When I was young, he came to America to visit for another uncle's wedding. When we went to the wedding and I saw my uncle, he brought out a t-shirt that he wanted to give me as a gift. The shirt had that popular DiVinci drawing of a man in a circle—with two sets of arms and legs spread out.

When I saw the shirt, I must have made a face that suggested I didn't like the design. He asked if I liked it, and I said that I didn't. I think he took it in stride, although he was probably bummed out that I was rejecting his gift. My parents were more upset at me, perhaps feeling like I had insulted my uncle by not taking the shirt and therefore demonstrating bad manners.

For me, the whole thing was confusing. I didn't want to reject my uncle's gift, but I didn't want to lie to him by saying that I liked it. After seeing everyone's reaction and starting to feel bad about my actions, I said that I would accept the shirt, but my uncle said that if I didn't like it, I didn't have to take it. The whole thing seemed unnecessarily awkward. It was my first memory of having to balance between being true to my own feelings and doing what was socially appropriate to show gratitude for receiving a gift.

Here lies the conundrum of gratitude. Every time someone believes they are giving us a gift, are we expected to be grateful, even if we don't want it? What if the gift is something that will actually cause more problems?

I am reminded about a request I received from an organization this summer that wanted to donate some furniture after it was used for a few days at a conference. I was asked to help find a place to donate this furniture—specifically a place that works with immigrants or refugees. It turned into a huge headache for me. I had to find a place to store it after the event and it wound up costing me \$100 to hire someone to move the stuff a few blocks. The organization was adamant that it went to a specific

cause, so they didn't want to call Goodwill to take it. Despite the intended generosity, I hardly felt grateful for this donation. But I did thank them for it and, for all I know, they feel like they did a good thing.

It is in these moments that I try to really put the power of covenant to use. I believe gratitude plays an important role in building a community of right relations. Saying "thank you" to acknowledge any kind of gift should be a natural reaction. However, the ability to gracefully turn down an unwanted or unneeded gift is also a skill to cultivate—and it requires the giver to hear the concern and understand why the gift is not helpful. It may be a hard conversation, but the hope is that the giver might then have the knowledge to offer something different that is needed or helpful.

This kind of mutual gratitude, at a larger level, illuminates the difference between charity and solidarity. In a charity model, the giver holds a position of power over the receiver, and expects gratitude. Relationships based on solidarity attempt to equalize the power dynamic, so both parties are giving and receiving—and therefore everyone involved gets the positive feeling from giving and the opportunity to express gratitude.

I've learned a lot since the t-shirt incident with my uncle, but it was a great learning moment for me as a child to reflect on. I still struggle with finding appropriate ways to turn down a gift that I don't want or need, but I am better at turning it into a conversation rather than just shaking my head or making a face.

As we all reflect on the role of gratitude in our personal lives, in our families, and in our various social circles, I invite us to consider the ways that we might increase our awareness in both giving and receiving. To think about gratitude for the generosity offered, and gratitude for generosity received. In this way, I believe we can create deeper connections while also avoiding creating resentments. □

NOVEMBER 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, Adult Faith Development, and Small Groups available:

Pathway to Membership, Nov 5 & 12
Thoughtful Leadership Forum with Kim St. Clair, Nov 12
Pet Service, Nov 19
Open (Drop-in) Small Group with Mike Sheffer, Nov 19
Thanksgiving Potluck, Nov 26

6TH ANNUAL SERVICE AUCTION

Combined Congregation & Preschool Online Silent Auction:

Friday, November 27 – Sunday, December 6, 2015

Stay tuned to *Compass*, our weekly e-newsletter and Facebook for more information.

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 there will be childcare for children under 12.

Donations (due by November 15th): visit www.phoenixuu.org for more information.

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.

Milestone celebrations:

- Jim Sorgatz and Josh Tures were married on October 9th.
- Mike Sheffer welcomed his first grandchild, Gracie Sienna Jones, in mid-October.

In remembrance:

- Curtis Sloan, husband of Helen Durista, passed away in White Bear Lake, MN at age 62.

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things that he was grateful for. He talked about the difference this simple practice had in reshaping his attitude in more positive ways. He felt happier, more satisfied. He experienced more joy internally and in his relationships. After all these years, I still remember that article. After reading it, I too tried this practice. Every time I crossed the threshold of my apartment, I stopped to give thanks—for people, for conveniences, for a sunny day, for getting to work on time, for being home—for anything and anyone that I was grateful for in that moment. And indeed, it shifted how I looked at my day and how I felt throughout my day.

Now a confession: my regular gratitude practice, since reading that article, has been intermittent. For a month or two, I will develop a regular way of being intentional about giving thanks—from beginning and ending my day with gratitude, or each time I enter or leave the house, or even ending a regular meditation practice with

gratitude. I know the power of gratitude. I have experienced its power to unlock more love, joy, hope, and reverence in my life, but I also know my practice of it is imperfect and irregular. This month, I invite all of us (me included) to choose a regular way to be grateful each day and to pay attention to how the regular practice (or even momentary practice) of gratitude shapes your attitude and outlook.

In our world today, we are bombarded with negativity, slights, criticism. This attitude undermines collaboration, appreciation, hope and collective action. We are often quick to criticize and slow to offer praise. What would it mean to shift this—to be quick and abundant with praise, and reserved with criticism? What would it mean to really live lives of gratitude, to be a people of gratitude? In this environment, practicing, sharing and living the value of gratitude might be one of the most radical things we can do. □

COFFEE HOUR SHOWCASE

While you're enjoying coffee hour after Sunday services, stop by the Coffee Hour Showcase Table and learn more about the groups, programs and service opportunities we have to offer at UUCP.

Each week highlights a new group—check back often!

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children and youth will be invited to sing the great blues song "Freight Train." As I write this, the ukelele circle has started working on it, and my musical parent has introduced it to our Sunday morning classes. I'll teach the song to any interested children and youth at the Thursday Community Night dinner on October 29th, and again on the morning of November 1st before the service.

In the elementary school that I taught at years ago, each child in the upper three grades was assigned a child in the younger three grades—6th graders with 3rd graders, 5th with 2nd, and 4th with 1st—to occasionally do activities with and watch out for. This cross-grade buddy system gave each child a connection with someone at the school outside of

their grade, and it seemed to be very meaningful to both the younger and older child in each pair. Even older students who couldn't get along with their classmates could look out for their younger partner, and the younger students enjoyed having a relationship with someone outside of their grade. In an important way, I think it helped each student feel that they belonged at the school, not just in their own classroom. In the same way, let's be grateful for the opportunities we have at UUCP to connect with people of various ages, both older and younger than us. Maybe those connections can remind us of something similar—that we all belong everywhere, not just where we've been, and certainly not just with people who remind us of ourselves. □

November Worship Theme: **Gratitude**

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

November 1: Multigenerational Dia de Los Muertos Service, *Remembering With Gratitude*

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

This all-ages service invites us to remember our loved ones who have died through a ritual of remembrance, sharing our gratitude for the love shared. *Everyone is invited to bring a photograph or memento of loved ones to place on the altars of remembrance.* Dia de Los Muertos is a wise reminder that we need not be afraid of death, but find ways to remember our loved ones as we celebrate the gift of life.

November 8: *Gratitude For This? Giving Thanks When Times Are Tough*

Service Leader: Rev. Andy Burnette

Andy Burnette is the Senior Minister at the Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Chandler, AZ. He is preaching at UUCP as part of a pulpit swap among the greater Phoenix area UU Ministers.

November 15: *Turning Towards Gratitude*

Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray

Gratitude seems simple, but really learning to live a life of gratitude and to be, as a religious community, a people of gratitude, means learning to shift many of the lessons we have been taught in our lives. We may need to embrace gratitude with a beginner's mind to embody it more fully in our lives and culture.

Share the Plate Sunday: Offering benefits the Liberty Wildlife Rehab Foundation, Inc

THURSDAY, November 19: *Pet Blessing Service*

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

This special Thursday evening all-ages service (after Community Night dinner) honors the pets in our lives and families. Pets are welcome, on leashes or in terrariums or carriers. Photographs of pets are also welcome, including beloved pets you remember in memory.

November 22: Multigenerational Thanksgiving Service, *What Gift Can We Bring?*

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

Thanksgiving is a day set aside especially for gratitude and remembering the many blessing of our lives. In this pre-Thanksgiving service, everyone is invited to bring a grain-based staple (tortillas, challah, brown bread, muffins, idlis, injera, naan, fry bread, etc.) to share with the community. As we bring gifts reflective of our family traditions, we nurture a greater awareness of the beauty and diverse texture of our community.

**Special Note: UUCP is being featured in a book about UU congregations attempting to live into a more multicultural, multiracial future. The authors of this book, the Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones and UU laywoman Karin Lin will be at UUCP on this weekend to see our community and meet members firsthand. Come and welcome Karin and Nancy to UUCP!*

November 29: *Is it Really Better to Give Than to Receive?*

Service Leader: Emrys Staton

We will explore this platitude of gratitude that puts moral emphasis on giving. In the role of receiving, there is also great power in the concept of gratitude. How we choose to show gratitude plays a major role in creating and sustaining an overall culture of generosity and compassion.

— GRATITUDE —

From experience we know that whenever we are truly awake and alive,
we are also truly grateful. — Br. David Steindl-Rast

*Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life
is the foundation for all abundance.* — Eckhart Tolle

In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back
the people in this world who sustain our lives.

In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender
before the miraculous scope of human generosity
and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely,
for as long as we have voices. — Elizabeth Gilbert

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation
is not to utter words, but to live by them. — John F. Kennedy

*Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold
a rather large amount of Gratitude.* — A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

