Horizons Journal
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
January 2017

Authenticity: It’s Complicated
Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray

This fall, we held Identity Groups on three consecutive Thursday evenings. On one night, we met in separate groups based on religious heritage, another night on gender, another night on race. On the night of the gender groups, when I walked into the Women’s Group, I immediately felt a sense of freedom, relaxation, joy. In a word, it felt liberating. And the feeling surprised me. There is something liberating about meeting in homogenized or same groups around identity. The immediate feeling of ease and comfort is not something we feel all the time. Within our larger societal context of privilege and oppression, those who carry marginalized identities often have to translate or mitigate their identity in order to “get along.” My surprise at that feeling caused me to reflect on the ways that our identities can be under pressure more than we realize. We normalize it.

As we dive into the theme of authenticity and what it means to be authentic, it is important to acknowledge the role of power and privilege in the conversation. Even as I felt liberated in the women’s group, as a cis-gender, white woman, I was in the clear majority in the room. The feeling of liberation may not have been as strong or clear for women of color and transgender or gender queer women because even in that room there were aspects of identity at the center and others on the margins.

As 2017 begins, mindful that we will have a transition in leadership at the national level in our country, this theme of authenticity has more caveats and more questions. The language and imagery of the Presidential campaign and the background of

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Si Se Puede!
Benjie Messer

When I arrived at UUCP three years ago, I was informed that our worship planning team had set a goal years before to sing Spanish-language hymns regularly and confidently in services. Given the history of racism in the southwest, and our faith’s strong anti-racist theology, I’m sure that wasn’t the first time our congregation had set that goal. Singing hymns in Spanish would both help members of our community become more comfortable with the language themselves, and would send a clear signal to visitors that our congregation cares about Spanish speakers and stands against the racism they face.

We haven’t realized this goal of singing regularly and confidently in Spanish as a congrega-

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 tion; at least, not during my three years here. We’ve sung Spanish-language hymns in services occasionally, but not regularly, and we don’t know any well as a congregation. Most often when we’ve sung a hymn in Spanish, it’s been a translation of a hymn that we know well in English—“Spirit of Life,” or “Enter Rejoice and Come In”—not a song from a Spanish-speaking tradition. Our choir has performed wonderful music from Latin and South America, but as a congregation, we still have work to do.

Having a goal and not meeting it can be disheartening. It can feel like we’re only giving lip service to it—that we “talk the talk” but don’t “walk the walk.” The opposite of lip service is authenticity, our worship theme for January. So what would it
At the last Board Meeting, I found myself saying “I’ll write the article on Authenticity.” Why? It’s a question I have been asking myself. I guess “being authentic” has been a recurring theme in my adult life.

At age 24, I was forced to choose between, on the one hand, the life in which I had become truly lost and in which I was barely surviving, and on the other, one in which I would have to partake in some serious self-reflection, action, courage, and healing to turn my life around and “find myself.” That path is what I term “the journey to one’s true self.”

Now, in my personal and professional life I try to pass on to others what I was taught, partly in an effort to derive some meaning from all my early life experiences, and partly because my values call me to do so. I work in a residential treatment center for women suffering from severe trauma and mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. Generally, women enter the program confused and carrying heavy burdens of shame and guilt about the mistakes they have made in their lives. They prepare themselves for the words they expect to hear from us, “There is something wrong with you, and you need to change.” What I actually tell them is, “You have lost yourself and you are now on a journey back to your true self.”

This is not an easy choice, because this decision requires action and the courage to reveal oneself, “warts and all.” There are those who mistake this demonstration of emotions and vulnerability for weakness; however, the opposite is actually true. How much easier is it to not unveil how you truly feel about a subject, to just go along with the majority rather than stand up for what you know to be right, or to not act on your true values because you fear the consequences? I find myself frequently being the person who speaks out. I would like to say that this is because I am making a conscious decision to speak my truth, but, honestly, usually the words have escaped from my mouth before I have filtered them!

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work in what is my “calling.” Being true to my values has led me to help severely traumatized human beings. As UUs we are called to justice, to basic human rights, even in the face of severe social, economic, and political challenges and provocations. We recognize our need to be true to what we stand for and to have the courage to put “our money where our mouths are.”

Concretely, what does this mean? Well, a conversation has started about possibly offering sanctuary to undocumented immigrants at UUCP, and/or finding alternative methods to protect vulnerable people from the fear and trauma of unwarranted indefinite detention and possible eventual deportation. Among many justice-centered interests that draw our attention as UUs, this issue compels this community to debate, decide, and take action in accordance with our principles and values; in other words, to demonstrate authenticity.

It is all too easy to talk about injustices in the abstract, to empathize, to hope for change in the world at large. When confronted with injustice on our own doorstep, in our own city, county, state, country, are we ready to put action behind our words? In the midst of our own daily busyness and our own problems, it is easy to forget how fortunate we are in comparison to most of the populations in the world, and it can be so tempting to avoid doing what is required of us and within our ability.

To truly walk a path of authenticity requires introspection and, above all, courage and action. In the words of John F Kennedy:

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.
This year, our Children’s Ministry Team has explored storytelling and narrative building. As educators, some of our most powerful tools are familiar plotlines and archetypal characters. Studio: TELL offers our kindergarten through 6th graders a chance to hear and tinker with the stories our community tells itself. In Coming of Age, our middle schoolers are exploring the root of multiple faiths as they work to build their personal credos. A major aspect of YRUU is story sharing. As youth work through the month’s themes, the advisors have worked hard to create a space for narrators, heroes, and the villains to be heard. Of course, as UUs our students can be relied on to turn those narratives on their heads, second guess the protagonists, and question the “moral of the story.”

Deconstructing Disney is a month-long unit that both celebrates and tears down some of America’s favorite narratives. Together we will examine, reinterpret, and repurpose the love stories and heroic quests the mouse has told us. We’ll find UU values in Ohana. We’ll look at the images of rectangular men and tiny-waisted women and let it go. We’ll figure out what the stories are telling us we have to be and we’ll dig a little deeper. Like a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down, we’ll make sure to have a bit of fun. And of course, throughout the whole month, we’ll let out conscience be our guide.

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**Chalice Keeper Reception**

Sunday, January 8, 2017  
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM  
Smoot & Charlotte Carl-Mitchell’s House  
Scottsdale, AZ

This a special annual event where the Unitarian Universalist Foundation of Phoenix Board honors members who have committed to leave a legacy gift to the congregation, and welcome those who are interested in learning more about legacy giving. RSVP to Heidi Parmenter at heidiparmenter@phoenixuu.org or 602-840-8400.

**Congregational Meeting**

Sunday, February 5  
10:30 AM  
UUCP Sanctuary

Please join the Board for our midyear Congregational Meeting. At this meeting the Board and Capital Campaign Team will share information about the Capital Campaign. We will also share information about Rev Susan’s Campaign for UUA President. All are welcome.
There’s a great scene in the movie I Heart Huckabees where a team of existential detectives offer an observation to their client: he tells the same stories over and over at work to impress others. He responds, “Alright, I don’t have to tell the stories.” A detective replies, “What do you think would happen if you didn’t tell the stories? Are you being yourself?” He quickly retorts, “How am I not myself?” As the weight and insight of the question sinks in, they all repeat it in a state of stupefied curiosity: How am I not myself?

The movie is based on the split between two major schools of Buddhist philosophy, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. The existential detectives represent Yogācāra, which is concerned with how human experience is constructed by the mind.

The question How am I not myself? functions as a koan, or a simple riddle that can offer deep and penetrating insight. The character, a rising corporate manager, finds he is acting on his own insecurities by repeating a specific story that always gets a good laugh and, hopefully, earns him respect. In a way, he is being his authentic self, which happens to be insecure. But, what if he doesn’t tell the story and confronts the insecurity: is he still being himself? The assumption is that his storytelling is actually inhibiting a more true or authentic version of his self. Either way, he is still his real self. How could one be otherwise?

Existential philosophy puts a lot of weight on authenticity. Giving in to external pressures, ignoring reality, or not forming your own opinions are all seen as inauthentic ways of life. Being authentic, thus, relies on being a fully realized, conscious self.

What if we view it through the lens of social or collective life? Perhaps we make decisions to blend in or participate in a larger group that disregard some aspects of our true selves. Is that somehow not authentic? In anything that we do, whether it comes from the core of our being or from a desire to be accepted, is either more authentic?

I see a lot of existential philosophy in UU principles and theology. A search for freedom of expression, a desire for justice and equity and a society without oppression, a safe place to explore our own identities—we participate in a faith tradition that affirms a quest for authenticity.

Looking at authentic ways of being ourselves, I think about the concept of consent—a core term in Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum, which teaches comprehensive sexuality education. Consent allows a person to participate in any interaction in a way they feel is respectful and comfortable for them.

The character in I Heart Huckabees was in a variety of non-consensual relationships in his corporate work structure that demanded he perform and function in certain ways. He coped by creating a persona that could navigate the system while protecting his own insecurity or vulnerability. Was this persona somehow less authentic?

By integrating systems of consent into our lives, we provide space and opportunity to explore our authenticity. Oppression, on the opposite side, functions to remove consent and punish authenticity. This is why identity caucuses (like a women’s group) can be such powerful spaces where participants feel they can “be themselves.” Maybe there is an important distinction between authentic self and the self we show based on situation or context.

“How am I not myself?” is a great question to contemplate. Do you feel more or less authentic in certain places, or are you always equally authentic in any circumstance? Is there a more “real” version of you that is hidden or repressed?

Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron is known for her teaching Start Where You Are. This suggests we are fully authentic right now, just as we are. Even if we are holding something inside, then we are authentically the person holding that thing. We meet ourselves, and each other, with the stance that you are always yourself. Not what you should be or ought to be. Just who you are in the present moment. Because how could you not be yourself?
Welcome, New Members!

Please welcome those who became members of UUCP during our November Pathway to Membership class!

**Tom Babb** was born and raised in Phoenix and lived in the Valley all his life. Since childhood, he has enjoyed thinking deeply and contemplating the nature of things, which led to studying history and humanities at ASU. Tom enjoys nature and has joined the UUCP Outdoor group.

**Teresa Simone** worked for ten years for a children’s theatre company and as a teaching artist in Tucson. In recent years she moved to Phoenix where her family lives. She works in the education department for a nonprofit organization, takes walks, does yoga, and writes plays.

**Lillian Barker** is a Phoenix native who enjoyed many years teaching writing in South Phoenix. Her husband and grown son are also teachers. Lillian thrives on Tai Chi, artwork and being outdoors. She was lured to UU by the meditation group, and before she knew it she was folding UU newsletters and working in a crafts fair. She has had a long acquaintance with UU and once lost a job because she declared herself “Unitarian” on an application.

**Amy McKlindon**, a Philadelphia native who has lived up and down the East Coast, moved to Arizona in 2014 with her partner Mike. Amy is a social worker and currently works for Arizona’s Adult Protective Services program in policy and program development. She enjoys road trips, hiking, and trying new restaurants and recipes. Amy is grateful for the sense of community she has found at UUCP.

**Mike McCullough** met his wife while attending graduate school at Ohio State—as part of a program sponsored by their workplace, The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). After graduation they moved to Virginia, married in 1992, and bought a house where they lived until her death from stage 4 lung cancer in 2013—after which Mike moved to Phoenix to be near his father. Now retired, he enjoys hiking, travel, SCUBA diving, and spending time with his rescue dog. Mike has embarked on a journey of spiritual discovery, and appreciates the inclusive, open, social and justice-oriented nature of UUCP.

**Beverly Hart**

Not Pictured:  
**Courtney Flanagan**  
**Julianna Delgado**  
**Michael Hogan**

_The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are._  
_C.G. Jung_
Unicare News

Please lift up in your thoughts those in our community who share their transitions, sorrows, celebrations and wishes—that they may find strength in your love and friendship. For more information, or to get involved, contact Vicki Myers, our UUCP Unicare Coordinator, at unicare@phoenixuu.org.

Remembrances
- Larry Agle, a longtime member of UUCP, office volunteer, job club and membership committee member, passed away in November. Larry's life was honored at a UUCP memorial service in December. Larry will be missed by many and we send our healing wishes to his partner, Jeffery Falcon and daughter Holly Agle.
- Aaron Leader said goodbye to his hearing-assistance dog, Garfield. He was a sweet dog who was loved and will be missed.
- Our thoughts go out to the McCarty family, who lost their son Michael to a heroin overdose in November. Please send your healing thoughts to these UUCP friends.

Healing and Transitions
- Healing wishes go out to Shirley Karas as she recovers from hip surgery.
- Our spiritual support and love of Earth continues to radiate for those living in Standing Rock, ND as they continue their work to resist the pipeline.

Celebrations
- Granddad Gary Ezzell is happy to announce that his daughter gave birth to a second child in November.
- Donna and Teri Talbot celebrated their 2nd anniversary of legal marriage and 22 years together in November.

Pathway to Membership

Saturday, January 14
9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Pathway to Membership is a class that invites you to meet with other folks considering membership, and hear more from ministers, leaders, and recently joined members about what it means to be a member of our congregation. You will have the opportunity to learn about the history of Unitarian Universalism and UUCP, get to know each other in groups, and ask questions.

The class ends with an invitation to join by signing the membership book and pledging your support. There is no pressure to join. We recognize that membership is a commitment and we hope people will take their time before joining.

To register, stop by the welcome table in the lobby and fill out the registration, register on the UUCP website, or contact coordinator Janine Gelsinger at janinegelsinger@phoenixUU.org.
Join us for a one-hour presentation of
**Traveling 2\textsuperscript{nd} Friday**
January 13, 7:00-8:00 PM in UUCP Sanctuary

Margo Wilson will present on United Arab Emirates, Dubai, and Oman.

Learn about Oman’s different version of the Muslim religion, its deliberate lack of tall buildings and huge malls, its beauty, its role in mediating disputes among mid-eastern countries, its lack of significant oil income. Take a virtual tour of these very different countries that are near neighbors.

Everyone is welcome. Questions: call Barbara Cawthorne at 480-994-1452.

Common Read

On January 8, the UUCP Book Group will start discussing the UUA’s 2016-17 Common Read book. The book group meets Sundays, 10:45-12:00 in Annex Room B. (It will not meet on December 25 and January 1.) For more information about Book Group please contact Michael Peterson at bookgroup@phoenixuu.org.

*The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Hate* by The Rev. Dr. William Barber II and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Beacon, 2016), has been chosen as the 2016-17 Unitarian Universalist Common Read. Unitarian Universalists were electrified at General Assembly 2016 by Rev. Barber’s call for building and sustaining a movement for justice for all people. The Common Read selection committee believes that now is a moment for Unitarian Universalists to answer that call. *The Third Reconstruction* offers helpful, practical guidance for engaging with justice movements born in response to local experiences of larger injustices. Drawing on the prophetic traditions of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, while making room for other sources of truth, the book challenges us to ground our justice work in moral dissent, even when there is no reasonable expectation of political success, and to do the hard work of coalition building in a society that is fractured and polarized.
Roger Ulrich is an environmental psychologist who took advantage of a naturalistic experiment... What he found was that the patients with a view of a grove of trees left hospital on average a day sooner, needed less pain medication, and had fewer negative nurse’s notes than patients who had a view of a brick wall. —Esther Sternberg, “The Science of Healing Places,” On Being

Circle of Trees
Wednesdays, January 11 – March 1
6:00-7:30 PM, Memorial Garden
Cost: $10 per adult (kids are free!)
Facilitator: Heidi Parmenter

The Program
Circle of Trees is a multigenerational program of eight workshops that nurture deep connection with trees, nature, and all of earth’s living creatures. The program uses trees as an entry point to understand and connect with life on earth. Across many cultures, trees are recognized as a symbol for life on earth—for example, the biblical Tree of Life. Even young children understand trees as sustainers of life, fundamental engines of life on earth as we know it. Trees create and purify the air we breathe. They house and provide resources for myriad creatures, including humans. They bring us peace, joy, and delight.

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. —Albert Einstein

Goals
This program will:
• Provide a basic understanding of why trees are, literally, “providers of life”
• Identify threats to trees and the web of life and provide inspiration to take action
• Explore using methods that are spiritual, non-intellectual, with the hope of fostering deep connection
• Provide meaningful ways in which participants can actively promote the health of trees and, by extension, the web of life
• Reinforce the concept of interdependence as expressed in the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part”
• Affirm that stewardship of the earth is an explicit act of Unitarian Universalist faith.

Program Structure
One goal of Circle of Trees is to help participants to slow down, go deeper, and truly experience a connection to trees and all of earth. The program begins with some lighthearted learning about trees—how they are structured, what they contribute to life on our planet—then moves into appreciation for these providers of life. A ritual helps participants see into the essence of trees and nature, to sense what it feels like to be a tree or another being, and ultimately to experience empathy for trees and other beings; approaches that tend toward the spiritual, rather than the intellectual, foster deeper connection. The program incorporates movement, story learning, meditation, and taking action.

The workshops will all be held outdoors in the Memorial Garden, weather permitting.

The first workshop invites participants to get to know each other, while they learn about and connect with trees in a concrete, scientific, fun way. Workshops 2 and 3 actively explore the very real...
benefits trees provide to humans and all life on our planet. In Workshop 4, participants share the special trees in their lives and develop and express appreciation for these trees and trees in general. In Workshop 5, participants learn about climate change, discuss how trees fit into that global challenge, and develop ways to protect and help trees. In Workshops 6 and 7, participants create a ritual that fosters deep connection and empathy with trees, nature, and all life on earth. In the final workshop, participants go outside for a walk in the woods, literally immersed in the trees, with the hope of forging an authentic, lasting connection with these spirit- and earth-enhancing forms of life.

**Faith in Action**
Class participants are invited to join Heidi and other volunteers for the Memorial Garden & Trail Cleanup on February 4. There will be plenty of opportunities to put our workshop learnings into action! □

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**Memorial Garden**

*friends whose ashes were interred in our Memorial Garden this month in past years are still remembered*

James Francis Bauman
Frances Johnson Bishop
John Connair Cummings
Joanlynne Davis
Thomas Roberts Foltz, Jr.
Gertrude Posner Ganseberg
Hubert L. Gay, Jr.
Edwin Paul Grobe
Jane E. Horswell
Robert Albert Klaus
Gladys Welters Klaus
James Thomas Lynch, Jr.
Wendell Charles Manker
Gordon Woods

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**Memorial Garden & Trail Cleanup**

Saturday, February 4, 2017
7:00-11:00 AM

UUCP’s Memorial Garden is a sacred space where UUs’ ashes have been interred for generations and home to John Waddell’s “That Which Might Have Been” statues honoring the four young girls who were killed in a church in Birmingham, AL in 1961 by members of the KKK. A hardworking crew of dedicated volunteers is needed to join Heidi with chainsaws, loppers, and strong backs to help us hack away the dead trees and brush and haul it to the roll off dumpster that will be provided. Families with children and youth are encouraged to participate. Contact Heidi at heidiparmenter@phoenixuu.org or 602-840-8400.
some of the people being tapped for executive leadership in the cabinet reflect explicit ideologies of white, Christian, patriarchal, hetero-normative supremacy. Some people are feeling more afraid about the consequences of their identities. And we must not ignore nor normalize the acts of violence and discrimination happening in the wake of the U.S. Presidential election results, especially toward Muslims and people of color.

This raises the question of the relationship between authenticity and privilege. Do some people have more freedom, more privilege, to express themselves fully, authentically, without fear of violence or detrimental consequences? And if so, then it is important that we look at authenticity this month not just in an interpersonal context, but also socio-politically and systemically. At the same time, we must talk about the spiritual courage not to silence or hide ourselves. Something happens when people are not afraid. When people throw off their fear, they show a powerful, beautiful, authentic and liberating path forward. It doesn’t mean we are never afraid, but the power and impact of the Coming Out movement for GLBT people and the Undocumented and Unafraid movement for young undocumented immigrants show the power of authenticity, vulnerability and truth telling to open people’s hearts and minds and build positive change.

As a faith community with power and privilege, we too must find ways to live our inclusive values more fully and explicitly in the larger community. We must not silence our voice of love, compassion and justice. For there are important ways in which the voices of those with privilege can be leveraged and are needed to be heard alongside and in solidarity with communities on the front lines of the struggle for justice and equality. May we especially take this month to consider the courage that is needed to live and work and act authentically, true to our values, true to our best spiritual selves, faithful to who we are.

Mean for us as a community to authentically pursue this goal of singing regularly and confidently in Spanish?

Maybe the first step is to decide again. One of the goals in our congregation’s 2016-17 implementation plan was for me to investigate what it would mean for our music program to be multicultural, and to work in that direction. After some research and a few meetings, one of several goals the worship planning team agreed about was this one: to have our congregation sing a few Spanish-language hymns regularly and to know them well. I hope I have your support with that decision—after all, you’ll be the ones singing them!

A second step is to make sure that UUCP’s Spanish speakers are central in choosing these hymns. So if you speak Spanish and would be willing to help me with this project, please let me know! Let’s meet, sing our way through “Las Voces del Camino,” the Spanish-language hymnal published by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2009, and learn any other songs that might be good hymns for our congregation. Together, we’ll create a short list of Spanish-language songs for UUCP.

A third step is to make time for our English speakers to learn these hymns. After we have a short list of Spanish-language songs, we’ll find some opportunities to learn them together in a relaxed way—maybe after a Thursday community night dinner, or on a Sunday morning before the service—times when we can each have as much time as we need to struggle with the words. Watch for a Compass announcement about these meetings sometime soon. We have a little learning to do, but I think it’s doable. I hope that by next fall, we have a few Spanish-language hymns that we sing in service confidently and regularly, and that visitors will be able hear the difference. Si se puede! (Yes we can!)
January Worship Theme: 
**Authenticity**

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

January 1: Welcoming the New Year  
Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray  
Through story, song and ritual, we will welcome the New Year, marking the hopes and intentions that we bring for this new year.

January 8: The Religion of *Antiques Roadshow*: Authenticity as the Highest Value  
Service Leader: Emrys Staton  
Relying on highly trained specialists, Antiques Roadshow allows us to watch as the authentic pieces are separated from fraudulent or imitation work. The search for what is deemed real and genuine ultimately leads to what is seen as valuable. How has a similar search for authenticity shaped the development of faith and Unitarian Universalism?

January 15: A Powerful, Spiritual Authenticity  
Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray  
On this Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday, what are the ways we are called to courageous and bold love in these times? How do we develop and share a powerful, spiritual authenticity that engages us in the work of justice and liberation that is deeply rooted in love, in compassion, in life-giving values?  
*Share the Plate Sunday: Offering will benefit the statewide UU Justice Arizona Network (UUJAZ)*  
http://www.uujaz.org

January 22: Getting Real  
Service Leader: Rev. Terry Sims, Minister of the UU Congregation of Surprise  
I sometimes think that being "real" with each other is overrated. After all, our authentic selves contain our worst as well as our best. On the other hand, if we are not who we truly and fully are, what is left for us to be with each other? Religious faith might provide a way out of this conundrum.

January 29: Truth and Authenticity  
Service Leader: Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray  
One definition of authenticity is something being true. In leadership, there is much emphasis on the importance of authenticity. What does this mean even as we increasingly dispute facts and people talk about living in a post-truth age?

Save the Date:  
**Annual UUCP Spring Picnic**  
Saturday, February 25th  
11:00 am – 1:00 pm  
McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park