

Pebble

W i n t e r 2 0 1 1

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.

Shadow Rock UCC, 12861 N. 8th Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85029 602.993.0050



Shadow Rock Christmas

Holiday Buffet

December 2 @ 6:30 p.m.

Children's Christmas Pageant

December 18

9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Services

5:00 & 11:00 p.m.

New Moon Drum

December 24 @ 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day

Meditation Service @ 9:30 a.m.

Sunday Service @ 11:00 a.m.

New Year's Day Service

January 1 @ 11:00 a.m.

On the Fulcrum

by Rev. Ken Heintzelman

What does it mean to be "cutting edge"?

Often when I hear people using the term "cutting edge" they are making an emotional evaluation. For example, if the issue or the action makes them and others uncomfortable, then it must be "cutting edge". While I think there is some truth to the uncomfortable nature of being "cutting edge," I do not think it is the only way to define it. I offer an additional way to think about it. I think the question comes out of an assumption about history and what it means to be in "right" relationship to history; not just emotion.

Our Covenant begins, "We covenant one with another to be that sensitive and responsive part of human society which perceives and responds to God's newest thrust in the midst of history." To be perceptive and responsive to God's newest thrust in history means paying attention to what is going on around us and in the world. Our understanding of history can be limited to the study of past events. However, our covenant implies a larger and deeper meaning to the word "history". Wrapped up in the use of the word is the sense of providence, sovereignty, interpretation, and destiny. There is that moment that happens between the past and the future. Our covenant assumes that GOD is at work in every moment that stands as the bridge between the past and the future. It is in this bridge moment between the past and the future that "cutting edge" happens and history can be bent for peace, justice, and wholeness or history can be bent for destruction, fragmentation, and alienation. So, one of the ways for us to define "cutting edge" is to ask how often are we intentionally standing in the bridge moments working for peace, justice, and wholeness.

Connected to this concept is the recognition that many past "cutting edge"

~continued on page 2



Children's Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 18

9:30 a.m. AND 1:30 p.m.

It's going to be so great, they're performing it twice!

On the Fulcrum

continued from front page

issues have been decided and presently are not "cutting edge" anymore. As people of faith and spirit we interpret the events of history with an over arching, all encompassing narrative. Slavery, women's rights, marriage equality, racism, anti-Semitism, democracy, etc. history has already decided the rightness of these movements and the consciousness of humanity is already shaped with this orientation. It is a done deal. For example, it is a given that one person should not own another person as a piece of property. There is still a lot of work to be done as human trafficking is still happening, and even one incident of this is too much. There is a kind of mopping up and vigilance that is necessary, but history has already decided. These issues are important but they are not "cutting edge".

The issues that are cutting edge are the issues that are still in the balance. The issues that are cutting edge are the issues that have yet to be written into the meta-narrative of peace and justice. Anti-Muslim, structuring of our economy, defining family, defining life, empowering women all around the world, world citizenship, the environment, the division and preservation of resources, the role of community in the shaping of individuals and etc. are examples of issues of the not yet written narrative.

As people of faith and spirit we make an important assumption. In trust that the arc of history is already bending in the direction of peace and justice we call on the ideas of our tradition. When we study the Word about Life we are challenged and must ask ourselves to what degree do our efforts move us in the direction of the coming age of Shalom, Peace, and Wholeness. It is with the "shalom faith lens" that we can perceive and respond to the events around us as people of faith and spirit.

So, we have three ways to evaluate our "cutting edge"-ness.

Gut check: is this uncomfortable and who is uncomfortable and why? How often are we intentionally standing in the bridge moments between past and future working for peace, justice, and wholeness? To what degree do our efforts move us in the direction of the coming age of Shalom, Peace, and

Wholeness (this is another way of saying bending the arc of history for peace and justice)?

This understanding of "cutting edge" is an important foundation for evaluating ourselves as a congregation. We have individuals who are "cutting edge" and we have several groups meeting under our roof that are "cutting edge". I believe Shadow Rock UCC is cutting edge not because of the issues we are tackling. As a congregation we are "cutting edge" because we are re-inventing what it means to be Church in today's society.

One of our foundational theologians, H. Richard Niebuhr wrote an essay promoting the idea that the Church is to be the social pioneer blazing the new ways of forming a society of justice. I want to build on this idea and explore the idea that the Church is not only a cutting edge institution, but it is the institution that gives birth and nurtures many incarnations of "cutting edge"-ness.

We meet the above criteria. We are intentionally standing in the bridge moments of history putting forth our best efforts to move all of Creation in the direction of peace and wholeness. As we do this we are making people uncomfortable including ourselves. We do this and more.

Shadow Rock UCC is an incubator for many groups that are at various stages of growth and we are a spiritual home for those who either have no home or have been kicked out. Our partners include;

- Shadow Rock Preschool
- A Stepping Stone Foundation
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Al-Anon
- Arizona Miracle Prayer Ministry
- Life-Cycle Celebrations
- Temple Gan Elohim
- Jesuit Alumni of Arizona (JAAZ)
- St. Theresa's Independent Catholic Community
- Shadow Rock Whole Life Center
- The Fusion Foundation
- Multi-functioning Family Support Group

Every partner is "cutting edge" in their own way and we are "cutting edge" by caring for them and empowering them. This is a new way to be Church.



Arizona Miracle Prayer Ministry



Rev. Ed Walsh
St. Teresa of Avila
Catholic Community



Rev. Jeffrey Dirrim
Footsteps UCC

On the Road Again

by Karen Richter, co-director of Christian Education



Scott and I have lived in four different states since our marriage in 1993; we were born in two other states. When people say that they have always lived in the same town, I am simultaneously jealous and pitying. Wandering is good; 'roots' are overrated. But at Christmas, I feel the need to be at home more than at other times.

Christmas is about home and family, right? Stillness and silent night, yes? For the Gospel writers of Matthew and Luke, the answer is no; not so much; not really.

New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan point out (in *The First Christmas*) that the stories of Jesus' birth are overtures, meant to set the stage and establish the themes of the stories that come later. If we accept this, then we can correctly predict that Jesus grew up to become a wanderer, a tramp, a vagrant... because there's a lot of traveling going on in the Christmas stories.

- Mary travels to the hill country to visit Elizabeth.
- Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem.
- Shepherds leave their fields "with haste" to visit the family.
- Wise men travel from the east.
- Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt to escape Herod.

Do you sense a theme? Author Charles Foster recounts a story of an atheist friend picking up a Bible. The friend harrumphs noisily and says, "The only things of interest in there are the maps." Foster ponders this – considering the various voyages of scripture – and decides that God agrees.

The Christmas stories are travelogues, narratives about life on the road and what happens along life's edges. When we get settled and comfortable, it's easier to miss the whole point. Just like water which gets stale when it's still, we lose something when we don't move around. We get overly attached to the place we are and the things and people that are there with us.

The Spirit of Life and Love – the God of Abraham and the *sukkah*, Jesus's Abba, and Paul's Christ – is always on the move. It's no wonder then that Jesus' early followers were called people of The Way. We are moving too – the 'On the Road Again' people.

Journey of the Spirit 2012

by Karen Richter, co-director of Christian Education

True confession time... I've had a little low-level anxiety since Ken told me that our study topic for JOS 2012 will be the book of Amos. I admit to being a New Testament girl, much more comfortable with Paul (even with all his faults) than with Moses. Yet, as I've spent some time getting to know my friend Amos, I'm starting to warm up.

First, Amos is relevant, scarily so. Amos was shepherding and prophesying around 750 B.C.E. during a time of political stability and material prosperity for Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom). Only during the reign of Solomon did the Hebrews have more apparent success. This success however wasn't shared among all the people. Amos has strong and poetic words for those who sell the poor for a pair of sandals. Amos warns oppressors then and now that this kind of inequality cannot stand for long. Twenty-seven centuries later, he can add fire to our passion for justice. He reminds us that actions have consequences.



Second, Amos has some beautiful language. There are all manner of lions roaring, lush gardens struck with mildew, and needy people turned away at the gate. We hear these lovely lilting words of Dr. Martin Luther King often, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream," without realizing that Dr. King was just borrowing some words from a fellow prophet.

Finally, Amos is a regular guy. He wasn't a professional prophet; he hadn't been schooled by a senior prophet. He was a shepherd and a fig trimmer, delivering a difficult lesson to his Northern Kingdom neighbors. I imagine that he felt inadequate for the task, often scared of those in power. Maybe he even missed his sheep and wished at times that he had ignored his vocation and stayed in the hills with them. Just like the rest of us.

Journey of the Spirit launches February 19. I will be looking forward to introducing you to my friend Amos.

Solstice: A Contemplative Sunset Concert

Sunday, December 11 @ 5:00 p.m.

Lynne Haeseler, composer/pianist
 Renee Morgan Brooks, vocal
 Carolyn Estrada, flute
 Jere Friedmann, gongs
 Sam Anderson, African drums
 Gerry Kato, keyboards
 and a Chanting Choir

The word solstice comes from the Latin sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still).
 Join us on December 11 at sunset for a contemplative hour of music
 and the poetry of Rumi.

Breathe in the timelessness of the moment
 as the longest night of the year approaches.
 Give yourself time for your soul to stand still.

Tickets are \$12. A portion of ticket sales support the Whole Life Center's work in
 nurturing wholeness in people, wherever they are in life, through providing
 opportunities for community, healing and inspiration.

Youth Page



The Our Whole Lives (OWL) human sexuality program at Shadow Rock is going strong, and we're excited about a new opportunity coming in January: OWL Facilitator Training!

This is an opportunity to get certified as an OWL instructor right here at Shadow Rock! Normally, these trainings are held all over the country, so why spend money on flights and hotels when you can get certified right here in our own backyard? If you think there's even a possibility you might want to go through facilitator training in the future, this is an excellent opportunity for you.

The training will be January 27-29, 2012, and will focus on the curricula for grades 7-9 and 10-12. During these sessions, teachers are shown how to teach participants about sexuality in age-appropriate ways. To be certified as Our Whole Lives teachers, individuals are expected to: demonstrate a commitment to a values-based, comprehensive sexuality education; have a willingness to affirm the Our Whole Lives program goals, values, and philosophy; have an ability to provide a safe, engaging learning environment; and have an appreciation for working with people of diverse races, cultures, ages, abilities, and sexual and gender orientations.

More detailed information and registration forms can be found online by going to the Shadow Rock website's OWL page (www.shadowrockucc.org/owl) and scrolling to the bottom. Or you can always ask Abeth Spencer or Liana Rowe any questions you might have. There will also be opportunities for Shadow Rock members to help out with the weekend itself – since we're hosting this training, we'll be looking for volunteers to help with food, homestays, or other hospitality issues. If getting trained as a facilitator isn't your cup of tea, you can still support OWL by helping out with training logistics!

Check the Youth Calendar on the Shadow Rock website under the Youth tab.
www.shadowrockucc.org/youth-calendar

FAITHQUEST

Faithquest is a program for spiritual education and thoughtful discussion. Topics for discussion range from spirituality to events in our daily lives and is led by Brenda Hensley and Tony Spencer.

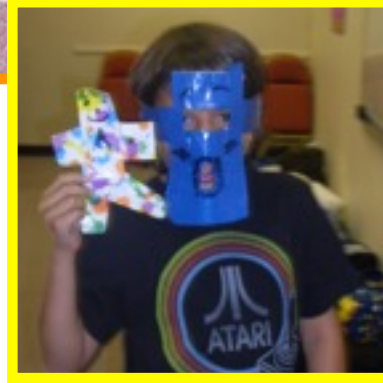
YOUTHROCKS

Twice a month on Sunday evenings from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. (opposite OWL & Confirmation Sundays) Junior High and Senior High Youth gather with Youth Director Brenda Hensley for fellowship, fun, and a shared meal.

SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE YOUTH EVENTS









- * **Senior High Sneak Trip - *Beyond the Border***
February 17 - 19, 2012
- * **Junior High Retreat - *Plug Into God***
March 9 - 11, 2012
- * **Supercamp**
June 17 - 22, 2012
- * **Senior High Camp**
June 24 - 29, 2012
- * **National Youth Event (NYE)**
July 10 - 13, 2012

Truly Crazy
Sleepover



October 2011

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