

April 2019

Grace Notes

The Monthly Journal of First Unitarian Universalist Church

Wholeness

What does it mean to be a
people of wholeness?

From the Minister

Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer



*I will keep broken things:
In my house there remains an honored shelf
on which I will keep broken things.
Their beauty is they need not ever be "fixed."*

- Alice Walker

Often, it seems, we live in a world of either/or, instead of both/and.

Something is either broken, or whole.
Either right or wrong, sacred or profane,
this or that – nothing in between.

Life and the world we live in seems to be a little more messy than that.

I can remember a conversation from many years ago in a class wrestling with the word Salvation.

It is a word with a very mixed history –
filled with complex histories and dogmatic baggage
used as a bludgeon, rooted in fear and exclusion and even hatred –
toward those who had it, and those who didn't.

But there is also a lost history with the word, that changed it all for me:
Salvation comes from the root Solteria, meaning wholeness and well-being,
similar to the fuller meaning of the word Shalom –
or like a salve for a wound – a sense of healing.
At its core, Salvation means wholeness and flourishing and health –
of mind, body, heart, and I would say mostly – a soul.

And I think when we peel away the many layers of meaning,
and we roll back whatever stones of hatred or power or exclusion get in our way,
we find that salvation comes down to this:
not perfection, not having all the answers,
but knowing that even when you feel broken,
even when your life has been busted apart into shards,
salvation is to have a home for your soul –
a place you feel and know you are beloved,
a place to know you belong,
a place where you, and this world,
even while broken, can be whole.

Remember: you don't need to be fixed. You are broken and beloved and beautiful.
And like the strength of little sprouts through the late spring snow,
we rise up, every day, to find love and possibility and hope.
No day or life or soul will be perfect, and when we remember that,
maybe we can feel a little more whole in our brokenness.

From the Board

Ann Hutton

*Don't leave your broken heart at the door; bring it to the altar of life.
Don't leave your anger behind; it has high standards and the world needs vision.
Bring them with you, and your joy, and your passion.
Bring your loving and your courage and your conviction.
Bring your need for healing and your power to heal.
There is work to do and you have all that you need to do it right here in this room.
-Rev. Angela Herrera*

Several times when helping plan Sunday worship, I have selected these words from Rev. Angela Herrera for our chalice lighting. Whether the service focused on social justice or healing or, as in this month, wholeness, this invocation resonates with me. The words remind me that I come to church as I am today. That whatever my frailties at any moment, the very human combination of strength and weakness is a part of the whole of who I am as an individual and who we are as a congregation.

As a person who loves making lists and checking off tasks, I easily get caught up in church work, whether tackling bylaws amendments or participating in a fire drill to ensure the smooth operation of our new Fire Alarm Control Panel (FACP) System. So many jobs need to be done every day to make sure our church is safe, secure, and well managed--so much work that it is easy to focus on the individual details rather than looking at the whole. And there is nothing wrong with a systematic approach. After all, in construction you need well-laid footings before raising walls or setting floor joists.

UUA President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, has written, "In the absence of mission, we can easily see ourselves as merely a collection of individuals." With a quick exchange of words, her observation encourages us to see beyond a mere list of tasks. We need to ask: Do the discussions at the Board meeting, the monthly committee work, and even our physical environment aid or hinder us as we strive to be a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice? The beauty of mission is that it need not be binary: it does not need to be a choice between the individual (persons or tasks) versus the bigger picture. Rather, it should be a conscious blending of both, recognizing how individual tasks become ready steps on the path to mission.

We cannot deny the excitement of discovering an unexpected moment of wholeness. I feel it when I am struck by natural beauty on a hiking path at Tettegouche State Park, feeling very, very small yet connected to the power of Lake Superior. Or when I am enjoying the challenging Berlin Mass shared by the Walden Hill Vocal Ensemble, which musically merged my memories of childhood Latin with my chosen Unitarian Universalist faith. Quite often I feel that sense of wholeness on Sunday morning when music and readings and message are interwoven in such beauty that I am pulled away from my check lists and everyday tasks-- beyond the week that just finished and the week just beginning--and I recognize "There is work to do and we have all that we need to do it right here in this room."



Coming of Age

Derik Robertson



"Who teaches and who is taught? This light reminds me that I learn from the inner light of all. Sit, talk, and be with me as we teach and lift one another."

With these words we start every gathering of the Coming of Age class. It is a mantra that directs our minds to the entire point of the class. As we light our chalice, it is a small devotional that calls us to ourselves and to one another. By reflecting on each part of this chalice lighting, we can get a better idea of the Coming of Age program.

"Who teaches and who is taught?"

As with all good learning, our saying starts with a question to ponder while we pause a moment and take a breath. In the Coming of Age class there are facilitators, mentors, and youth. We do not have traditional labels of teacher and student.

By removing the traditional teacher role, we create an environment where ideas, beliefs, doubts, concerns, angers, joys, and emotions can be shared freely. And, in turn, by removing the traditional student role, we recognize that everyone is called to receive all those things from another. In short, we start with an invitation to bring the whole person into the class and not to simply assume a role. Even though each youth has a mentor, rarely does the mentor walk away from the experience without having learned something from the youth. Because the class invites the entire person into a dynamic learning relationship, often the relationships between the participants in the class--be they facilitators, youth, or mentors--will last well after the class is over.

"This light reminds me that I learn from the inner light of all."

We learn not only from what is said but what is lived. For this reason we make the assumption in class that an idea can only be called a belief if it can be manifest in the lived actions of an individual. I may believe that I am a nice person, but if I do nothing to be agreeable, caring, or even concerned about another living being and I go out of my way to cut in line and laugh at the shortcomings of others, I might just hold a false belief about myself. But this part of our mantra also reminds us that we never know who or what will step into the role of our teacher. We can, after all, learn a lot about who we are from a plant, some water, or the wind, if we will only take the time to listen. Over the course of the year, for example, we have learned some of the principles of humanism by looking at the example of Erasmus of Rotterdam, who decided to put reason over received doctrine. His correction of a verse in the Bible paved the way for the formation of Unitarianism. We learned about the interconnected web of being from the air: how it surrounds, permeates, and sustains all things. We learned about compassion from the Jains, who wear masks and sweep the ground in front of them in an attempt not to bring harm to any being, no matter how small.

“Sit, talk, and be with me”

The members of the Coming of Age class come together for 75 minutes every Sunday to slow down and sit with one another. There is a holiness that can arise in just sitting in a circle with others – just ask the Society of Friends (Quakers). Every Sunday we meditate together in a circle where we simply sit and breathe. We then talk and allow others to talk with us. We invite others into our circle by listening to *This I Believe* podcasts every week. We have listened to and talked about beliefs held by famous individuals such as Helen Keller, Rosa Parks, and Albert Einstein, as well as everyday mothers, musicians, daughters, and sons. Most importantly, we are there for one another. We share space and simply are for one another. It is through being with one another that we join together in a community, the entire purpose of religious life.

“As we teach and lift one another.”

Everything done in the program is reciprocal, and if we do it right, everyone comes out better at the end. By listening to one another, we grow. By sharing with one another, we become better. We are edified by all. As the Quaker proverb says, “I lift Thee, and Thee lift me, and we shall ascend together.” We invite you to join our circle. Let us partake of your light as you partake of ours. Come and sit, talk, and be with us on May 19 for the Coming of Age service. Teach us and learn from us so our entire community can be that much better. And, after the service, we humbly invite you to consider becoming a facilitator or join the mentor pool for the coming year.



Boston Pilgrimage

Walden Hill Youth



PHOTO FROM THE 2013 PILGRIMAGE

Early in the morning on August 4, a group of youth and adult volunteers will gather and commence a pilgrimage to the old Boston and Concord towns to visit the many spiritual sites of early Unitarian Universalism in the United States. This pilgrimage will explore the whole spiritual landscape of Unitarian Universalism that spans education, as we go to museums to learn about history; transcendental spiritualism, as we go to Walden Pond and Emerson's house; religious history and theology, as we go to churches, the UUA headquarters, and Harvard Divinity School; social justice, as we volunteer in inner city shelters to help those in need; and community, as we cram 6 teens into a single hostel room for a week. So what motivates a youth to pay almost \$2,000 to go? I asked a few of the youth and received the following responses:

"I want to swim in Walden Pond."

"I've never been to Boston before."

"I'd like to spend time in downtown."

"To learn about my religious history."

"It's Boston, so no matter what, it's going to be awesome."

"I look forward to traveling and seeing new things and visiting the landmarks to expand my knowledge and get to know my fellow youth better."

"To participate in UU worship services in the Boston congregations."



PHOTO FROM THE 2013 PILGRIMAGE



PHOTO FROM THE 2013 PILGRIMAGE

The congregation is investing a lot in sending these youth on pilgrimage. We recognize this effort and are very grateful. Because we are a part of this congregation and want to share our spiritual journey with the congregation, the youth will be presenting a worship service on August 25 to share the insights, impressions, and lessons they received while in Boston. We hope that you will be able to come. That evening, we will hold a dessert reception to share our pictures and stories of the trip. This reception will be a ticketed event. Contact a youth to purchase advance tickets. We hope to see you there.

Upcoming Events

Watch the Weekly eNews for a complete list of events



5:30-6:30 pm	Dinner in the Commons (<i>free will donation</i>)
6:00-7:15 pm	Choir Rehearsal
6:15-7:15 pm	Children's Activities, Childcare in Nursery
6:15-7:15 pm	Walden Hill Youth Group
6:30-7:15 pm	Forum

Walden Hill Wednesday Forums

- April 3 **A Safe Church Home: Board Policy Forum**
Join the Minister and Board leaders for a discussion on the proposed draft of the Risk Reduction Policy. You can find the policy in the e-news or contact the office. The policy addresses ways that people with a sexual offense history can safely participate in the life of the church.
- April 10 **Addiction, Intervention, and Recovery**
Join guest Paul Markusen, intervention specialist and recovery coach, for a conversation about health and wholeness.
- April 17 **Community Conversation on Developmental Disabilities**
Join an interactive conversation about inclusion of people with disabilities in our community, facilitated by the Region 10 Quality Council, as a follow-up to the preceding Sunday service from our Accessibility & Inclusion Team on intellectual disabilities.
- April 24 **Clara Barton Rummage Sale Set-up**
The Clara Barton rummage sale team needs your help! Please come to help set-up and drop off your items. This will be a great opportunity to preview what might be for sale at the Clara Barton Rummage Sale.

Special Events

- April 18 **The Welcome Table**
A service of poetry, music, silence, and breaking bread, echoing traditions of suffering and liberation from the Jewish Passover and Christian Maundy Thursday, ending with a traditional Universalist Communion ritual. All are welcome.
- April 27 **Clara Barton Rummage Sale- Save the Date!**
Join the Clara Barton Guild in supporting the annual UU rummage sale. Drop off items beginning April 24.
- May 5 **Maypole Celebration**

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Throwback Page

History Highlights of First UU



An arial view of the land before Walden Hill church was built.

*"The rising hills, the slopes, the steep climb lies before us...
they say there are valleys, pastures, we can meet there in peace...
To climb these coming crests one word to you, to
you and your children:
stay together
learn the flowers
go light"*

-- Gary Snyder

First Unitarian Universalist Church



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Sunday Services & Religious Education
9 & 11 a.m.

Our publication title, **Grace Notes**, harkens back to the name of this congregation in the 1870s, Grace Church, and also refers to a grace note in music, which is an extra flourish to a main piece of music. Each month, we create some space to highlight just a flourish, some extra notes, within the larger life of our church.