



REACH

Our reach should exceed our grasp.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northfield

A WELCOMING CONGREGATION

October 2011

Services are held at Fellowship Hall, corner of West 2nd & Linden Streets in Northfield. Babysitting and children's religious education are provided.

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October Services

Sunday October 2 • 10 a.m. • “By Whose Authority” • Rev. Kristin Maier •

By whose authority do we forge our congregations, our beliefs, our actions in the world? Join us for a service exploring this question as well as a celebration of “Association Sunday.” A second collection will be taken to support the Unitarian Universalist Association and the work of our larger religious movement.

Sunday October 9 • 10 a.m. • “Honoring the Jewish Tradition-Yom Kippur and Atonement” • Guest speaker Seth Greenberg •

Seth Greenberg, the benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor of Psychology at Carleton will speak on the meaning and importance of the High Holy Days as a way to encourage further understanding of the Jewish tradition and culture.

Sunday October 16 • 10 a.m. • “Honoring First Nations” • Guest Speaker

Richard LaFortune • Richard LaFortune, GLBTT Native American (Yupik) activist returns to our congregation with updates, commentary, stories and revelations from the Indigenous people's front. Richard co-founded Two Spirit Gathering and has been involved with Indigenous People activism worldwide for decades.

Sunday October 23 • 10 a.m. • “Claiming Our Voices Part I: Our Universalist

Roots” • Rev. Kristin Maier • What religious beliefs do we as individuals claim? What beliefs have we yet to claim? How are those beliefs supported and informed by Unitarian Universalism as a tradition? We will explore these questions together in an Adult Religious Education series that will take place in the context of our Sunday Services. Join us for Part I, in which we explore how Universalism developed in America, what early Universalists believed and how the tradition has evolved over time. We will reflect together on how Universalist beliefs resonate with our own beliefs today.

Sunday October 30 • 10 a.m. • “Intergenerational Activity - Day of the

Dead” • Suzannah Ciernia & Kristin Lucas • Join us for a variety of activities downstairs in an intergenerational celebration of the Day of the Dead. A fifth Sunday celebration.

A Living Bridge

There is a region of northeast India that is arguably the wettest place on earth. It once received over 1,000 inches of rain in one year. The typical year brings 425 inches of rain with most of it falling during the three short months of monsoon season.

As you might imagine, transportation can be a challenge in this hilly region where gentle streams quickly become raging rivers. Bridges are easily swept away. Those that stay standing don't for long – the area is so wet that wooden bridges rot at accelerated speeds.

Harley, a resident of the region, is practicing an art passed down by his people for hundreds of years. It is the art of building living bridges capable of withstanding extreme conditions. (And yes, his name really is Harley, which you can see for yourself on the *Human Planet: Rivers* episode.)



Harley leans over a tangled fig growing out of the side of the river bank. He gently coaxes the roots of the massive plant into a hollowed section of tree trunk. When the roots reach the other side of the bank, he will allow them to dig into the soil. It takes 10 to 15 years of work, but in time, a bridge strong enough to support up to 50 people will span the river. Because of the network of roots, the bridge will prove incredibly resistant to the torrential levels of rainwater. And, because it is a living substance, it will not rot.

Harley does not cultivate the bridge alone, however. His niece Juliana squats beside him as he bends over the tangled roots. He is teaching her everything he knows about caring for the living bridge. These bridges live up to 500 years. Such a bridge cannot be cared for by one person in one lifetime. So, he teaches her. He tells her that this bridge will be used by her children and her children's children and that she must take care of the roots – let no one cut or damage them.

The slow, deliberate building of a living bridge – that is the image I get when I think of the adults who go downstairs on Sunday to teach our children and youth. When any of us take our time and energy and invest it in the children of our congregation or community we are building a bridge into the future – for them and for all of us. When we pass on our values and beliefs – in the inherent worth and dignity of everyone, in the sacred right to follow our conscience, in the very holiness of this planet – we create a bridge of meaning that we hope will sustain our children like it has sustained us. And, through the relationships we build with our children and youth, we nurture lives and a way of living together and in the world that can reach far beyond our own lifetime.

Perhaps you have not experienced the joy and deep meaning of teaching a religious education class. It doesn't take any particularly special skill, just a willingness to engage, to take small risks really, and show that you care. If you would like to be part of this living bridge to our children and youth, I know our Director of Religious Education, Nancy Huppert, and the RE Committee can help you with that.

Something for the Wall Flowers

Immediately after each Sunday morning service, there will be an opportunity downstairs for people to continue the conversation.

“It's an effort specifically to make visitors and newcomers feel welcome, by letting them participate in an informal chat,” said Bill McGrath. “But anyone is invited to join us at the table downstairs.”

Bill will be facilitating the discussion for the first couple of months. He will wear his famous green cap so that newcomers know which table is hosting the discussion. Later in the year, someone else may take over in the role of after-church discussion facilitator.

Our Fifth Principle

by Bob Ciernia

If you have been attending UU services for any length of time, then you know there are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations seek to affirm and promote. These Principles are as close as we come to a Creed or set of Commandments; they are meant to serve as guidelines as we shape our congregational and personal lives. As your new Board has begun its work for the coming year, I thought it would be useful to reflect on the 5th Principle and how it shapes our work.



The 5th Principle says *that we affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large*. So, what does that really mean when it comes to doing Board work, or deciding what is (or is not) “appropriate” work for the congregation to formally undertake?

Within our congregation and how we conduct “church business,” this seems fairly straightforward. We *vote* on important matters at our Annual Meeting and, collectively, make the big decisions that determine our congregational life. We *elect* our church leaders and we expect them to be transparent as they do their work, e.g. they need to inform the other Members of the congregation what they’re doing, what they’re talking about, and how they are working to meet the needs of the congregation. The Board Bits column in the Reach is one of the ways the Board lets the congregation know what it’s up to. For many years, forums before, after, and even during services have been used to determine Member thinking with the goal of reaching consensus on how to proceed. These forums have addressed our ministerial needs, religious education, adult RE, and – going back many years – whether we wanted to move from the Arts Guild worship

space to our current location.

Much of the Board’s work is to make decisions on behalf of the congregation as a whole. In many cases, the Board has relied on surveys to make those decisions; in other cases, a less comprehensive polling of opinion was undertaken. So that there would be institutional memory to refer to, last year’s Board began to formally adopt Policies that can be used by future Boards and Committees. Like the seven Principles, these Policies are not the last word nor set in concrete; but they are a “quick reference guide” for issues not of sufficient import to merit a congregational vote at the Annual Meeting. [To further the goal of transparency and to remind you of what you may have read in earlier editions of Reach, the current Policies are printed elsewhere in this edition of Reach.]

So, how does the 5th Principle play out when we’re talking about concerns that extend outside our congregational walls?

Well, as might not be immediately obvious, there is an inherent contradiction in the guideline. We are asked to both live our conscience (which may require us to oppose prevailing rules or laws or social mores) *and* we are also asked to live democratically which implies that we will support (or at least accede to) majority opinion.

It’s a fact that we will not all agree on how to live out this Principle when it comes to specific social (i.e. political) issues. What to do regarding the so-called (Anti-) Marriage Amendment is a case in point. It can be argued that we should not get involved at all as this is a “political” issue and, so as to maintain our tax-exempt status, we ought to carefully monitor how we separate church and state. It could be argued that we should work to put this Amendment on the ballot so that the majority opinion (whatever that is) might be the law. And it could also be argued that it’s unconscionable to put human rights to a vote as one needs only consider that majority opinion approved of slavery in this country and denied women the vote – for several centuries!

So, for our own congregation, is there a way forward when unanimity is unlikely? I think in many cases the answer is yes. First, we have our denominational leaders and General Assembly votes to guide us. In

Policies Approved by UUFN Board

regards to the (Anti-) Marriage Amendment, here is an excerpt from the UUA website: “Unitarian Universalists (UUs) believe that the [First Principle](#) of our faith, respecting ‘the inherent worth and dignity of every person,’ applies equally to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. [UU congregations](#) and clergy have long recognized and celebrated same-sex marriages within our faith tradition. Since 1973, when we established the [Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns](#), the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has made an institutional commitment to full equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people.”

While our congregation is not bound by any decision made at the denominational level, we can turn to our own history of votes on LGBT rights to guide us on what to do in this regard. At our most recent Annual Meeting in May of this year, we formally – and unanimously – voted to be recognized as a Welcoming Congregation. By another unanimous vote, the congregation changed the last sentence in our bylaws’ Article II to read: “We welcome all people without regard to race, color, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity who wish to unite with us in the search for truth, and the promotion of respect and love among the entire web of life.”

The vital essence of UUism, in my opinion, is that we *act* on what we profess. Those actions are at the core of conscience *and* the democratic process; we have neither if we do not *do* something. Could such actions lead the congregation into dissension and discord? Possibly... if we do not embody the words of Francis David (1510-1579) when he said, “We need not think alike to love alike.”

As we face whatever issues the future holds, and whatever differences, our Principles can guide us to act in ways that affirm our values and respect our differences. It is through this often challenging – and rewarding – spiritual work that the arc of the moral universe bends towards justice.

Second Collections: Second collections during Sunday services may be taken, but we would like the practice limited to just once per quarter. Organizations should be designated by the IRS as approved 501c3s, and the organization’s values and mission must be consistent with those of the UUFN. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Policy Board. *Policy approved at the meeting of September 13, 2010.*

Memorial Gifts/Donations: If no preference is given by the donor of memorial gifts to UUFN, the Board will show preference toward adding the money to the Future Fund. *Policy approved at the meeting of January 3, 2011.*

Safe Congregations Policy: Too lengthy to print here; see separate document. *Policy approved at the meeting of March 1, 2011.*

Delegate Credentialing at PSD or UUA conferences.

Delegate credentials will be assigned in the following order:

1. Board members (in this order):
 - A. President
 - B. Treasurer
 - C. Vice president
 - D. Secretary
 - E. At large member
2. Committee Chairs
3. Remaining members

Policy approved at the meeting of April 5, 2011.

Acknowledgments of Contributions

The Treasurer, as part of his or her duties, and to comply with IRS rules, will send a written acknowledgment of each single contribution of \$250 or more. The acknowledgment must include the organization name, each individual contribution, the date of each individual contribution, and an assertion that the only benefit the member received was an “intangible religious benefit.” [Note: The statement does not necessarily have to be organized

by tax year, but the contributor can only deduct contributions of \$250 or more if s/he has already received an acknowledgment containing the necessary information for each such contribution.]

Policy approved at the meeting of May 9, 2011.

Use of UUFN Funds to Support Attendance at PSD and UUA Events

UUFN has often put money into its Budget line items that support Members attending a variety of PSD and UUA conferences, seminars, and meetings. Because funds are limited, the Board will award these funds in the following priority: President, V-P, President elect (if not already one of the officers), Treasurer, Minister, DRE, Secretary, At-Large Board Member, followed by Committee Chairs/ Liaisons on a first-come, first-serve basis to include RE, Sunday Services, Stewardship, Social Justice, and Membership, followed by any Member of the congregation who is interested in attending.

Policy approved at the meeting of July 26, 2011.

Access to Financial Information

The Board desires to balance the “need to know” against “the right to privacy.” So that Members of the Board can be informed as to the current fiscal health of the Fellowship, the President and Treasurer will have access to all the financial records and pledges pertaining to the congregation. This same information will be made available to the Stewardship Committee so that that committee can conduct a successful pledge campaign. Board Members will not routinely have access to pledge/ contribution records other than in a cumulative, non-individual summary.

Policy approved at the meeting of July 26, 2011.

UUA President Responds to Sentence in Arizona Protest Trial

August 23, 2011, Associated Press

Boston, MA) The Rev. Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), was convicted August 5, 2011, on misdemeanor charges stemming from his nonviolent civil disobedience in Phoenix, Ariz., in July 2011.

Rev. Morales was arrested while protesting Arizona's anti-immigrant legislation, SB 1070. Today, August 23, 2011, his sentence was announced in Maricopa County court. For his act of conscience, he received a sentence of one day in jail, with credit for the one day already served.



Rev. Morales released the following statement upon hearing of his sentence:

“While my trial has finally ended, my determination to oppose Arizona's SB 1070 and the inhumane practices of Sheriff Joe Arpaio is stronger than ever.

“As people of faith, we are called to oppose injustice and help protect the most vulnerable among us. We cannot turn a blind eye to the inhumane immigration enforcement practices of Sheriff Arpaio, nor should we accept similar policies in other parts of our country.

“We Unitarian Universalists will continue to stand on the side of love against such legislation and the anti-immigrant sentiment it represents. We look forward to an opportunity to witness publicly against such injustices at our Justice General Assembly in Phoenix in 2012.”

The UUA is a faith community of more than 1,000 congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance and social justice. For more information, please visit our online press room.

October in RE

by Nancy Huppert

Sunday, October 2

K-4 Picture Book RE - Leaf Man

Teacher: Nancy Huppert

Nursery: Will Marfleet

With a body made of fallen leaves and acorns for eyes, Leaf Man takes off from a backyard and flutters away on the breeze, meandering past animals, over fields of fall vegetables, above waterways, and across prairie meadows. The artwork in Leaf Man is dazzling and will offer inspiration for our quilt project.



Youth Group: Attend worship service

Sunday, October 9

Visit to the Apple Orchard - All children and youth

Today we will visit the Fireside Apple Orchard. Please arrive at the church by 9:15 a.m. as we plan to leave at 9:30. We will return at approximately 11:30 that morning. Transportation to and from the orchard will be provided. Please don't forget your signed permission slip. In addition to two adult chaperones, we will assign a youth group buddy to each preschooler so that we can offer adequate supervision to our little ones. We plan to use the apples we pick for our annual Apple Crisp Sunday.

Sunday, October 15

SPECIAL EVENT - YOUTH GROUP LOCK-IN

7:00 p.m. Tonight will be our first ever Youth Group Lock-In. All youth are encouraged to invite a friend and join us for a yet TBD activity before we head over to the church for our overnight event. We will kick-off our new Heresy Apparent curriculum, have some community-building fun, watch movies, and play video games. Adults will be in attendance throughout the event. When we wake up Sunday morning, we'll be ready to help peel apples for Apple Crisp Sunday. Watch for permission slips, which will be coming soon.

Sunday, October 16

K-4 & Youth - Apple Crisp Sunday

Leader: Natalie Marfleet

Nursery: Claire Paulsen

Today is our annual Apple Crisp Sunday. We will serve warm apple crisp during coffee hour and will have ready-to-bake pans available for purchase. If you would like to bring in a pan of your own, we will fill it up.

Sunday, October 23

K-4 Picture Book UU - To Everything There is a Season

Teacher: Lois Burnes

Nursery: Theo Lucas

The poetic words of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes have been read, sung and whispered in countless books, songs and prayers. But in this picture-book tour de force, the two-time Caldecott Medalists celebrate the universality of the time-honored verse, depicting its relevance throughout history, spanning all cultures and religions.

Youth Group: Attend worship service

Sunday, October 30

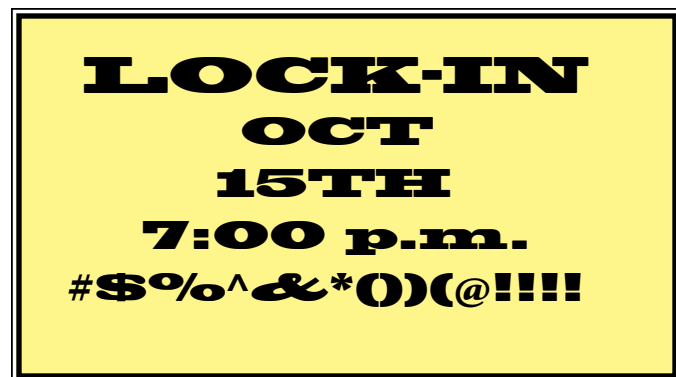
Intergenerational Activity - Day of the Dead

Leaders: Suzannah Ciernia & Kristin Lucas

Nursery: Nick Marfleet

"Above a small town in Mexico, the sun rises like a great marigold, and one family begins preparations for an annual celebration, El dia de los muertos, the Day of the Dead."

So begins a simple story written by Tony Johnston that tells how one family in Mexico spends this special day. Today we will enjoy a variety of activities downstairs in an intergenerational celebration of the Day of the Dead.



Coffee Hour

Below is the list of those who have volunteered to set up, bring treats, and clean up for Social Hour. Thank you all! We are trying to simplify for the hosts this year so are asking that you provide just one sweet and one savory treat.

Feel free to exchange with someone else if another date works better for you and please let Bev Topp know about the changes at bevorleetopp@frontiernet.net or 612-702-6127

Thanks to everyone!

Sunday Social Hour Hosts

10/2 ?

10/9 Terry Stead & Marcia Jacobs

10/16 RE Apple Crisp Sunday

10/23 Marilyn Provost & Nan Just

10/30 ?



Greeter List

Ed Frost & Mairi Doerr

Greeters are asked to serve for a month of Sundays. In the event there is a Sunday in your month that doesn't work, please just contact Bill McGrath at billmcgrath52@gmail.com (or 645-7660) and we will find a fill-in for you.

NOVEMBER: Greg & Natalie Marfleet

DECEMBER: Bobbi Baker & Burt Fleming

JANUARY: Kristin Lucas and either Scott or Roxanne Davis

FEBRUARY: To be Determined

MARCH: Marcia Jacobs & Klaus Huehn

APRIL: Mera Colling and Paula Case

MAY: Marilyn Prevost and either Mike or Megan Jonas

BACK-UP GREETERS: McGraths, Topps. Ciernias.

GREETER MAIN DUTIES:

1. Stand at door from 9:50 until 10:05.

2. Give a program to each person.

3. If a person is attending for the first time, get them to sign the book, and

fill out a temporary name tag.

It's Time for a Circle Supper!

Circle the date for a circle supper on either of the first two weekends in November: Friday, Nov. 4; Saturday Nov. 5; Friday, Nov. 11; or, Saturday, Nov. 12.

If you haven't been to a Circle Supper, you may be wondering what it is. A Circle Supper is simply a chance for the members and friends of the UUFN to have dinner and get to know each other better, in a small-group setting, in someone's home.

Here's how a Circle Supper works:

- 1) The host has four to six other charming and intelligent people to his or her home. Visitors (including prospective members) are welcome, as well as UUFN members. The evening is a casual gathering and not a black tie event.
- 2) This is a planned potluck. Hosts decide on the basic menu, choose what they would like to prepare, and then ask guests to bring a main dish, salad, bread, or dessert, large enough for that size group.
- 3) Hosts are encouraged to define their Circle Suppers as they'd like: adults only or children welcome, alcohol served or soft drinks only, vegetarian food or meat allowed.
- 4) If you want to participate, send an email to Bob Ciernia at bobciernia@gmail.com, or leave a message on the answering machine at **507-663-7876**, or look for the sign-up clipboard during social hour the last two services in October. Because we'd like to have Circle Suppers once or twice more during the church year, we hope everyone will host at some point; if this is a good time for you, please include that in your message as well. Once the hosts and guest lists are set, Bob will let the hosts know who is coming to their homes so they can follow up with their guests about the specifics.

These are always fun events. Please join us.

To Pray Without Apology

What would have happened if Martin Luther King Jr. had cast his lot with the Unitarian Universalists? A reflection on race and theology.

By Rosemary Bray McNatt

Several years ago, in the middle of my seminary education, my literary agent called with an intriguing proposition. Would I be willing to be considered as co-writer of Coretta Scott King's autobiography? I was one of several people being considered, but the book's prospective editor was said to be partial to me. I was more than willing to talk about it, and a meeting with King was arranged at the editor's office.

I didn't make the final cut, but that is not why I tell this story. During an hour of wide-ranging conversation, I mentioned to her that I was in seminary to become a Unitarian Universalist minister. What frankly surprised me was the look she gave me, one of respect and delight.

"Oh, I went to Unitarian churches for years, even before I met Martin," she told me, explaining that she had been, since college, a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which was popular among Unitarians and Universalists. "And Martin and I went to Unitarian churches when we were in Boston."

What surprised and saddened me most was what she said next. Though I am paraphrasing, the gist of it was this: "We gave a lot of thought to becoming Unitarian at one time, but Martin and I realized we could never build a mass movement of black people if we were Unitarian."

It was a statement that pierced my heart and troubled my mind, then and now. I considered what our religious movement would be like if the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had chosen differently, had cast his lot with our faith instead of returning to his roots as an African-American Christian. Certainly no one with King's gifts would have lived in complete obscurity. I realized, however, that our liberal religious movement would have neutralized the greatest American theologian of the twentieth century. Certainly his race would have been the

primary barrier. In a religious movement engaged until the 1970s in the active discouragement of people of color who wished to join its ministerial ranks, King might have found his personal struggles to serve Unitarian Universalism at least as daunting as the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Even if race had disappeared as an issue, King might have found the barrier of theology insurmountable. Though from the very start of his theological training he revealed a decided bent toward liberal religion, by the time his faith had been tried by the civil rights movement, King had said No to the sunny optimism of liberal faith—an optimism frankly untested in the heat of the battle for liberty and dignity for African Americans.

In his famous essay, "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence"—published in the Christian Century's series, "How My Mind Has Changed," in 1960—King made some trenchant comments about liberal theology that bear discussion:

There is one phase of liberalism that I hope to cherish always: its devotion to the search for truth, its refusal to abandon the best light of reason. . . . It was . . . the liberal doctrine of man that I began to question. The more I observed the tragedies of history, and man's shameful inclination to choose the low road, the more I came to see the depths and strength of sin. . . . I came to feel that liberalism had been all too sentimental concerning human nature and that it leaned toward a false idealism. I also came to see that liberalism's superficial optimism concerning human nature caused it to overlook the fact that reason is darkened by sin. . . . Liberalism failed to see that reason by itself is little more than an instrument to justify man's defensive ways of thinking. Reason, devoid of purifying power of faith, can never free itself from distortions and rationalizations.

Long before I ever spoke to Coretta Scott King, I had sensed in some of her husband's writings the tension between liberal theology and African-American religious and cultural traditions that formed him. To read one of the first papers he wrote in graduate school, on the role of reason and experience in finding God, is to watch him grapple with the connections between an experiential and relational God that is a bedrock of traditional African-American theology and the use of reason in religion

demanded of humanity in a scientific age.

He wrote: "We can never gain complete knowledge or proof of the real. This, however, does not destroy the stream of rational religion. On the contrary, it reveals to us that intellectual finality is unattainable in all fields; all human knowledge is relative, and all human ideas are caught in the whirlpool of relativity." But in the same paper he also wrote that "religious experience is not an intellectual formulation about God, it is a lasting acquaintance with God." He concluded that "although experience is not the only way to find God, it is probably the primal way. It is a road . . . open to all levels of human intelligence."

The notion of the self-perfectibility of human beings was an inadequate theology in the face of the sustained hatred and embodied evil of the segregationist South. Yet King retained his faith in the great potential for goodness in humanity—his faith in the possibilities of human nature—that Unitarians and Universalists would lift up as a central affirmation of our free faith. Reason and experience revealed as much to King about humanity as about divinity, and what he thought and learned taught him the importance of both.

For King to have answered the call to a liberal religious faith, a faith that clearly resonated with him since his earliest days of graduate studies, however, would have meant a fatal separation from the sources of his power—a faith in a suffering God who stood with suffering people despite their mistakes and failures, and covenantal love between himself and oppressed African Americans, the people who grounded his passion for justice but did not restrict it solely to themselves.

I had been a Unitarian Universalist for eight or nine years when I moved to Detroit, Michigan. I was participating in a service at the Detroit church, and in my part of the presentation I had talked about God. An older woman approached me during coffee hour later that morning to inform me that, as UUs, we had given up the notion of God. She demanded to know how I, as an African-American woman, could possibly talk about God when that same reprehensible Christian concept had been used to justify slavery. I was dumbfounded by her vehemence, but not too shocked to remind her that

it was that same tradition's God—most particularly, a just and loving God whose movement was forever toward justice and freedom and wholeness—that had inspired much of the antislavery movement, and indeed, most of the major reform movements of the nineteenth century that we as Unitarian Universalists are so eager to claim. Finally, I informed her that I was just as much a Unitarian Universalist as she was, and I had not given up on the notion of God.

I couldn't decide what was more frightening, that she seemed oblivious to our historic roots as a liberal Christian community of faith, or that she wanted to make sure no mention of a higher power of any kind ever disturbed her worship experience. It is not that her question had not occurred to me before; indeed, I had engaged in a spiritual struggle only a few years earlier that nearly ended in my leaving our faith for a more traditional expression of Christianity. Yet in the end, I could not go. Unitarian Universalism won my heart and mind because both God and freedom are precious to me, and it is only within our non-creedal tradition that I felt there was a chance, however slight, that I might lay claim to both.

I asked myself then, as I have asked myself hundreds of times since: How much do we mean it when we talk about inclusion, about becoming an anti-racist religious community, when we are not willing to acknowledge, incorporate, or engage the historic theological realities alive among many people of color?

Do we realize what we are risking in pursuit of this goal of an anti-racist Association? Do we realize that we are risking being informed by varieties of religious experience not entertained in our churches for decades, if ever? Are we prepared to know what informs the survival strategies used by people on the margins? Are we prepared to accept that even when there are people of color within comfortable economic levels—as opposed to those poor uneducated people who don't know any better than to praise God—there may be not only a theological but cultural understanding of the divine that travels with them into our sanctuaries?

Sometimes a person's experience is informed by structural oppression. Sometimes, it's just life itself

that has weighed on them. But there are many people who have found help and hope and strength from a source greater than themselves to endure what has often seemed unendurable. Do we risk their sharing with us how it is they have survived? What if they tell us, "God brought me through"? Do we dare make room for them to share and to celebrate, to witness to what they have seen and felt and intimately known?

What if our liberal brother, King, had come to one of our congregations on a dark night after being bombarded with threats on his life and the life of his family? What if he had said—not to God, but to one of us—that he couldn't go on anymore, that he was afraid? What if he had said, as he did say to God, "I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone"?

Might members of our congregations have prayed for him, or with him? Or would he have been consoled with words like these from the Rev. Charles Francis Potter, author of *Humanism: A New Religion*: "If man habitually leans upon God when the going is hard, and expects God's help when he meets a difficulty, he loses the strength of character which is gained by the extra effort in emergencies. . . . And when, at a time of crisis, man does pray and depend on God, and help does come, does that prove that the help came from God? . . . Too often, man thanks God for what man has done."

In the end, King chose to forego the liberal religious enterprise among Unitarian Universalists and leaned instead on the God who promised never to leave or forsake him, even in death. Yet many of us who believe in the work of anti-racism have not left the Unitarian Universalist movement. Many of us, in the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, have found our way back to belief in God after a long sojourn elsewhere. Many of us who grew up in the black church, and many others who can say that the black church grew up in them, have followed our various paths to the doors of the liberal church. Are we here to provide interior decoration for our congregations, here to do spiritual domestic work

on behalf of those wounded by God, by racism, by white privilege, or by the circumstances of their own lives? Can we who are called to serve as religious leaders discern when we are doing ministry and when we are doing minstrelsy? Might our own wounds stand in the way of clarity? Will there ever be a time when we can authentically be who we are, believe what we believe, speak our own truth, sing our own song—and be with one another?

The work of becoming an anti-racist religious movement is not an adventure in which I am willing to participate under false pretenses. I want it all: for us to be anti-racist, religious, and a movement. I respect that the theological stance of others will differ from my own. But I am as hungry to be freed from the narrowness of our religious assumptions as I am to be released from the wary dance we engage in around race, class, and gender. I am waiting for our congregations—and my ministerial colleagues—to end our long exile from the marketplace of religious ideas. I long for us to engage once again contemporary religious belief and in such engagement to give voice and substance to the liberal religious way of life. I nurse a secret wish that one Sunday, my Pentecostal mother might wander into a Unitarian Universalist congregation and stay for services, even if I'm not in the pulpit. Above all, I am praying for the transformation of the religious movement I love so much—and hoping for just one day when I won't have to explain why I might choose to pray.

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OUTSIDE THE BOX

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BOB CIERNIA

The following is from an article in Harper's, June 2011, quoting Ali Abu Awwad of the Palestinian Movement for Non-Violent Resistance:

“Causing someone to suffer the same price you have paid will never ease your pain. It doesn't help much to be right. You damage your right by just being right. One usually wants to be right only because he or she can't be honest. Give me a solution—whatever it is, one state, two states, something in between—where my right is in harmony with my humanity and their right is in harmony with their humanity. Nonviolent protest is where you invest your pain, a place where this pain becomes action in accordance with your humanity. You cannot practice nonviolence without listening to the other side's narrative. But first you have to give up being a victim. When you do that, no one will be able to victimize you again. I don't want the world to feel pity for me; I want the world to take responsibility, as I do.

It is the competition in suffering, in being victims, that keeps the conflict going. The Jews are not my enemy; their fear is my enemy. We must help them to stop being so afraid—their whole history has terrified them—but I refuse to be a victim of Jewish fear anymore. Nobody is born to hate. Hatred is poison, and revenge, or the thirst for revenge, makes it worse. Forgiveness is the best revenge.”

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?

The nation's 6,900 small, locally owned, community banks control \$1.4 trillion in assets. That's 11 percent of all bank assets. They currently have \$257 billion in loans to small businesses and farms on their books. The four giant banks — JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citibank, and Wells Fargo — command \$5.4 trillion in assets, or 40 percent of the total. Given that they are nearly four times as large as all local banks combined, one might expect that they would have made four times the small-business loans, or about \$1 trillion. In fact, these banks have a mere \$85 billion in small-business and farm loans on their balance sheets.

Read more in Yes! Magazine, Fall 2011 www.yesmagazine.org

ACTING IN SUPPORT OF THE INTERDEPENDENT WEB

Much of the clothing we purchase every year carries hidden environmental and social costs. Growing non-organic cotton, for example, uses copious amounts of pesticides, herbicides, and water. That's one concern for people who want to make low-impact, ethical choices as consumers. Another issue is that clothing sold in the United States is often produced in the developing world, in factories with poor wages and working conditions. To ensure that you're buying fair labor clothing, look for companies that are transparent about their production process. Green America's National Green Pages (www.greenamerica.org/pubs/greenpages) is a good source of information if you're looking to buy the most sustainable and fairly produced clothing available.

You can wear recycled cotton — or use it to insulate your home. Home insulation is available that is made from 90 percent post-consumer recycled denim and cotton fibers, uses less energy to manufacture than traditional insulation, contains no fiberglass or formaldehyde, and doesn't off-gas.

The cotton industry's “From Blue to Green” campaign showed that consumers are eager to recycle when it collected more than 40,000 pairs of old jeans in 2010. These were used to make insulation that was then donated to community housing projects.

Read more ideas about do-it-yourself ways to live sustainably in Yes! Magazine, Fall 2011 www.yesmagazine.org



The Wayside Pulpit

*The aim of life is to live, and to
live means to be aware, joyously,
drunkenly, serenely, divinely aware*

Henry Miller