



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO

May 2017 Newsletter

First Unitarian Society of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637 (773) 324-4100

Reflections

Rev. Teri Schwartz

I spend most of my time wondering
if I should be somewhere else.

So I have learned to shape the words thank you
with my first breath each morning, my last breath every night.
When the last breath comes, at least I will know I was thankful
for all the places I was so sure I was not supposed to be.

—excerpt from *The Paradox* by Sarah Kay

This past season, I put down Facebook. It was part experiment, part discipline, part of a Lenten practice for me. Say what you will about social media—I have found Facebook to be an invaluable tool for my ministry. The platform allows me to connect instantly with other UU ministers around the country in electronic ministerial groups based on interest or identity. I can post a question about best practices or worship ideas and get replies from colleagues hundreds of miles away—within seconds. (It's also a nice way to see cute kids and kittens). It can be helpful for tracking news and my networks'

responses to it. Of course, it is also (at best) a curated slice of information, and (at worst) an overwhelming echo-chamber that can eat away at the mental health of the most balanced among us.

Yet, those were not the primary reasons for my little experiment. I was curious if I'd experience life differently without Facebook for an extended period of time. Facebook is fine—even good!—within and of itself. It's my responses that can get me out of whack. I have definite affinity to compare my insides with other peoples' outsides. (Continued)

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The curated nature of Facebook is the perfect way for me to indulge in my dubious pastime of “comparing and despairing.” Who made a home-cooked meal even with young children pattering about? Who just paid off their student loans? Who’s doing visible and commendable work in the world? Who just lost twenty pounds? Yes, I knew about my tendencies to indulge in a strange twist of voyeuristic self-flagellation and jealousy. That didn’t come as a surprise; it was, in part, why I put down Facebook—to free up a little bit of mental real estate.

Yet, very quickly I learned something about myself. Despite my self-concept to the contrary, I am vulnerable and susceptible to FOMO: **Fear Of Missing Out**. I began to wonder about all the news I wasn’t going to get. What if a really good idea came along that I didn’t see? What if I missed a really important status update—like a birth or a death? What about something really moving, that would slightly change the course of my life, perhaps for fifteen minutes—or perhaps for much longer? What if something important happened? And when important things were unfolding in the world, what were people saying?

The time away afforded me a bit more sanity—and clarity. FOMO, in part, fueled my attempts to keep pace with my digital world. Yet, ironically, the more I sought to stay on top of my feed, the more often I was actually missing out—on the physical life right in front of me. It’s a curious thing. It’s not either/or—certainly, we live some of our lives in the digital sphere. It can be rewarding and even necessary to our work.

Yet, until I put Facebook down, I hadn’t realized how much my electronic FOMO kept me out of the present moment of my

physical life. I’d scroll through my feed before realizing that 20 minutes had passed and I was leaning over the kitchen counter with a kink in my neck and had no idea. I was in the present moment—of my digital life. Yet that came at the cost of not being present to my physical life: the rice cooking on the stove, the kids’ questions, even the odd angle in which I had arranged myself on the kitchen counter despite discomfort.

Many religious teachings urge us to stay in the present moment—all of life, the only life we have to live, is right here, in the present. Over time, I’ve had varying degrees of awareness of the things that pull me out of the present moment. It had seemed to me that my electronic life allowed me to access the present moment in a way that extended beyond my physical bounds. And it does. Yet, until my experiment, I hadn’t realized how much my electronic life was one of the things that pulled me out of the life I have right here and now.

Many things lead us to wonder if there’s somewhere else we should be. Some are good things to explore; some come at the cost of the life that is right in front of us. Life is so daily. It is full of laundry and wonder, irritation and delight, digital and physical worlds, dirty dishes, cleaned counters, disappointments, yet, also tulips and lilacs blooming. The only day we have is today.

In this month of May, as our physical world blooms around us, may we each find greater clarity of what brings us into the present. We may then find ourselves newly aware of our locations—be they the geography of the mind, spirit, or body. And when we find ourselves fully present in the moment, may there be thanks in our hearts.

May it be so,
Rev. Teri

Traveling Through Life

Rev. Karen Mooney

Be prepared, that's the Boy Scouts marching song.
Be prepared, as through life you march along...

My family sang constantly when driving, working, or waiting. It was a badge of honor to be able to sing, without repeat, for hours as many songs as we could remember. Tom Lehrer was favored in these pursuits as his songs always pulled at the fabric of our world, setting skewed expectations about social customs to catchy tunes. This song in particular—while a bit off color—was a favorite, and oddly, I find myself singing it when I am entering places I should be prepared, like before an exam, during an interview, before preaching, or even as I get ready for a Sunday. It has become a welcome friend in life; it makes me smile, shake my head, and move forward, assured that life is often ridiculous. Be yourself—what is the worst that can happen?

I am thinking about preparing these days as the youth and young adults around us move through a variety of transitions in their lives. Graduations of many kinds are happening over the next few months. People will move and begin new ways of being in the world. They will start classes in new buildings with old friends. They will reach out to try new ways of being, they will date and joining lives in marriage. It is a vibrant and amazing time, and is a foreshadowing of all of life. We prepare as best we can, and then we move out into the unknown to try to live well with what we have learned. Preparation for life is hard. We gather up knowledge of all sorts, memorize facts, equations, and processes.

We prepare by practice, even test ourselves to ensure we know where we stand. We can, and if we are wise, *do* prepare for many things. This is what classes and school are all for: preparation. Still, nothing can prepare you fully for an actual event. We can and do prepare, but when the time comes to go out on our own, life can still feel like a mystery.

I have begun wondering if the preparation for life should really be about preparing to be resilient, preparing to be brave, preparing to be flexible, preparing to laugh, preparing to be kind ... the list could go on and on. Is this what we should be teaching our children? As I move forward in life, I have begun to wonder if the preparation I need is not the facts, but the ability to simply remember who I am and who I wish to be, even when faced with failure or disappointment. If the preparation I need most is to affirm that I have prepared and I will do my very best.

I hope this is what our children learn by our actions as well as our words. In this time when there are so many different ways to hear no, can we still say yes to the core of who we are and, in doing so, show up in a way that allows us to engage the fullness of life and community? All of *us* are needed – *all* of us are needed.

Karen

10 AM Sunday Service Themes and Music

May 7th

Creators Workshop: An All Ages Pageant
First Unitarian Congregation

A pageant on freedom and creativity to be sung, acted, and participated in by all ages.

The First Sunday Choir will reconvene on this first Sunday in May. All singers are invited to meet in the sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. sharp for a warmup and rehearsal. We will prepare a simple and uplifting anthem for the 10:00 worship service. We also welcome the return of cellist Francisco Lopez Malespin as our music guest.

May 14th

Annual *This I Believe* Sunday,
Allen Lang and Bette Sikes

In the legacy of Edward Murrow's *This I Believe* radio program (1951–1955), each year we invite two church members from varied walks of life to share their personal philosophies, hard-won beliefs, and basic values with the congregation.

In 1951, Murrow wrote, “[I]n talking to people, in listening to them, I have come to realize that I don’t have a monopoly on the world’s problems. Others have their share, often far bigger than mine. This has helped me to see my own in truer perspective: and in learning how others have faced their problems—this has given me fresh ideas about how to tackle mine.”

As Unitarian Universalists, one of the seven principles of our faith is *the free and responsible search for truth and meaning*, which we do both independently and in community. Our lives are all the richer when we join in our searchings and findings together.

Music for the *This I Believe* service will include several short settings of the familiar text “Love Is the Spirit of This Church.” The choir will also present the anthem “All Lifted Hearts” by UU composer the Jason Shelton, minister of music at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville. The work is a setting of the words of Kendyl Gibbons, minister of All Souls Unitarian Church of Kansas City, Missouri, and is a spoken and sung reflection on the third source of our Unitarian Universalist faith: wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.

May 21st

One Out of Many
Rev. David Schwartz

The fastest way to grow a church is to round up a bunch of folks who look the same, come from the same background, and believe the same things. We're taking the harder road.

For this service, we are delighted to welcome the Vivace ensemble of the Chicago Children's Choir Hyde Park chapter, joined by the newly formed CCC Austin chapter.

May 28th

Re-member a Memorial Day Journey
Rev. Karen Mooney

This re-spelling of a common word invites us into a deeper truth. There are times in life when remembering is not enough. Sometimes we have to go a bit deeper to integrate facts and memories into our individual, communal, and global understanding.

On this Sunday we welcome alumni of the Chicago Children's Choir as our music guests.

182nd Annual Meeting of First Unitarian Joan Pederson, President

The Board of Trustees has called the 182nd Annual Meeting of the congregation to be held in the Sanctuary at 11:30 a.m., Sunday, May 21, 2017.

All members and friends are encouraged to attend. All who have been members for at least 90 days are entitled to vote if they have either contributed at least \$50 of record (in other words, not anonymously) during the 12 months preceding May 21 or requested and received a financial requirement waiver from one of our Senior Co-Ministers.

The agenda will include presentation of the results of this spring's Capital Campaign Feasibility Study as well as voting on the following matters:

- Elections
 - Adoption of the 2017–2018 budget
 - Selecting the 2017–2018 recipients of our Give Away the Plate program
 - Prospective affiliations with the Community Renewal Society and with Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition
- Instructing our delegates to the 2017 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association not to vote in favor of immediately adopting an Eighth Principle
 - Adopting bylaw revisions involving the congregation's financial life, mainly by clarifying and simplifying Article X: Fiscal Affairs

Learn more about these matters after church on April 30 (budget), May 7 (Give Away the Plate), and May 14 (affiliations, instructing delegates, bylaws).

Also on the agenda: Reports, mainly in writing; recognitions; and the Racial Justice Task Force of our Social Justice Council presents its annual Multiracial Unity award.

Everyone leading a council, committee, task force, team, or other group in the congregation is encouraged to provide a report on 2016–2017 no later than May 5. Send reports as digital files to Michael Knowles, our Director of Operations, at administrator@firstuchicago.org.

Endowment Report Finance Committee

In June 2016 the endowment funds of \$880,712 were transferred from the UUA account and invested in VTI, the Vanguard Total Stock Fund account. At the end of the March 31, 2017 quarter, the current value was \$948,809, an increase of 7.7 % after taking payments of \$11,500 each previous quarter, the allowed 5% annual withdrawal to support maintenance of the church property.

In November the remaining \$293,000 in proceeds from the sale of Fenn House were invested in VOO, the Vanguard S&P 500 Fund. This was fortunately just before the election when the market was down, so this fund profited from the Trump bounce. At March 31 this fund was at \$330,818, a 12.9% increase. The total value of the funds was \$1,288,103, including cash from dividends.

Update from the Denomination Affairs Committee Regarding the Adoption of the 8th Principle Proposed by the BLUU Collective Marie Cobbs, Committee Chair

The purpose of this update is to share with the congregation the results of the DAC meeting of April 9, 2017. Our next meeting will be May 14, 2017 at 11:45 a.m.

Approximately nine people were in attendance. We discussed the concept of white supremacy and the need to have a working definition to clarify its meaning. Dr. Kenneth Christiansen's essay, "The Benefit of Asset-Based Anti-Racism over Guilt-Based Anti-Racism" was also discussed.

The DAC decided to oppose any attempt to bypass the normal procedure for institutionalizing the proposed 8th principle. We also nominated for submission to the board Finley Campbell, Marie Cobbs, and Allan Lindrup as delegates to the Mid America Regional Conference.

Finally, we discussed the crucial nature of the resignation of President Peter Morales.

Auction 2017: Saturday, May 6, 5:30 p.m. (Portion of Proceeds to Benefit Ujima Village Shelter)

Sunday, April 30, is your last chance to buy tickets for the First Unitarian 2017 Auction (\$15 at the door) at the discounted rate of \$10).

The auction will be held Saturday, May 6, 2017, from 5:30 to about 8:30. A light dinner will be served and FREE childcare, including a pizza dinner for the little ones, will be available.

Your donations of items and talent are needed and welcomed. We'll be accepting all donations until April 30. Donation forms are available on the church website.

Come and bid on a few items; we have lots of good stuff!

Here a few of the evening's highlights!

- Silent auction
- Light auction
- Live auction
- Music and more!
- Free child care!

Got questions? Contact Cheryl Wegner at cherylwegner@sbcglobal.net or 773-715-6163.

Bring your family and friends for a wonderful evening of fun and charity. We're looking forward to seeing you there.

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Saturday 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Co-Ministers' Office Hours

Rev. David Schwartz, by appointment on
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday

Rev. Teri Schwartz, by appointment on
Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday

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