



## UUNewsletter for January 2019

**January 6, 2019**

**"Not Gonna Miss My Shot"**

**Rev. Scott Rudolph, Minister**

The story of Alexander Hamilton is inspiring. So is the story of "Hamilton", the musical. We begin our new year with both stories to remind us that each of us only gets one shot at life. Rise up!

**January 13, 2019**

**"How Do I Do Church? (If You Choose to Call It That...)"**

**Rev. Scott Rudolph, Minister**

What is a church? How does it work? Why does it work? Where do I fit in? A lot of folks who come to Unitarian Universalist congregations are people that never thought they would attend a church. Many of us are "non-joiners" at heart. And our fellowship runs a little bit different than most churches. So, it is worth slowing down at the beginning of the year to ask, "Just what exactly is going on here?"

*Choir Sunday:* "I Am Only One" by Adolphus Hailstork, poem by Edward Everest Hale

**January 20, 2019**

**"None of Us Are Free"**

**Rev. Scott Rudolph, Minister**

At its core, the theology and worldview of Martin Luther King, Jr. was deeply relational. He once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" We all share a destiny. Our lives - both physical and spiritual - are intertwined. We simply cannot look to Life without seeing connection, dependence, and interrelatedness. So... let's look.

*Special Music:* "I Wish I Knew How" (Nina Simone); Katrina Hays

January 27, 2019

"Tending the Mythic Fire:

Stories of Healing and Renewal from the Heart of Winter"

Will Hornyak, Storyteller; Guest Speaker

Winter is a time for tending the fire of imagination that glows from the depth of our being. In the darkness and stillness of winter the outer world rests and the inner eye opens. Stories and dreams are a type of inner fire that can illuminate the past and inspire new possibilities for the future. From Irish myths and Mexican folktales to Grimm's fairytales and beyond, storyteller Will Hornyak shares stories from the heart of winter to spark creativity, kindle vision and reconnect us to the timeless threads of meaning woven through our own lives.

*Choir Sunday: "In Winter" by Victor C. Johnson*

## THOUGHTS SCOTT BEGOT

Cold. Yesterday I woke up and the sun was shining giving that Oregon early morning false impression of warmth. After getting the paper from outside, I decided that my first morning run to jump-start my lapsed exercising could wait until later in the day. (It didn't happen then either.) Now, I understand that a January newsletter article should be full of forward-looking sentiments about newness and fresh starts and all that... but I am cold right now. It is what's on my mind and in my bones. My son is not having the same experience as me. He wants to wear t-shirts under his heavy winter coat in the snow. He cares not for gloves and hats until he needs them because things are blue or they hurt. Never preventative. He is only interested in "need-based warmth."

And so, I find myself having an experience that I recall from my childhood, only the roles are, of course, reversed. I remember that I, too, did not like bothering with all this over-protective, paranoid, puffiness that my parents wanted to bedeck me with in the winter: "I don't like to wear hats. The glove lining is uncomfortable. Scarves are scratchy on my neck." But now as a parent, I am administering a Basic Universal Principle that I assume every parent knows and every child resists: if I am cold, my child is cold.

Unfortunately, I extrapolate this Basic Universal Principle and apply it to all sorts of other unhealthy situations. Often times, what I think is correct, feel is normal, and believe is true, others must, too. We live in a divided world. Am I alone in finding it hard to accept that other people don't always think like me, and when people don't, am I the only one who at least considers the possibility that the other people are wrong or foolish?

Why would I walk a mile in someone else's shoes? Mine already fit! They should be the ones trying on my shoes so that they could see how shoes are supposed to fit. Mmmm... but my shoes might not fit *their* feet.

Each of us begins by experiencing and understanding the world through our own skin and mind. Unitarian Universalism affirms individual experience as the starting point of religious and spiritual understanding. We don't uncritically accept other people's interpretation of what is good or true. We each have a unique perspective because each of us is unique. We build a clearer, better understanding and faith through sharing and checking out our experience and understanding with others.

Remembering that just because I'm cold doesn't mean you are cold as well is especially important when we enter into conversation with people from diverse and multi-cultural communities. My way of walking in the world is not the only reasonable way to be human. Our ability to create and sustain healthy, vibrant, peaceful communities (including church!) depends upon individuals seeing beyond our own noses. We must learn to appreciate and honor the many ways of being human, and the subtle complexities and beauties of culture and identity. The way forward must embrace multicultural realities, opportunities of diversity, and the gifts of many paths. And we must be willing to call out the difference between living through your experience and causing others harm.

Dr. Martin Luther King affirmed that the Civil Rights Movement in America was and is about more than freedom and justice for black Americans. He said, "The Universe is so structured that things go awry if people are not diligent in their cultivation of the other-regarding dimension." The goal is creating an inclusive, peaceful, and just community where neighbor loves neighbor, not in spite of our differences, but because of them. He called it the Beloved Community, the World House, in which we are inextricably woven together in a common destiny, a common humanity.

I want people to be warm. But perhaps the best approach is not to force them to wear the hat I picked out, or to expect them to put their arms through the coat that I think they need. And I do think that it is okay to challenge people directly who go walking around throwing buckets of ice water on people in the middle of winter doing them harm. (Don't worry. No one is actually doing this that I know of. Just continuing the metaphor...)

What will work then? Love is a fabulous quilt. Compassion, a tremendous cloak. Even when we don't agree with others, understanding and respect are perhaps the best sweater and gloves for cold hearts and icy hands. Whether we are the ones warm or we are shivering, we all need a place around the fire.

With Love,  
Rev. Scott

## **STAFF INSIGHTS**

*January in Religious Exploration*

It's January, the month named for Janus, Roman god of gates and doors, beginnings and endings, and hence represented with a double-faced head, each looking in opposite directions -- back into the old year and ahead into the new. February 5, 2019 begins the Year of the Boar in China. I found some red fabric boars at Portland's Lan Su Garden to give as traditional gifts to friends and family for this important holiday. One has two heads, each facing in the opposite direction, much like Janus.

I may keep the two-headed boar for myself, a symbol of my task as an interim DRE to help you look backwards as well as forward. What has religious education looked like in your past? What have you done well? What have you learned from your mistakes? How have you arrived where you are? And where are you headed? What is your vision? Next year your DRE Search Committee will be asking these questions. I'm looking back at what I've observed so far; anticipating what will come in the next year.

This may sound simple, but in fact it is challenging work -- not only for me, but also for the religious education community and your church leaders. Recently I was rereading parts of religious educator Maria Harris' book, *Fashion Me a People*. It reminded me why this is a challenging task. My experience so far has been an interesting one. Welcomed and working closely with staff and volunteers I have been surprised at the progressive religious education philosophy here.

Other congregations and their leaders do not fully understand the value of interim religious education and the special qualities a trained interim religious educator can bring to a congregation in transition. It is important for an interim to be able to assess the emotional temperature of an organization in a transition. There may be anxiety and conflict in the congregation's system. A fine balance exists between the professional's guidance and the congregation's willingness to invest the time and energy to delve into deep discernment of core values, dreams for the future and the resources available.

Harris writes "...the church does not *have* an educational program; it *is* an educational program." I think that when we talk about religious education, our focus is too narrow. Religious education isn't something separate that happens over in the RE wing. It isn't just the curriculum we choose to present in the classrooms. It is every interaction that children or youth have with every individual in this congregation, every experience they have here. It is the way that we treat one another. It is the way they experience worship with the congregation on Sunday mornings. It is the physical space in which they meet-its condition, cleanliness, comfort, and aesthetics. It is the way the religious

educator is perceived and treated. It happens in every Board, committee, team or congregational meeting when decisions are made -- or not made -- that impact RE programming and financing.

Harris talks about the "explicit, the implicit, and the null" curricula in a church. The *explicit* curriculum is what we say we do. It is found in our RE handbooks, in our by-laws, our personnel policies, job descriptions, and mission statements. But is it really what we do? The *implicit* curriculum refers to the patterns or organization or procedures that frame the explicit. It is seen in attitudes, resources devoted to religious education, and actual practices. The *null* is a paradox, Harris says. This is the curriculum that exists because it doesn't exist; it is what is left out. The point of including it is that ignorance or the absence of something is not neutral.

Let's take an example of these three. You say explicitly that Religious Exploration is an important part of the church program. In practice, when designing this beautiful building, the RE 'Office' was put in the far back corner of the building isolated from the rest of the staff. People allowed that to happen. Everyone did. Why? If you want to bring your explicit and implicit messages more in sync, do you need to change the explicit message? Shall we say, "Let's just give the religious educator a little space in one of the classrooms." Or might it be better to examine what implicit practices and attitudes need to change in order to support the explicit? And is there anything else that we can do?

As I work closely with Rev. Scott, and the other outstanding staff and volunteers who work so diligently to keep the heart and soul of this congregation beating, I am grateful for the extra counter space in the main office thoughtfully put there for the many to use. That counter space is an example of explicitly putting what you say into what you do. The practices and organization of this congregation frame the explicit curricula of how RE is valued. The little desk in the back corner is an example of the null curricula.

I am not sure what practices and attitudes made the null curricula happen here. In the meantime, I invite you to dig more deeply, to get past the surface, to try to identify the explicit, implicit and null curricula here at UUFCCO. Your insights, shared with Rev. Scott, staff, any of the Board members or myself, will greatly enhance this congregation's search for settled religious leadership.

In faith,  
Dana Regan, Interim Director of Religious Exploration