



The Flaming Chalice

THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE • RADICALLY INCLUSIVE • JUSTICE CENTERED
Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | June 2023 Newsletter



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June 4

Flower Ceremony: Beauty Calls Us Together

Join us for an intergenerational service, the beloved Flower Ceremony. On its 100th anniversary, learn about its WWI heritage and the power of our Unitarian history.

Rev. Ruth Rinehart leads.

June 11

You Encircle Circling

What does Hildegard of Bingen, an astonishing 12th century German nun, have to say to Unitarian Universalists?

Rev. Ruth Rinehart leads.

June 18

The Problem with Evil: A Unitarian Universalist Theodicy

Theodicy is a fancy way of trying to talk about the problem of evil in the world and why it exists. It is a topic many philosophers call the most difficult problem in theology, and every major religion has at least one position on theodicy (and most of them have several, including Unitarian Universalism.) The 'problem with evil' is a question that begs for our attention as religious progressives.

This morning I will offer a Unitarian Universalist response relevant to the events of our time. We will also honor the Father's Day holiday. Bring a friend!

Rev. Ben Meyers leads.

June 25

Faithfully Becoming: GA worship (streamed)

Join your congregation to watch the General Assembly worship. It is always beautiful produced, inspiring, musical, OUR theology, it's us! Join us.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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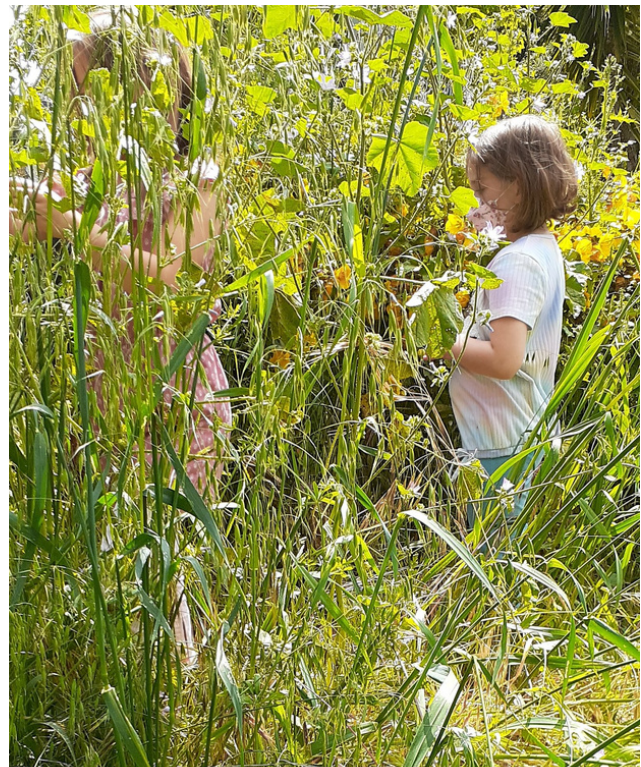
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May Highlights



Ben cleaning a formaldehyde spill out of her van

From the Minister

Rev. Ruth Rinehart

Beloveds, I will be away from California most of the month of June. I am writing this on the plane heading to Colorado. In these coming three weeks, I will be working remotely from my home in Golden, then will be in Pittsburgh for the UUMA Ministry Days and the UUA General Assembly. I will be back in Hayward on June 26th, to wrap up our Interim year, which ends July 15th. (Save the date! Party at the church! :)



I am reflecting upon our faith tradition’s grounding in Reason. This has been a sacred principle for many of us – especially as our faith heritages are borne of Christian heresies: Universalism and Unitarianism. We can be proud of our heritage and its insistence on our right to reason things out for ourselves, rather than simply relying on faith for theology we simply cannot believe:

- that a god would damn people to eternal fire,
- that there might be a predestination which means that our individuals acts on earth are meaningless, or
- that earthly pleasures are sins in themselves.

Universalists and Unitarians both have resisted religious authority from on high; we have evolved much from the days when Michael Servetus was tried, convicted, and burned at the stake by John Calvin himself in Geneva, Switzerland. Our current faith was born anew in 1961, when these two heretical christian traditions consolidated into the Unitarian Universalist Association, a liberal faith.

While there is much concern, by some of our members and by the splinter church, the North American Unitarian Association (NAUA), that the UUA current direction is abandoning reason, I hope you will stay with me here, in my differing perspective on that concern.

I hope you have been joining us for our common read this year, *What Happened To You: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience and Healing*. Perhaps you have attended board meetings, where we discuss this monthly. Perhaps you have joined one of the monthly Zoom drop-in discussions. We will have two more of these drop-in Zoom discussions; you are still invited to join us! Look at the weekly newsletter emailed to you on Friday the 26th. It has the dates for June and July.

The main question the book considers is, how do we shift the question from “What is **WRONG** with you?” to the more trauma-informed and relational question, “What **happened** to you?” Perhaps you have the experience in your life – in your congregation, family, friends – of someone being highly reactive, being “triggered,” responding in such a way it is clear something else is going on. Perhaps it is clear the person who is triggered is responding to prior events. Perhaps it is clear they are not living up to their best selves in that moment. Perhaps you have been bewildered at this behavior – why would this person, with a good heart and with intelligence, why would they be responding in this way? Perhaps you think to yourself, what is **WRONG** that person? If so, I do hope you join us in reading *What Happened to You?*

From the Minister

Rev. Ruth Rinehart (cont.)

Chapter 8 is very important for UUs to understand; it is about how biases work in our human brains. The brain science explains the challenge of having a strong orientation towards social justice, while also behaving at times in ways that reinforce oppressive stereotypes: racism, ableism, misogyny. This happens because of how our brains are developed, and how we are hardwired to resist and fear the “other” ... those who are not like us. On top of that, add in the dominant culture, how media and power infrastructure reinforces oppressive stereotypes, and you have a “reptilian” brain stem that responds with implicit bias. That “reptilian” brain is the “lower” level of the brain; all our thoughts and actions are filtered through it first, before the “higher” brain, the pre-frontal cortex. When we are operating out of our cortex, we can understand the long-term implications of our actions, we can act out of our beliefs and principles – but FIRST, unfortunately, our reptilian brain, steeped in implicit bias, is in control.

Dear ones, this Ch 8 of the book talks about a sequence that is necessary in relationships that allows our reason to shine, that allows us to live into our highest values. This sequence determines success in many situations. This sequence is critical: **Regulate. Relate. Reason.**

First, **regulation**. The chapters leading up to this one speak over and over again about the need for emotional and physical regulation. This can come through rhythm: Calm breathing. Movement. Dance. Rocking. Walking. I led you through the “prayer sweep” in a recent service: one can lead this for another. One can be the calm, non-anxious presence that can lead another out of dysregulation.

Then, **relationship**. Once the other is more regulated, attend to the relationship. Love on that person (or child – think of a toddler being accompanied out of a tantrum). Honor your relationship, connect with that person. Don’t rush it. Be with them. Recognize their beauty and strength and courage, in the face of this challenge. Relate to them. It brings them more out of the state of dysregulation.

Only then do you turn to **reason**. Only then are they able to access their higher intelligence. Only then are they able to step outside that immediate experience, to be able to see beyond their immediate emotional state and see to the wider situation. Only then are they able to have self-reflection and self-awareness.

Chapter Eight reminds us that all marginalized people are traumatized— marginalization is in itself a trauma because we are such relational creatures.



From the Minister

Rev. Ruth Rinehart (cont.)

With the UU reckoning around racial justice (our faith has always had higher aspirations than we could live into), I find the work the UUA is doing at the national and congregational levels to be powerful and inspiring. *Widening the Circle of Concern*, from the UUA Commission on Institutional Change, offers our faith a vision of a different future, along with a practical guidebook for changes we can make. As we work to dismantle white supremacy culture within ourselves and within our organizations, a better world awaits us. One in which we learn how to **regulate, relate**, and only then turn to **reason**.

Let me be clear: no one within UU circles in the past six years has been calling any other Unitarian Universalist a white supremacist. The members of the NAUA splinter group often say this, but they are conflating two very different phrases. “White supremacy culture” is the water we swim in. “White supremacy” is the KKK, the neo-Nazis, the white christian nationalists that have become emboldened in these MAGA years. White supremacy culture is held within the founding DNA of this country: the genocide of indigenous peoples, and the wealth built upon the labor of enslaved Black peoples. Anyone who learns the history of this nation, and doesn’t understand that we all walk amidst a white supremacy culture – this is a willful turning away, a willful denial of truth. I suspect it is most often rooted in the privilege of white patriarchy and a recognition that white men simply do not and will not hold the place of privilege they are used to anymore. The handwriting is on the wall (graffiti artists are so often modern day prophets).

Beautiful people, I love you! Every one of you; including those of you with whom I am in deep disagreement. You cannot do anything that would keep me from loving you. When I came to Starr King last August, you could not discuss these matters openly. You are doing that now. I encourage you to keep doing it. Be curious. Ask questions. Explore. Learn what the NAUA stands for. Learn with the UUA stands for. Come to understand our history. Reading *Widening the Circle of Concern* is probably the best way to do that. In combination with *What Happened to You?*, you can come to understand why the UUA has changed so much over the past six years.

Peace, lovelies.
See you soon.

–Rev. Ruth Rinehart (she/her/hers)
minister@starrking.org

(720) 290-5715

You may schedule appointments with me by clicking [this link](#).

Peace and Justice Action Team

Introducing “Ouch-oops”

At our April meeting we learned about “ouch-oops,” a practice used in a lot of UU youth groups now to address microaggressions and other hurts in a loving way. Here’s how it works:



- Let’s say I’ve said something problematic. Someone says “ouch.”
- I acknowledge the ouch by saying “oops.” What I say next depends on what happened and whether I understand it or not.
- Sometimes a simple “oops” is enough. If I’ve just misgendered someone, for instance, the “ouch” is a quick reminder and my “oops” acknowledges the mistake. I can say “Oops – sorry” if I want. It doesn’t need a bigger apology than that. There are times when a big apology makes it worse. We move on.
- If I don’t understand, I can say “Oops - what happened?” and someone might enlighten me. There are several possibilities here, of whether the person who is hurt wants to talk about it in the group, or privately, or not at all. If I, as a white person, just said something unintentionally racist, for instance, maybe I need to get my white friends to explain it to me – possibly later. Paying attention to the wishes and needs of the person who is hurt is key here. An apology might be appropriate in the moment, or a genuine “thank you for sharing that and I’ll work to understand it better” could also be appropriate. Also the ouch can come from an ally rather than from someone impacted directly, and that changes the dynamics.
- If I understand what I did, my response will depend on whether someone is right there hurting, in which case I might say “Oops, I’m sorry,” or whether it’s a more theoretical point. Suppose I inadvertently said something anti Black, for instance, and there weren’t any Black people present. In that case I might just say “Oops, thank you!” meaning “Thank you for pointing it out so I can avoid doing it again.” I do not want to say anti Black things, and if I’m doing it inadvertently, I’m grateful to anyone who points it out.
- Please resist the urge to say “That isn’t what I meant!” I believe we all have good intentions and none of us means to say hurtful things. Ouch-oops is a way to hear if our impact was not in alignment with our good intentions so we can make amends. It’s a gift.

When someone shares a hurt, that’s a brave and risky thing. It takes courage and it takes trust. It’s a sacred moment. They’re saying “I’m being vulnerable with you and I trust you to be gentle and respond with love even if you don’t understand or agree with what I’m saying.”

In our meeting, as we discussed ouch-oops, we started to use it. We shared a couple of ouches and responded with oops and it felt good. It created a kind of small-group-ministry feel, a group trust that it was okay to share hurts, even really little ones. It was sweet. It led someone to share an ouch they’d been feeling for years. I was one of the people who’d been causing the ouch, and while I was chagrined to learn I’d been doing it, I was also grateful because now I know and I can avoid doing it again!

We would love it if we could start using ouch-oops in all church meetings and conversations. It’s a way of honoring our own feelings and those of others in a loving way, and reducing the amount of hurt we cause in the world.

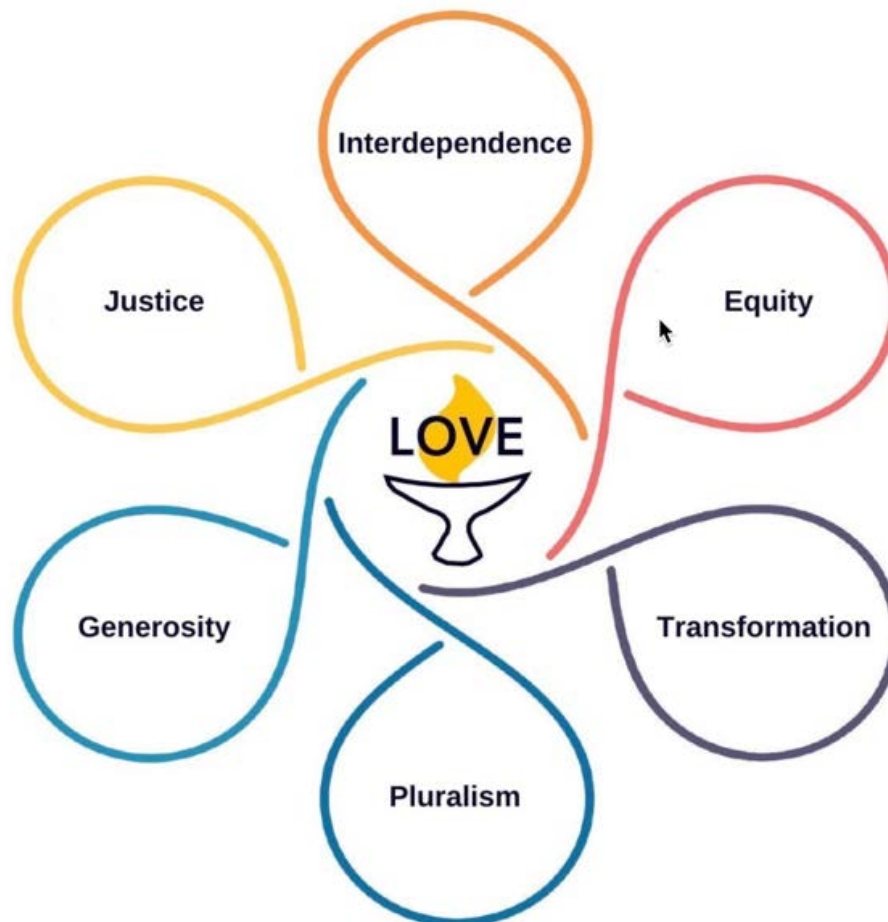
Announcements

Congregational Conversation on the Draft Article II

June 4th, at 12pm

Join us in the sanctuary
and on Zoom ([Join Here](#))

Come ask questions and share your thoughts and feelings about the proposed revision to Article II of the UUA bylaws, the section that contains the [7 Principles](#) and [6 Sources](#). These principles and sources are our collective statement of what we believe, the values we agree to strive to uphold in our Unitarian Universalist faith. They were last revised in 1987. After more than 3 decades, many think it's time for an update. At [General Assembly](#), church delegates will vote on whether to consider the proposal for another year and have the final vote in 2024 or stop the discussion now. Our church's delegates, Stephanie Smith and Ben Ogilvie, are interested in your perspectives. [This copy of the proposal](#) has line numbers to facilitate discussion. We will take a straw poll at the end of this meeting to guide our votes. If you can't make the meeting but want to share your views, please contact [Ben](#) or [Stephanie](#) before the meeting.



Announcements

Small Group Ministry to resume

Small Group Ministry was developed over a decade ago to provide an opportunity for members to regularly meet and discuss items of deep interest that affect their personal lives, hopes, and aspirations. Meetings—monthly in some cases, bimonthly in others—ensuring privacy and confidentiality, but above all a safe opportunity for deep sharing, deep listening and support. Small Group Ministry has several components:



Selection of Topics relevant to the lives of the participants: Beginning in August, running through mid-December, Terry Hunt and Mileva Saulo Lewis will serve as co-facilitators of a Small Group. We will use the book *Heart to Heart* (by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins) which will be provided you free of charge. You will have a schedule of the sessions, and adequate time to prepare for each session. The book offers a variety of topics, each with a series of Readings and Activities, to help us prepare emotionally and spiritually for the session. Terry and Mileva will choose the topic for the first session and participants will be able to review the list of sessions and choose those that appear to be most relevant to them for the remaining sessions.

Meeting in Covenant: Consistent with how Small Group Ministry has operated here at Starr King from 2014, the group will write its own covenant to guide how we will relate to each other during and following the sessions.

Engage in activities to make us think at length about the topic, looking deep into our memories. For example, when the topic is Forgiveness, the authors of *Heart to Heart* suggest making a list of forgiveness incidents, composing a dialogue about yourself and the other, or writing a page in one's journal about it. In other words, finding ways to touch one's own history of dealing with the issues, to 'ring a bell', so to speak.

What small group ministry is not:

- A social club, although ties between church members deepen through SGM.
- A debate society, although many important topics are discussed.
- A support or therapy group, although the atmosphere is positive.
- A worship service, although there is a strong spiritual aspect to the meeting structure and topics.
- A rigid template of activities, although there are general guidelines to follow.
- A closed "fraternity," although groups must be limited in size to be effective.

Logistics:

- There will be no more than 8 participants, 10 total, including the two co-facilitators
- We will meet twice a month, during the day, at the church
- On Sunday 4 June, we will place a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall, for people to indicate their preferred time (day /time) from the choices outlined.

Anyone interested in starting another Small Group can speak to Terry Hunt (hunt.terence@gmail.com) or Mileva Saulo Lewis (milevalewis@comcast.net) for more information. –Terry Hunt and Mileva Saulo Lewis

Announcements

(cont.)



Mileva has had the opportunity to examine end-of-life care as a nurse, an ethicist and as a mediator. Recently, she has served as a health care agent for family and several friends when end of life decisions had to be made and implemented. These experiences plus her own recent hospitalization have deepened her awareness and the importance of having an advance directive, an agent and what it means to be one.

During this session, we hope to:

INSPIRE you, so that while you are here, in this sacred space, we can have a conversation about a very tender topic – a conversation about end of life preferences;

EDUCATE you on why it's important to have an advance directive, how to start the conversation, to know the rights afforded you to influence this phase of life, and not how you want to die, but how you want to live until you die, and finally,

EMPOWER you to know your ethical and legal rights as you navigate “medical jargon” to be informed of new laws, and to know the questions to ask in order that your values drive your plans for care at life's end.

Even if you have completed an Advance Directive, this session will provide updates and advocate for yourself or loved ones in times of confusion and stress.

–*Mileva Saulo Lewis*

Souful Family Ministry

June Highlights

Sharing a Thought...

"Is there a problem Here?"

For our Mother's Day, or People Who Love Us Day, the children were going to decorate cupcakes. I panicked as I realized that I had only two frosting tubes and one sprinkle bottle for 4 children. Out loud, I verbalized, "Oh no! I have don't have enough frosting tubes or sprinkles for everyone." I panicked, trying to quickly solve the problem. The class volunteer, Terri Owen, said, "Well this will be a lesson on sharing." I was not convinced that these seven year olds would be up for the challenge and would not be able to work it out. I was sure there would be lots of arguing.

Well, I was proven wrong. The minute I put the tray down, the children instantly reviewed the situation and began to throw out different solutions, taking turns, "you do the frosting and I will do the sprinkles", "I can wait for my turn and I will play else where until it is my turn." I was truly amazed. No problem here!!! As an adult and teacher I am continuously reminded that it's the children that provide the role modeling!!

Circle Time:

According to Queen Howdy-You-Do, our imagination is a powerful thing. Just like our Non-binary Singing Rainbow Alligator and Flora the Garden Flower, the children can use their imagination to create their authentic selves. Thinking "outside of the box" was a fun circle time game. A rock in a box was just a rock, but when placed outside the box and using our imagination, the rock became a dinosaur egg, a smasher or a muffin.

Gratitude

I am so grateful and hope that all the class volunteers, Board members and the congregation can feel my heart felt gratitude.

Updates

There will be no multi-generation service this month due to scheduling challenges. Our next multi-generation service will be July 2. We will be acknowledging our volunteers and the congregation for all of their support to our Family Ministry.

-Lorie Miller



Ongoing Activities

- Masks are optional.
- Eating & drinking are permitted in the Fellowship Hall
- Singing without masks is permitted
- Encourage gathering in all indoor and outdoor settings.

We will continue to provide:

- Virtual worship as an option as well as for meetings
- KN95 mask for your use

Evening Meditation	Every Wednesday 7:00-8:30 pm, on Zoom. Open to all. Visitors welcome. Contact: Diane Meyerson
Board Meeting	First Tuesday of the month, 3:30–5:00 pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Roy Dickerson
Peace and Justice Action Team	Second Sunday of the month after worship (after a 15-20 minute break) in a hybrid model via Zoom using the same link as the service.
Starr King Singers	Sundays before the service from 9:30-10:00 a.m.
Starr King Choir	Every Monday 7:00-8:00 pm. Contact: Linli Wang at music@starring.org
Small Group Ministry	Contact: Terry Hunt (hunt.terence@gmail.com) or Mileva Saulo Lewis (milevalewis@comcast.net)
Adult RE	(On hold) Contact: Mileva Saulo Lewis at milevalewis@comcast.net

We would love to celebrate your Birthday in The Chalice. If your special day is not already listed, please let us know the day and month of your Birthday. Send information to ddmeyerson@gmail.com.



June Birthdays



June 1 Robin Fink

June 11 Colleen Dino

June 24 Keith Lewis

June 5 Rene G. Castle

June 18 Diane Meyerson

June 26 Drake Otermat

June 9 Bethany Salway

June 24 David Baker

June 26 Claudia McDonagh