



# *The Flaming Chalice*

THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE • RADICALLY INCLUSIVE • JUSTICE CENTERED  
Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | March 2024 Newsletter



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## **March 3**

### ***Talking About Religion and Money in Polite Company***

Ben Ogilvie and Rev. Sollie are having a conversation this week about some taboo topics. You are invited into the conversation as well.

## **March 10**

### ***The Story of US***

Your transition team exploring Starr King's heritage has listened to you through your individual and collective storytelling. Rev. Sollie will share what we heard and some observations. What is the story Starr King tells about itself?

*Rev. Elizabeth Sollie leads.*

## **March 17**

### ***Multi-gen service, ceremony***

Age of Reason Service & Ceremony of UU Becoming  
*Tanya Webster leads.*

## **March 24**

### ***How Country Western Saved My Life***

Keith Lewis will tell the story of how his brief career as a country/western Disc Jockey helped put him on the road to recovery. Be prepared for a different kind of sermon.

*Keith Lewis leads.*

## **March 31**

**TBD**

# WHAT'S INSIDE

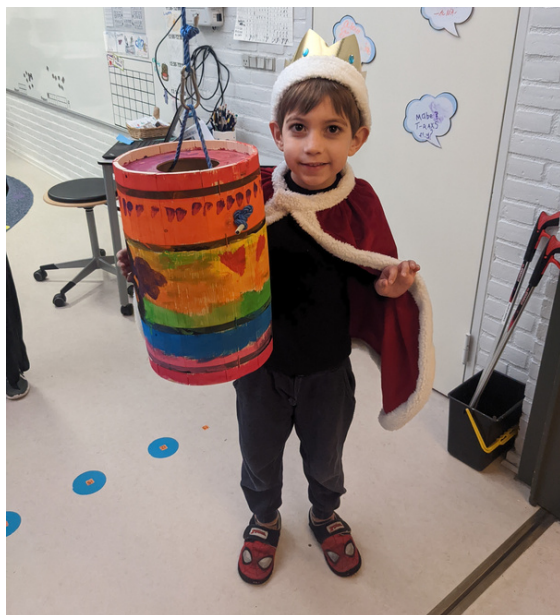
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## *February Highlights*



# From the Minister

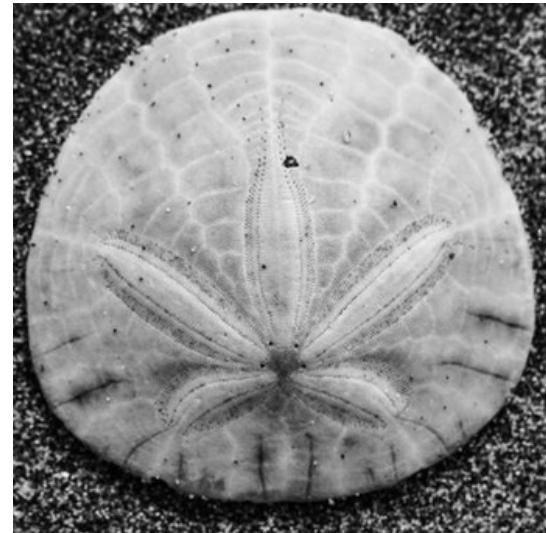
Rev. Elizabeth Sollie

Grace is a gift that is not earned. Our first principle is, “We, the member congregations, covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” Our first principle, comes down firmly on the side of grace. That really cuts across the grain, doesn’t it—to honor or respect people who have not earned it?

Sometimes, I find it easier if I begin at the beginning. I think we can all agree that every baby born into this world arrives with inherent worth and dignity. That is their birthright. I don’t expect we would withhold that from any child. And then we grow up. Some of us grow up to be pretty nice people and some of us not so much. Yet we are called by our faith to see worth and accord dignity to everyone. And honestly, I think that is where the fun begins—to give people unconditional positive regard whether they have earned it or not. And it is fun, because it requires you to stretch and grow and go places you never planned to go. We have given ourselves this outlandish goal to work on for the rest of our lives that will lead us to some pretty astonishing places.

And I think grace is one of those places. Grace is generally considered a Christian concept involving deity, and that sort of grace is not really part of my theology, but it is a word that will not let me go. I return to it again and again without ever completely understanding it. But I know it is at the heart of our first principle and may, in fact, be our first thing—the center from which everything else flows: love that you do not have to earn, worth and dignity and respect, that you do not have to earn.

Annie Dillard writes, “Thomas Merton wrote, ‘there is always a temptation to diddle around in the contemplative life, making itsy-bitsy statues.’ There is always an enormous temptation in all of life to diddle around making itsy-bitsy friends and meals and journeys for itsy-bitsy years on end. It is so self-conscious, so apparently moral, simply to step aside from the gaps where the creeks and winds pour down, saying, I never merited this grace, quite rightly, and then to sulk along the rest of your days on the edge of rage.



*I won't have it. The world is wilder than that in all directions, more dangerous and bitter, more extravagant and bright. We are making hay when we should be making whoopee; we are raising tomatoes when we should be raising Cain, or Lazarus.*

*Go up into the gaps. If you can find them; they shift and vanish too. Stalk the gaps. Squeak into a gap in the soil, turn, and unlock—more than a maple— a universe. This is how you spend this afternoon, and tomorrow morning, and tomorrow afternoon. Spend the afternoon. You can't take it with you."*

May you stalk the gaps this month, embracing the grace you never merited and make whoopee instead of sulking along.



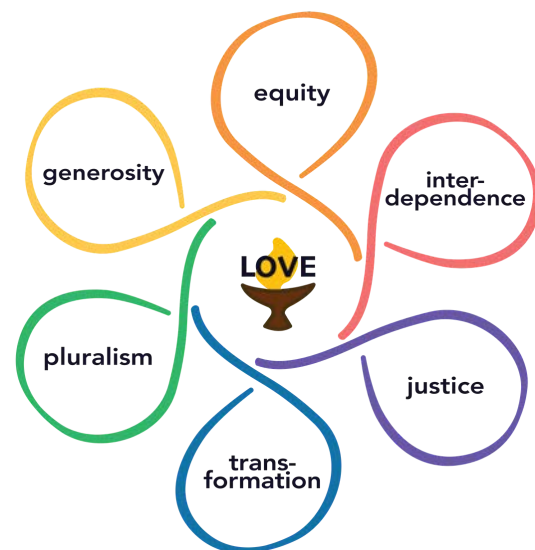
# *Around the Starr King Hearth*

As we kick off our stewardship focus this month, I've been asked to share more about our RE program this year at Starr King.

RE, or religious education, is where the children go when you 'sing them out.' There, among many other things, we light our chalice and share in Circle, talking about ourselves and our world. We support each other and agree to honor our group covenant, which we wrote together and signed, and has a lot of kindness and respect put into it. We widen our circle to include all, try new spiritual practices, learn how to frame justice work through allyship, become familiar with our communities, and practice self-care skills. We play games, have fun, and find joy in being together. Oh, and we learn about Unitarian Universalism and Beloved Communities. Whew. And all before noon!

While we obviously don't do all of this in one day, RE always includes caring support and fundamental UU beliefs, such as the Seven Principles and, this year, the Article II values, which are slated for final adoption at the General Assembly this summer. In RE, we talk a lot from a kid's perspective about these shared UU Values, seen on the screen above: What does pluralism really mean? Interdependence? Equity? What things can we do to practice them? Why do we think they are important for ourselves and everyone in the Web of Life?

As some of you may know, I created the Article II values graphic for the UUA, shown here on the screen. The "Flower of Shared Values" is widely used in our churches and UU spaces, and I feel blessed to have the chance to serve our faith in this way. As a brief aside, I'll let you in on a little secret: While I love the Values Flower, I conceptualized it as an Atom (admittedly, a very abstract Atom). I drew the six values rotating around a nucleus-like center of Love, the values actively rotating within themselves, giving stability and energy to the center and receiving the same in return. The off-center circles are laid out to express action and energy. They do not fully connect to the center to better remind us that our system is open, willing to welcome new ideas and people, and to remain open to transformation. Who knew? I do like the Values Flower symbolism as well.



In the past decade, RE, or "religious education," has been reframed as FE, or "faith engagement." I embrace this welcome change as it encourages adults, at any age, to keep actively engaged in what is spiritually significant to us. Faith Engagement is more than learning in a classroom setting or just offered for those under 18. FE is a powerful practice, and can mean different things to different people. You might engage your faith through choir, weekly meditation, long hikes in the hills, journaling, justice work, or contributing to and caring for our Starr King community.

# ***Around the Starr King Hearth***

**(cont.)**

Faith Engagement is so much more than Sunday mornings. Yes, it creates a safe container each week for our children to decompress, connect, find support, and practice being strong, compassionate people. And it's also for the adults, individuals and families, visitors, and old-timers in our Starr King community. I invite you to take some time to explore how you engage your UU faith. Together, let's recommit to Starr King and to 'Live our Faith, and Love our World.'

*Tanya Webster*  
Director of RE



# Inclusion Workshop

## Micro-signals: Key Concepts

By Ben Ogilvie

If you missed the Zoom Inclusion class on Sunday, Feb 18, you can still watch the video [A Zoom Transformation: Build Community, Practice Inclusion](#). This is the handout for the class.

**1. Micro-signals are the little messages we send and receive that are subtle, contradictory, or unconscious.** They're the unstated messages you get when you "read between the lines." They can be intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious, positive or negative.

**2. Negative micro-signals are sometimes called microaggressions.** We're using the term micro-signals instead because a study of microaggressions is invariably negative. It's all about what we're doing wrong and how to do it wrong less. That's only one side of the picture! Micro-signals can be negative or positive, and both are important.

**3. Positive micro-signals are important because they are life affirming!** They signal belonging. They tell us we have a place in the world where we matter. They are beautiful gifts we give one another. We need to understand them so we can do more of them.

**4. Negative micro-signals are important because they undermine our values and goals, and cause harm – to individuals and to the community.** We need to understand them so we can do less of them. The fact that we do them unknowingly doesn't make us bad people; it makes us human. At the same time, if we don't care that we're doing them, or don't make an effort to do them less, that says something about us.

**5. How a micro-signal lands depends on who it's landing on, their circumstances, their life experiences (including their experiences of oppression), and the intersectionality of all their identities.** Because of this, there's an asymmetry in the system. Many micro-signals seem subtle or insignificant to the sender but painfully obvious to the receiver. They are "micro" to the sender but "macro" to the receiver.

**6. Intention does matter, especially if you intend to cause harm, but a *positive intention in no way guarantees a positive impact*** because impact depends entirely on how it lands. The more you know about the receiver, the better your chances are of having a positive impact. This is the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they want to be treated.

**7. Every demographic group is affected by a unique set of signals (positive and negative).** This is why we can't just say "We want to be inclusive" and expect to be successful. We need to say who we want to include and then do the work. If we aren't in a particular group we might have no idea what signals are meaningful to that group. If we want people in a particular group to feel welcome and included, we have to educate ourselves about what matters to them, we have to be in dialogue with group members about it, and we have to change ourselves and our culture to shift our signals from negative to positive.

# Inclusion Workshop

## Micro-signals: Key Concepts (cont.)

**8. The book *Subtle Acts of Exclusion* by Tiffany Jana and Michael Baran offers this “Framework of SAE Types”.** These are negative micro-signal messages that let people know they don’t fit in, that they’re outside our circle of care.

- You’re invisible. *[That’s the main one for zoom exclusion.]*
- You (or people like you) are inadequate.
- You’re not an individual.
- You don’t belong.
- You’re not normal.
- You’re a curiosity.
- You’re a threat.
- You’re a burden.

**9. All speech has consequences because all speech sends signals.** We’ve had controversies in our communities over the years about freedom of speech and our right to say whatever seems right to us. The limitation of this point of view is it only considers the speaker and not the listener. It doesn’t take into account the impact of speech on listeners and consequently on the community. It doesn’t signal caring for the listener, only the speaker. The most controversial speech is speech that sends negative signals to particular groups, messages that say “We don’t care about your concerns. You are not important to us.” Most of us don’t intend to send negative messages – we have good intentions – but that’s how they land. These are messages of exclusion, messages that often seem inconsequential to the speaker and hurtful to the receiver. The question for us is how do we feel about sending such messages? If community and inclusion are important to us, what does that mean in practical terms?

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”*  
– Maya Angelou

# 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

<b>Evening Meditation</b>	Every Wednesday 7:00-8:30 pm, on Zoom. Open to all. Visitors welcome. Contact: Diane Meyerson
<b>Board Meeting</b>	First Tuesday of the month, 4:00–5:30 pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Mileva Saulo Lewis
<b>Peace and Justice Action Team</b>	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.
<b>Starr King Singers</b>	Sundays before the service from 9:30-10:00 a.m.
<b>Starr King Choir</b>	Every Monday 7:00-8:00 pm. Contact: Linli Wang at <a href="mailto:music@starrking.org">music@starrking.org</a>
<b>Small Group Ministry</b>	Contact: Terry Hunt ( <a href="mailto:hunt.terence@gmail.com">hunt.terence@gmail.com</a> ) or Mileva Saulo Lewis ( <a href="mailto:milevalewis@comcast.net">milevalewis@comcast.net</a> )
<b>Adult RE</b>	Check our website for upcoming opportunities: <a href="https://starrking.org/adult-programs">https://starrking.org/adult-programs</a>