



The Flaming Chalice

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

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May Worship Services:

Please see [our website](#) for an updated listing of our upcoming worship services.



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April Highlights



From the Minister

Rev. Elizabeth Sollie

Our annual meeting is coming up. As part of that, we have been voting on changing the bylaws to allow us to pay operating expenses out of the endowment. This is a stopgap measure while the congregation figures out how to become self-sustaining again. Obviously, growth is a part of that – numerical growth. We need to just about double our membership to be financially viable with the staff we currently have.

The questions are beginning to bubble up. These questions are usually framed in a way that puts the onus of growth on a few individuals. What is the Board going to do about this? What is the Membership Committee going to do about this? What is the minister doing? Can we hire a minister who will focus on growth?

I think we all know, however, that no committee or minister can double the church membership all by their lonesome. It just doesn't work that way. So, my question to you, dear reader, is how are you going to grow the church?

I can think of three areas to focus on off the top of my head.

The first is to check in with yourself. Are you driving with the brakes on? This most commonly looks like holding on to something from the past. "If we could just get back to X, we would grow again." There is an excellent chance that is not true. Nostalgia rarely entices people to come on in. Are you in a mindset to serve the people who will come after us or are you trying to conserve something that held you so well?

You might wonder how we can possibly know what the next generation will want or need? Surely, however, there are hints if we are listening carefully and not holding so tightly to what was. The world is changing fast and not necessarily always in good ways: it is completely understandable we want to preserve what we cherish. Change, however, is inevitable – not a choice. Hoarders are often reminded that holding on to too much makes relationships and growth impossible. They are encouraged to imagine what they would have room for if they cleared out some of their treasure. Maybe there are things you need to relinquish in order to make room for something else. Is it possible that letting go will not just result in loss, but in gain? What possibilities are missed when you sit in the driveway? Where could you go on your journey if you hit the gas (or electric) instead and had a little faith?

Second, many people come to Unitarian Universalism for the first time, because somebody invited them to church – maybe even most people. If every person in this congregation brought one person to church who stayed, we would double our membership. I know, that is much easier said than done, but is there someone in your life who is a UU and just doesn't know it yet? They are waiting for you to invite them in.

From the Minister

Rev. Elizabeth Sollie (cont.)

Finally, we can be welcoming to the people who arrive. You do this really well. I hear from many visitors who say they feel so embraced by this community. We have learned we need to hone our welcome for young people, people of color and people with disabilities, but you can do that — your hearts are big. You've got this!

I would invite all of us to own this need. We are the ones that will grow this congregation through our love. What is YOUR plan? When does implementation begin?

UU's taking wing.



Adult Formation

Healthy Conflict Series

-Mileva Saulo Lewis, EdD

Conflict is inevitable...damaged relationships are optional (Rice, 2021, p.3)

SKUUC members participated in a series of classes over several months and began an educational journey to explore their previous experiences with conflict, to view it differently, to explore a new set of skills and to determine when and how to engage, or not, when differences are noted.

Initially, most thought conflict saw conflict as negative, war like, anger, or destructive. Participants were invited to shift their view to see conflict as:

- Opportunity - Use the energy to be curious
- Not be avoided; but to engage in a conversation
- Listening for understanding of the needs/interests of all
- Shifting the view - every conflict is not a contest

A Common Definition such as, "Conflict occurs when we perceive that one or one of our values, needs or interests and or aspects of our identity are being challenged, threatened, or undermined by another person" helps us to identify the focus of the "ouch" moment. (Noble, 2012)

Self-Awareness: The first step in the education journey is to be Aware. The group was surprised to hear that people "felt" conflict in different ways: in my gut, I get a headache, my heart skips a beat, I have sweaty palms. This acknowledgement that "something is wrong" is an essential first. Don't ignore it. At the time of the "ouch" moment: Note:

- What am I feeling?
- What just happened to make me feel this way?
- Why did that statement affect me that way?
- Should I say something now? Is this crowded room the right time and place?

Participants examined their predominant Conflict Type/s. All were reminded that:

- All types are appropriate
- Goal is to choose the type appropriate to the situation
- Styles were compared to animals:
 - Teddy Bear – Accommodate
 - Turtle – Avoid
 - Shark – Competitive
 - Fox – Bargain/Compromise
 - Owl – Collaborate

Adult Formation

Healthy Conflict Series (cont.)

Each style balances concerns for self, others, and the relationship.

The first skill then in this “new tool kit” is awareness/acknowledging. The second skill is Analysis – to listen for emotion and content. Listening, according to Madelyn Burley-Allen is The Forgotten Skill.

Listening is a Skill - Speech is a game between the talker and the listener against the forces of confusion. Unless both make the efforts, interpersonal communication is quite hopeless.
–Weiner in *Listening, The Forgotten Skill* (Burley-Allen)

The difficulty with communication is the illusion that it has happened.
–George Bernard Shaw

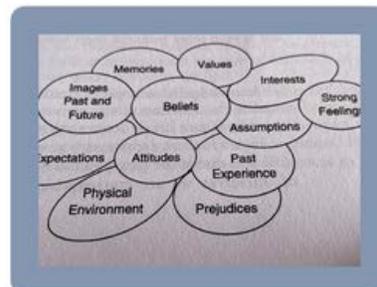
We learned that while listening is the skill we use most often, more than speaking, writing, and reading, it is the skill least taught. We reviewed how often our first response is a reaction, rather than a response. We listen all our senses and several parts of our brain.

- Ears – tone of voice
- Eyes – body language, facial expressions
- Heart – feeling tone
- Executive State – logic, reason, thinking, what can I learn
- Survival state – Am I safe? Flight, fight
- Emotional State – Am I loved?



We realize how important it is to “calm” the survival state reaction (adrenalin) and allow the thinking brain to analyze the situation as well as to shift from seeing the person as “enemy” to that of “friend” and stimulating the hormone Oxytocin, the bonding hormone.

Over the course of a lifetime, we “store information” in our brain and sort them into categories called filters. For example, a scary experience with a dog in childhood can store the early memory that all dogs are harmful until we are older and can reason how to differentiate from “all” to “some” or “none”. Each of us then, can view the same situation and explain it differently based on these filters. To illustrate that we viewed several pictures embedded with other pictures that some could identify, while others could not.



Adult Formation

Healthy Conflict Series (cont.)

We used a variety of scenarios and practiced responding using the CARES skills developed by Dr. Mileva Saulo Lewis and the Rev. Robert J. Wagener in 1994 at the Center for Medical Ethics and Mediation in San Diego

C - Clarify
A - Active Listening
R - Reframe
E - Empathy
S - Summarize

In preparation for our final session, which will be reported in the June issue of *The Chalice*, we will summarize:

- Cross cultural communication considerations
- Principled Interest Based Negotiation – using the “taking away of the car keys” talk
- Listening with compassion to words that are received as “hurtful” or “harmful.”

Our Goal - Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Listening with head and heart - Seek first to understand, then to be understood (Covey, 1989).

*Between the stimulus and the response there is a space, and in this space lies our power and our freedom
-Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning*



Announcements

Family Picnic

Saturday, May 11th, 10:30 AM–1 PM. **At Coyote Hills**

Adult Faith Formation–Collateral Beauty

Thursday, May 16th at 6:00 PM. **Zoom only**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9291456582>

Meeting ID: 929 145 6582

To prepare for our time together this month, please watch the movie, "Collateral Beauty" ahead of time. Rev. Sollie has a DVD to lend and it is available on Amazon for rental. Feel free to invite people over for a watch party. Then we will meet on May 16th for a discussion of the film. One discussion prompt will be to discuss what you understand collateral beauty to mean, and to share an experience you have had with it in your own life. It might help to watch the movie with that in mind. We will all be on Zoom for simplicity's sake.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 26, 12–2:30 PM

We come together annual for the election of Trustees and officers, approval of the annual budget, and to reflect on the past year. All are welcome to attend, but only members may vote.

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, 4:00–5:30 pm on Zoom. Open to all. Contact: Mileva Saulo Lewis
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 7:15-8:15 pm. (Paused June–August) Contact: Linli Wang at music@starrking.org
Small Group Ministry	Contact: Terry Hunt (hunt.terence@gmail.com) or Mileva Saulo Lewis (milevalewis@comcast.net)
Adult RE	Check our website for upcoming opportunities: https://starrking.org/adult-programs
