

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis

March 2020 Monthly Update



Between Us

Jill K. McAllister, Senior Minister

If you were to ask me to describe the primary aims of Fellowship life, I think I'd say this: We aim to help people become more free, and more mature. What does that mean? Let me try to explain what I'm thinking. First, let me say that a lot of what we are seeing and experiencing in the world (both here and elsewhere) comes from immature needs to maintain systems of privilege and oppression.

I'll start from a perspective of spirituality, or spiritual / religious learning and growth. The spiritual life, for me, is the process of growing a greater and greater integrity – right relations if you will – between the self and the self, the self and all others, the self and Life. You've heard me say this before. From this perspective, freedom is a state of being able to express oneself both honestly and authentically— “to be who we really are” as the old saying goes. We all spend a lot of time and life trying to achieve “freedom from” the many external and internal limitations which confine us. This can be the work of a lifetime. Yet, eventually the project of “freedom from” can become the project of “freedom for.” What good is freedom if I am only for myself (as Hillel said so well.)

Understanding the difference between “freedom from” and freedom for” is one mark of spiritual maturity. To mature, or to grow up, is invitation Life continually offers us. If childhood is characterized by dependence, and adolescence by self-centeredness, then maturity is characterized by other-centeredness, or the ability to live with and from the compassion and respect which are necessary for justice and peace. Almost all of us still struggle with the inner child (how the relations of our childhood affected us). We struggle to recognize and outgrow relational habits that were formed in our childhood and teenage years.

Our project of considering ethical living is aimed at these main goals – to help ourselves and each other grow more free and more mature. This month and next we'll look at some common habits, and see what we can learn about how they affect our ability to live in right relations. I hope you'll stay in the conversation!

See you Sunday -- Jill

New Function for the Bulletin Board

Have you seen the new look on the main bulletin board in the foyer at the Fellowship? Thanks to Chris Bentley, the very wide variety of activities happening at the Fellowship is now visible! Each activity has a poster, listing the meeting date, time, and contact info. You can take a photo to save the information. You might be surprised, or a bit overwhelmed, to see how many different activities there are. In a congregation of this size, (between 400 and 500 people) this kind of programming is not uncommon. There are many ways to make connections at the Fellowship – connections which can help with your religious and spiritual life. We hope you'll find at least one which is good for you.

Sunday Help Needed

We need a team of people each Sunday to be ushers (or we might call them something different.) The tasks will include putting hymnals on chairs before services, helping people to seats as needed (especially visitors and those who come in late), and being on-call in case an emergency arises, such as a need to call 911. It would be great to have rotating teams. If you're interested, please let Jill know.

Worship Leaders in March

*March 1 Rev. Jill McAllister
March 8 Rev. Jill McAllister
March 15 Rev. Jill McAllister
March 22 Rev. Leslie Chartier
March 29 Revs. Jill McAllister and
Israel Buffardi*

Explorations

Israel Buffardi, Assistant Minister

One of the benefits of being a minister is that it is literally my job to spend intentional time reflecting on how to be a better, more mindful, and compassionate person. Which is pretty cool, dedicating time to this self-reflection often makes me realize that being my best self is an ongoing practice.

I was thinking about that this week, when I found myself getting increasingly irritated while sitting in some traffic. I kept looking at my watch, worrying about all the things I had to get done, thinking about all the other places I'd rather be than stuck in traffic, when I looked up and noticed a bumper sticker, a few car lengths in front of me. It read: "I'd rather be here, now." "Wow!" I said to myself. I spent the greater part of the afternoon in quiet contemplation, trying to see what other messages might be waiting for me, if I fixed my attention on the wisdom of the here and now.

Later that evening, when I got home, I entered my apartment to find it in darkness, because Abigail and Nicola were napping, but for some reason, I resisted the urge to turn all the lights on in the living room. I walked over to the window that overlooks my little corner of the Corvallis railroad tracks, and focused my attention on the majestic tree-line that forms the horizon. I watched the stars come out for a little while, thoughts of my to-do lists coming in and out of my head. I turned for a moment to walk away, the rumbling in my stomach telling me it was time to make dinner, when I said to myself, "just one more minute." I paused and fixed my gaze once again on the evening sky, and all of a sudden, a bright flash of light appeared with a long tail to reveal a shooting star gliding across the sky! I'd never seen one before in all my years of mostly city-dwelling, and I was touched not only by its bright flashing beauty, but also by how ethereal and fleeting it was.

What other beautiful if not brief gifts will my attention reveal, I wondered? But it also got me pondering about time, perspective, and yes, the mystery of creation itself. How each of our lives are like an impossible bright flash of light, occurring briefly, miraculously, and leaving behind a trail of our presence—leaving behind a memory of our beauty and our spark in the memories of those who were lucky enough to have known us. I pondered this, until my phone lit up and dinged, letting me know that I had yet another very important email to tend to.

Distractions come, and it's back to the everyday. But if you're anything like me, you yearn to carve out a little extra time to ponder the bright flashes of wisdom and mystery waiting for us up in the wide expanse of night sky. Luckily, I've got just the thing for you if pondering some philosophy and mystery—or dare I say—theology, appeals to you.

Come to the Next Theology on Tap

If you enjoy engaging in meaningful conversation about spirituality and belief while sipping on a nice cup of coffee or a pint of beer, then Theology on Tap is for you!

We'll meet together and enjoy some informal discussion over coffee/tea or beer.

For our next gathering, we'll be sharing our thoughts and experiences of wonder, awe, and mystery. We'll ponder different possibilities about beliefs, and we will ask ourselves what connects us to a sense of something greater.

Where: Old World Deli 341 SW 2nd St, Corvallis, OR 97333

When: Thursday March 12th at 7:00PM

RSVP to Israel Buffardi, assistantminister@uucorvallis.org

Board of Directors Report

Scott Bruslind, UUFC Board President

Your Board met on Monday February 10, 2020 at 7pm, facilitated by Herky Gottfried. Thank you Herky.

Condolences to our dear colleague, Uta Hussong-Christian, on the news of her mother's passing and best wishes as she and her siblings care for their father in Muskegon, MI. A special thank you to Uta for finding the structure for our policy review work. More on that below.

Congratulations to Rev. Israel Buffardi on his ordination in North Andover, MA. Also, we look forward to working with Jacob King as the congregational sponsor of his ministerial candidacy. Jacob plans to serve as a military chaplain. Please take time to introduce yourself and learn more about his intended ministry. Find Jacob working with our youth group, YRUU.

The Board received, with deep gratitude, a bequest from the estate of Marjorie Goss. We are humbled and inspired by Marjorie's generosity, and by her belief in the Fellowship as a fitting vessel for her legacy. Her example inspires me to try Planned Giving as a meditative practice - take a breath and consider how I wish to be remembered - by whom, for what.

Like Lifespan Religious Exploration, our contributions of time and money to the Fellowship can be considered Lifespan Stewardship - we donate to the weekly offering basket, and we pledge to the annual budget; and ultimately, we direct, in our wills, a lasting legacy. Through the work of the Stewardship and Finance Council, we intend to make Lifespan Stewardship more accessible, transparent and engaging. Meanwhile, if you are interested in learning more about making bequests to the Fellowship, please contact Jean Gilbert (businessmgr@uucorvallis.org).

Marjorie's gift gave the Board a moment to address policy reviews. Bequests, if not otherwise restricted, are allocated according to our Policy on Planned Giving 3.9: Charitable and Educational Endowment for Social Justice (10%), Reserve Fund (40%), and Flexible Endowment Fund (50%).

Any explicit allocation in a policy (as in the percentages above) hems in a Board's decision-making latitude. So, the Planned Giving Team is revising policy wording to reflect the 50-40-10 allocation as historical precedent - backward looking, if you will, while giving future Boards the means to direct as fits the needs of the congregation.

Policy revision work is ongoing. As mentioned at the beginning, Uta combed best practices of other UU congregations and found a working model from the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady (Rev. Lynn Gardner serves as co-minister.) The work at hand is to graft our current policies onto the new outline and undertake a thorough review of what policies say we do with what we aspire and are compelled to do. Thank you to Uta, Herky, Steve Strauss, and Anna Sontag for their time and effort in this important work.

Our next Board meeting will March 9 at 7pm. Meetings are open to observers. You are encouraged to RSVP.

Scott

Words For Reflection

Search engines find the information, not necessarily the truth."

Amit Kalantri

A responsible search for truth and meaning is an important part of my spiritual life. If I ask questions on a search engine that's designed to narrow and conform to my private world, that's one thing. But in the real world, our privilege does this, too: if we aren't willing to ask the important, uncomfortable, and even scary questions, we won't get to larger and deeper truths.

Rev. Katie Romano Griffin

March Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time & Location</i>
1	Action Lunch	12:00 PM, SH/K
2	Earth Month Meeting	5:30 PM, 6BC
3	Transgender/Non-binary Meetup	11:00 AM, SH/K
6	Tom Lehrer Sing-a-long	7:00 PM, SFH
7	Memorial Service for Lori Ragona	4:00 PM, SFH/SHK
8	Post-Sermon Discussion	12:30 PM, GAL
9	UUFC Board Meeting	7:00 PM, Room 7
10	UUFC Board Meeting	7:00 PM, Room 7
13-14	UUFC-CZC Quiet in the Heart Retreat	Friday night & Saturday
14	Men's Monthly Gathering	9:30 AM, Room 7
	Dance Planet!	7:30 PM, SFH
15	7 Principles Cafe	12:30 PM, LIB
16	Shawl Ministry	7:00 PM, 6B
17	Transgender/Non-Binary Meetup	3:00 PM, SH/K
22	Post-Sermon Discussion	12:30 PM, GAL
24	Transgender Support Group Potluck	6:00 PM, 6BC
26	Grief Tending Ceremony	7:00 PM, SFH
28	Emma's Revolution Concert	7:00 PM, SFH
29	First Steps	11:00 AM, LIB
	Young Adult Pizza Hour	12:30 PM, Room 9