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New Horizons – October 2019

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto
Vol 8, Issue 1

Belonging

*Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you got
Taking a break from all your worries
It sure would help a lot
Wouldn't you like to get away?*

*Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name
And they're always glad you came
You want to be where you can see
The troubles are all the same
You want to be where everybody knows your name*

Join a Journey Group!

Journey Groups are the best way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with small gathering of people for a couple of hours each month.

Groups meet at First and in people's homes and are scheduled at different times throughout the month.

For more information about joining a group, please visit our website, look for the link in First Light, or visit the Engage & Connect Table on Sundays.

Savvy viewers of television from the 80's will instantly recognize these lines as the theme song from the sit-com "Cheers". If you're not familiar with the show, it was set in a downstairs pub in Boston. A regular cast of characters were at the core of the show—and formed the centre of the community that came to life on the small screen each week for twelve seasons.

When I moved to Boston in 1996, a few years after the series ended, I was surprised to discover throngs of tourists still made their way to the location that served as the outside of the bar, even though, inside, it was a completely different establishment, and there was no sign of Sam, Diane,

Carla, Norm, or Cliff. Today, the bar, renamed to capitalize on the association, is still going strong and has become an enduring Boston landmark. It's fair to ask why, given the show has been seen only in reruns since 1993. My hunch is that it has something to do with the theme song, which speaks to that longing so many of us have for a place where we are truly known—and loved nonetheless and all the more. That place where we are known by name. That place where we fully belong.

In our recent Sunday service series on Belonging, we've invited you to reflect on how you relate to building up community, be it at First Unitarian or beyond. This month, through your Journey Groups, we invite you to deepen your understanding around—and maybe even your commitments to—what belonging and community mean to you.

In faith and love,
Shawn



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Questions to Live With

As has become our practice, be sure to engage these questions in advance of your group meeting and find the one that “hooks” you most. Then let it take you on an adventure. Live with it for the entire month. Allow it to break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts.

And then come to your Journey Group meeting prepared to share that experience with your group.

1. Do you have a place where you feel you truly belong? A place where you are known? If not, are there places in your life that might hold that potential?
2. What does community mean to you? And what does community ask of you?
3. What actions do you initiate to connect to others, to feel you belong?
4. Have the responsibilities of belonging ever felt too much for you?
5. Has a feeling of belonging ever saved you? Who offered you a welcome at an unexpected moment?

Upcoming Services

October 6th – “Belonging: Ins and Outs”
Rev. Lynn Harrison

October 13th – “Blessed”
Thanksgiving Sunday
Rev. Shawn Newton

October 20th – Lay Chaplain
Sunday

October 27th – “The Good
Enough Life”
Day of the Dead/Samhain/All
Souls
Rev. Shawn Newton

For Inspiration

As always, the following texts are not "required reading." We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our groups. They are simply meant to spark your reflections—and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about this month's theme.

We are lonesome animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome.
- John Steinbeck

We don't have a word for the opposite of loneliness, but if we did, I could say that's what I want in life.
- Marina Keegan

Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance... Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path.
- Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*

Anyone can be in community when it aligns with our interests; the challenge is to remain in community when our companions disappoint us.
- Stefan Jonassan

Service is taking life personally, letting the lives that touch yours touch you. These days many people seem to think that being touched is a form of weakness... The best definition of service I have come across is a single word, BELONGING. Service is the final healing of isolation and loneliness. It is the lived experience of belonging.

- Rachel Naomi Remen, *My Grandfather's Blessings*

Spiritual practice among Lakota peoples is grounded in the expression "All my relations," which proclaims that spiritual activity is not only for those immediately participating in it but for all beings everywhere.

- Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness*

Most human beings take it totally for granted that I am "me," and that "me" is this body, this mind, this knowledge and sense about myself which so obviously feels separate from other people. The language in which we talk to ourselves and to each other inevitably implies separate "me's," and "you's" all the time. All of us talk "I" and "you" talk, we think it, write it, read it, and dream it with rarely any pause. There is incessant reinforcement of the sense of "I," "me," separate from others. Isolated. Insulated. Not understood. How is one to come upon the truth if separation is taken so much for granted, feels so common sense? The difficulty is not insurmountable. Wholeness, true being, is here all the time, like the sun behind the clouds. Daylight is here in spite of cloud cover.

- Toni Packer

“Turn to One Another” - Margaret J. Wheatley

There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don’t know.
Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.

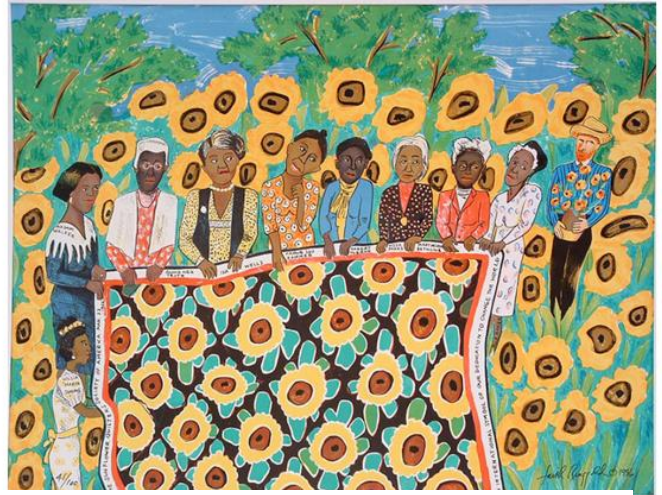
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.



Faith Ringgold: The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1996

Upcoming Themes

November – Enough
December – Celebration
January – Broken and Whole
February – Radical Inclusion
March – Owning Our Story
April – Our Whole Lives I
May – Our Whole Lives II

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



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