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New Horizons – May 2020

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

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Resilience

We are, obviously enough, living through a tumultuous time. In the span of a few weeks, the ways we understood our lives and ordered our days have been upended by this pandemic. Our sense of time has been shaken. And it's hard to know when we might be able to see far enough into the future to plan anything more than a well-considered trip to the grocery store. It is natural that we might feel rightly discombobulated.

While we, collectively, are having a shared experience, we are each journeying through this time in different ways. Still, it seems most everyone I know is carrying a mix of added stress, general bewilderment, and unexpected grief for the thousand little losses that are reshaping our world. We are carrying a lot right now.

As we absorb the hard truth that this pandemic is likely to be with us for a couple of years rather than a mere couple of months, it is clear that we will need to cultivate resilience, in ourselves and each other. To be less like the oak that Robert Jordan, in *The Fires of Heaven*, says “fought the wind and was broken,” and more like “the willow [that] bent when it must and survived.”

May we work together this month and beyond to become ever more resilient!

In faith and love,
Shawn

Questions to Live With

1. How is the pandemic affecting your view of your health and well-being?
2. What concerns you most about how your personal life has changed, and how are you responding?
3. What emotions have been most troublesome (or noticeable) to you at this time, and how have you been responding to them?
4. What lessons, if any, are you learning because of the pandemic?
5. What lessons about resilience have you learned over the course of your life that are helping you to cope through the pandemic?
6. Is this experience calling you in new directions, or revealing aspects of yourself you'd like to explore more deeply?



For Inspiration

A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain.

- Mildred Witte Stouven

The oak fought the wind and was broken, while the willow bent when it must and survived.

- Robert Jordan from *The Fires of Heaven*

If your heart is broken, make art with the pieces.

- Shane Koyczan

My barn having burned down, I can now see the moon.

- Mizuta Masahide

I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.

- Maya Angelou

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.

- Albert Camus

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

- Arundhati Roy

“Allow” - Danna Faulds

There is no controlling life.
Try corralling a lightning bolt,
containing a tornado. Dam a
stream and it will create a new
channel. Resist, and the tide
will sweep you off your feet.
Allow, and grace will carry
you to higher ground. The only
safety lies in letting it all in –
the wild and the weak; fear,
fantasies, failures and success.
When loss rips off the doors of
the heart, or sadness veils your
vision with despair, practice
becomes simply bearing the truth.
In the choice to let go of your
known way of being, the whole
world is revealed to your new eyes.

“Breaking Surface” - Mark Nepo

Let no one keep you from your journey,
no rabbi or priest, no mother
who wants you to dig for treasures
she misplaced, no father
who won't let one life be enough,
no lover who measures their worth
by what you might give up,
no voice that tells you in the night
it can't be done.

Let nothing dissuade you
from seeing what you see
or feeling the winds that make you
want to dance alone
or go where no one

has yet to go.

You are the only explorer.

Your heart, the unreadable compass.

Your soul, the shore of a promise
too great to be ignored.



“The Way It Is” - Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Over and over we break
open, we break and
we break and we open.
For a while, we try to fix
the vessel—as if
to be broken is bad.
As if with glue and tape
and a steady hand we
might bring things to perfect
again. As if they were ever
perfect. As if to be broken is not
also perfect. As if to be open
is not the path toward joy.
The vase that's been shattered
and cracked will never
hold water. Eventually
it will leak. And at some
point, perhaps, we decide
that we're done with picking
our flowers anyway, and no
longer need a place to contain them.
We watch them grow just
as wildflowers do—unfenced,
unmanaged, blossoming only
when they're ready—and my god,
how beautiful they are amidst
the mounting pile of shards.



Upcoming Services

Every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. our worship services will be held online.

As well, online drop-in gatherings are offered Tuesdays at noon with Rev. Shawn Newton and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. with Rev. Lynn Harrison.

Visit the First Unitarian Toronto website (www.firstunitarianontario.org) for links to join any of these online gatherings.

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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



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