

NEW HORIZONS

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Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

PURPOSE

These past few months have brought unwelcome upheaval to each of our lives. Many of our routines have been upended and some of our best-laid plans thwarted. For too many the pandemic has brought deep anxiety about our health, our finances, and our future.

These times have also raised questions—or, better stated, cast the enduring questions of life in a somewhat different light. “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “What is my life’s purpose?”

Alongside the seismic shifts taking place in society, many people are experiencing some internal shifts, as well. They’re re-evaluating where they’re at in life, and where they hope to go from here. We are hearing from all directions that the “new normal” will be different from what we knew before. As that message sinks in on a personal level, many are feeling called to change, in ways big and small. Some are feeling forced to do so by circumstances beyond their control, while others are sensing an invitation or at least an opportunity, for things to transform in positive ways. And, of course, any or all of this may be true all at once for each of us, depending on the day.

At the heart of all of this is our sense of purpose. Through the course of this pandemic, our purpose—what we know as our reason for being—may be revised. We may discover a new resolve, or a clear and different direction for ourselves. And, it needs to be said, our purpose in this time may be unclear or so challenged that we can’t imagine a way forward. That is completely reasonable given the trying times we are in. If your purpose isn’t clear right now, or for some time, be gentle with yourself.

The hope for this month’s theme is that it will help us to consider our purpose in these changing times with intention, even if the answers aren’t readily or immediately apparent. By asking the question, though, we invite the possibility of noticing answers that may arise from unexpected places.

May it be so.

In faith and love,
Shawn

Questions to Live With



1. What have you always felt called toward, but feared to do? What new life is wanting to come into being through you?"
2. Have you ever stumbled onto your true purpose while you were pursuing something else?
3. Have you ever had to embrace a purpose not completely of your own choosing?
4. Has purpose grown more or less complicated for you with age?

For Inspiration

What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?

- George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)

If you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I am living for, in detail, ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for.

- Thomas Merton

What am I living for and what am I dying for are the same question.

- Margaret Atwood, *The Tear of the Flood*

If you don't know where you're going, any road'll take you there.

- George Harrison

It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?

- Henry David Thoreau

If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you.

- Steven Wright

Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!'

- Hunter S. Thompson

...Douglas Steere, a Quaker teacher, says that the ancient question, "Who am I?" inevitably leads to a deeper one, "Whose am I?" – because there is no identity outside of relationship. You can't be a person by yourself. To ask, "Whose am I?" is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder, Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives, is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?

- Rev. Victoria Safford

“Wild Geese” – Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert,
repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your
body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you
mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of
the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean
blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and
exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

“You Were Made for This” – Clarissa Pinkola
Estes

One of the most calming and powerful actions
you can do
to intervene in a stormy world
is to stand up and show your soul....
The light of the soul throws sparks, can send
up flares,
builds signal fires, causes proper matters to
catch fire.
To display the lantern of soul in shadowy
times like these,
to be fierce and to show mercy toward others;
both are acts of immense bravery and greatest
necessity.

Struggling souls catch light from other souls
who are fully lit and willing to show it.
Everything we do is an act of poetry or a
painting if we do it with mindfulness. Growing
lettuce is poetry. Walking to the supermarket
can be a painting. When we do not trouble
ourselves about whether or not something is a
work of art, if we just act in each moment with
composure and mindfulness, each minute of
our life is a work of art. Even when we are not
painting or writing, we are still creating. We are
pregnant with beauty, joy, and peace, and we
are making life more beautiful for many
people.

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Our Life is a Work of
Art*



I believe in all that has never yet been spoken.
I want to free what waits within me
so that what no one has dared to wish for
may for once spring clear
without my contriving.

If this is arrogant, God, forgive me,
but this is what I need to say.
May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing to you as no one ever has,
streaming through widening channels
into the open sea.

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Book of Hours: Love
Poems to Go*

There must be another life, she thought, sinking back into her chair, exasperated. Not in dreams; but here and now, in this room, with living people. She felt as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice with her hair blown back; she was about to grasp something that just evaded her. There must be another life, here and now, she repeated. This is too short, too broken. We know nothing, even about ourselves. We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there... She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding.

- Virginia Woolf, *The Years*

I am always asking myself the question, "What is it you are struggling for? What is that vital thing the woods contain, possess, that you want? Why do you go back and back to the woods unsatisfied, longing to express something that is there and not able to find it?" This I know, I shall not find it until it comes out of my inner self, until the God quality in me is in tune with the God in it. Only by right living and a right attitude towards my fellow man, only by intense striving to get in touch, in tune with the Infinite, shall I find that deep thing hidden there, and that will not be until my vision is clear enough to see, until I have learned and fully realize my relationship to the Infinite.

- Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands*



Upcoming Services

Every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. our worship services will be held online, via both Zoom and YouTube.

Visit the First Unitarian Toronto website (www.firstunitariantoronto.org) for links to join any of these online gatherings, and to find out more about our ongoing Journey Group programs of small groups that discuss our monthly themes.

Upcoming Journey Group themes:

Home (October) * Character (November) * Presence (December) * The Body (January) * Grace (February) * Patience (March) * Acceptance (April) * Truth and Lies (May) * Time (June)

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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



Seek • Connect • Serve

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