What does “unfurling desire” feel like for you during this season of blooming?
Dear Ones,

At the beginning of my first planned and wanted pregnancy I found myself holding back my joy, refusing to let it expand. In those early days, I knew the risk of pregnancy loss was high, and I told myself to wait on joy until I knew this desired baby was really mine to keep. I held joy at bay for those first dozen weeks, and when that riskiest time had passed, I woke to the realization that risk and danger still lurked around every corner. That this tiny fetus was a person whose absolute safety I could never guarantee and who was not mine at all. My desire, set forth into the world, did not belong to me anymore. So, I had to allow myself to let joy grow, without security.

This is a feeling that returns to me whenever my child, now seven, climbs a tall tree, or navigates big hard feelings, or goes off into the world without me for a time. The product of my desire is not mine to keep. I think it’s also a familiar feeling for artists who release their creations out into the world or writers who set their words free for others to read.

I’ve learned to feel this way about church as well. These beautiful communities we are creating will live long beyond us, and so we have to accept that they do not belong to us. And allow ourselves to let our joy in them grow anyhow.

I’m delighted with the packet our team has put together for this season, inviting us to consider the many ways creation unfurls itself around us and within us. As we do the spiritual work we’re invited to in the Blooming time, I pray we'll let our desires unfurl before us without holding too tightly to them. And that we will, even without the promise of security, let joy grow.

In love and care,

Rev. Eileen

—

Rev. Eileen Casey-Campbell
Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua, NY

Gratitude: This packet was prepared by Suzy Farrell and Mary Lyubomirsky with the assistance of the three-church worship team, Rev. AJ van Tine, and the whole-hearted support of the packet writers ’team.
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Select one of the exercises below to practice and come prepared to discuss the experience and your thoughts and feelings about it with your group.

A. Stifled Desire: Recall a time when you experienced a deep desire related to your gender expression that was quashed due to cultural norms? (ex. The wish to wear clothes or play with toys that were not considered appropriate for your gender, a potential lover of the same sex, a college major or profession, an activity.) Do you recall the reasons given to you by “well meaning” people for that discouragement? Share with your group. Consider the following resources about ways gender could be allowed to naturally unfurl for our youth, and the resistance our culture still gives to this. (Link to Sweden article re: hen, and “This is How it Always is”)

B. Watching Nature Unfurl: Choose a plant that is growing in your garden, a local park or in a pot in your home. Take a photo, make a sketch, or document it in writing every day for a week or every week for a month. You may want to see if the Fibonacci Sequence reveals itself. At the end of that period, examine the plant’s beauty during its unfurling!

C. The longer view – life unfurling: Sit with a person 20+ years younger or older than yourself and explore part of your shared world. It might be a garden, a pet, your neighborhood, or an institution. What changes have you both witnessed? How have either of you been affected as a result of this evolution?

D. Participate in the Unfurling of Spring in the Rochester/Finger Lakes Region: Invite a friend or family member to attend a festival or Spring event (ideas in the resources section). Approach the activity with an openness to seeing if a new interest or desire bubbled up for you at the event.

E. Unbecoming to become your true self:

Quote:
“Maybe the journey isn’t so much about becoming anything. Maybe it’s unbecoming everything that isn’t you so you can be who you were meant to be in the first place.”
—Paulo Coelho

Listen:
Video: The camel, lion, dragon, and child.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LmLik-VopY

Reflect:
• What was “placed” on you, that you need to unfurl?
• If you were the lion, what “dragon scales” would you have to face to transform into true core self?
• What would it be like to “unfurl” and be free of that?
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions aren’t “homework” that need to be covered entirely. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The questions often lead not to answers, but more questions.

1. Has your unfurling desire experienced cycles? Examples:
   a. The cycles of desire/exhaustion that a gardening enthusiast goes through as they plan their garden in the winter, plant in spring, tend in summer, harvest in autumn.
   b. The cycle of a relationship through challenges you face together through the years.
   c. The hobby you pick up enthusiastically that ebbs and wanes on your journey to mastering or abandoning it.

2. Think back on your life and the exposure you have had to spirituality. How has your spirituality unfurled?

3. How have shifts in your life in response to the pandemic led to things unfurling differently for you than they may have otherwise?

4. Can you identify a time when you had a shift from “praying as you were taught” to saying “yes” to your longing? What enabled that shift? For further examination of this idea, read the Chelan Harkin poem in the resources: “I No Longer Pray”.

5. Our lives aren’t always unfurling in positive ways. How do you reconcile the extreme differences? For further exploration of this question, see Hymn #108, “My Life Flows On” in our resources page.

6. As your desire to grow your personhood unfurls, what is your experience with things “taking their course without interference?” For more on this, read #48 Tao Te Ching found in our resources.

7. Why do you think humans find beauty or attraction in the unfolding and organic patterns found in nature? And what might it have to do with the Fibonacci Sequence or the Golden Ratio?
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca (Onöndowa’ga:) Nation, Keepers of the Western Door and part of the Haudenosaunee People, on whose ancestral land First Unitarian Church of Rochester, First Universalist Church, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua now stand.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

READINGS FOR CHALICE LIGHTING

Forged in the Fire of us Coming Together  
(from Worship web-Rev. Gretchen Haley - excerpt from Forg in the Fire of Our Coming Together | WorshipWeb | UUA.org )

Here in our song and our silence  
Our stories and our sharing  
We make space for a new breath, a new healing, a new possibility  
To take root  
That is courage  
forged in the fire of our coming together  
and felt in the spirit that comes alive in this act of faith:  
that we believe still, a new world is possible  
That we are creating it, already, here, and now  
Come, let us worship together.

Things Are About To Get Interesting by  
Chelan Harkin (excerpt)

Things are about to get interesting.  
The more you open  
to the light of the Wild Sun  
the more motivated She’ll be  
to pour Her golden drink upon you.

Surround yourself with people  
who have already been brave enough  
to yank their souls  
from the straight jackets  
of their buds  
and let the blossom  
of their freak flags fly--  
you will need this encouragement.  
Because things are about to get interesting.

All your grounded words  
will turn into the swooping birds  
of unpredictable poetry  
and all of your polite ways  
will become true  
maniacs for love.

READINGS FOR CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

Untitled -Rumi

There is a life-force within your soul, seek that life.  
There is a gem in the mountain of your body seek that mine.  
O traveler, if you are in search of That  
Don’t look outside, look inside yourself and Seek That.

First Comes the Waiting (from worship web- Rev. Erika Hewitt, excerpt from https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/first-comes-waiting )

Grant us, oh Universe unfolding in mystery, a sense of your timing.  
May we loosen our grip on that which doesn’t serve us,  
leaving behind that which we have outworn and outgrown.
POETRY EXCERPTS

There is a Flower That Bees Prefer by Emily Dickinson (excerpt)

There is a flower that Bees prefer
And Butterflies desire
To gain the Purple Democrat
The Hummingbird aspire

Her face be rounder than the Moon
And ruddier than the Gown
Or Orchis in the Pasture
Or Rhododendron worn

She doth not wait for June
Before the World be Green
Her sturdy little Countenance
Against the Wind be seen

The Bravest of the Host
Surrendering the last
Nor even of Defeat aware
What cancelled by the Frost

Cricket Song by Joy Harjo, Muskoke Nation, June 12, 2013

Tonight I catch a cricket song. Sung by a cricket who wants the attention of another-
My thinking slides in the wake of the cricket’s sweet longing.
It’s lit by the full moon as it makes a path
Over the slick grass of the whitest dark,
I doubt the cricket cares his singing is swinging starlight
To the worry that has darkened my mind. It is mating season.
They will find their way to each other by sound.
Time and how are the mysterious elements of any life.
I will find my way home to you

May 17th: 2020 from A Collection of Collections Black American Poetry by John F. Dillworth II

Remarkably beneficial
It has allowed me to see our relationship from another perspective
To see you from a different space
I’ve had the privilege of better understanding your aura
It connects from your mind and body and soul

How you consume
How you create
How you curate your influence on our experience together
You don’t follow a written recipe but you know what to put in it
Yet you are open to new ingredients that pass the taste test
And I love that
About you
This time has revealed even more of your beauty to me
Now I’m appreciative to a higher degree
Because of what I have learned about
I No Longer Pray by Chelan Harkin

I no longer pray—
now I drink dark chocolate
and let the moon sing to me.

I no longer pray—
I let my ancestors dance
through my hips
at the slightest provocation.

I no longer pray—
I go to the river
and howl my ancient pain
into the current.

I no longer pray—
I ache, I desire,
I say "yes" to my longing.

I no longer pray as I was taught
but as the stars crawl
onto my lap like soft animals at nighttime
and God tucks my hair behind my ears
with the gentle fingers of her wind
and a new intimacy is uncovered in everything,
perhaps it's that I'm finally learning
how to pray.

FROM SACRED TEXTS / ANCIENT WISDOM

Song of Solomon 10-13
"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up,
my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of
the singing of birds is come, and the voice of
the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and
the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Julian of Norwich
"Two duties belong to our souls. One is to
reverently marvel. The other is humbly to
endure, always taking pleasure in God. He
wants us to remember that life is short and it
won't be long until we clearly see, within him,
all that we desire.

Tao Te Ching #48
In the pursuit of learning, everyday
something is required.
In the pursuit of Tao, everyday something is dropped.
Less and less is done.
Until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
It cannot be ruled by interfering.
Brihadaranyaka, Upanishad IV.4.5
“You are what your deep driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.”

Bee of Green Desires by Jack Phillips
“Unaware of living she simply lives and lusting only for fragrance and the vagrancy of desire, arches her back.”

From The Prophet “On Children” by Kahlil Gibran
“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself. They come through you, but not of you. And though they are with you yet, they belong not to you.”

From Eastern Body, Western Mind by Anodea Judith
“Desire is a spiritual/emotional impulse that inspires us to move to something greater, to embrace change. If we do not desire anything, the senses shut down. We lose our aliveness. We have no impetus to move forward. The object of desire may not be necessary, but the feeling of desire is the soul’s longing to move forward.”

Quote by Thomas Moore
“Just as logic leads the mind, Desire guides the soul”

From The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan
“Darwin called such a process artificial, as opposed to natural, selection, but from the flower’s point of view, this is a distinction without a difference: individual plants in which a trait occurred, which was desired by either bees or Turks [ie. humans], wound up with more offspring.”
PODCASTS, SONGS, ARTICLES, FILMS, & BOOKS

On the Unfurling of the Soul:

- Hymn #108 in SLT: My Life Flows On In Endless Song
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BifkC92nT8

- Hymn # in SLT: I Know This Rose Will Open
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKYoF-4swxo

- Listen to Cat Stevens’ Song, “If you Want to Sing”:
  https://youtu.be/HLLg73cj1ik

- Honor Beltane this year- May 1. This ancient Celtic festival is one of 2 seasons with which Pre-Christian Celts divided the year. These two junctures were thought to be critical periods when the bounds between the human and supernatural worlds were temporarily erased and witches and fairies roamed freely, and measures had to be taken against their enchantments. Celebrate Beltane with some of these ideas:
  - Invite friends or family to a bonfire
  - Other ideas include: https://www.outdoorapothecary.com/how-to-celebrate-beltane/

- Novel: The Forty Rules of Love by Elif Shafak
  - about the ecstatic desire for the divine
  The Forty Rules of Love unfolds two tantalizing parallel narratives—one contemporary and the other set in the thirteenth century, when Rumi encountered his spiritual mentor, the whirling dervish known as Shams of Tabriz—that together explore the enduring power of Rumi’s work.

On the Unfurling of Gender:

- Article about the Swedish gender-neutral pronoun ‘hen’. Makes me think about children and what if we allowed their gender identity to ‘unfurl’ on its own by using gender-neutral pronouns, etc until they were old enough to choose?
  https://write.co.nz/about-the-swedish-gender-neutral-pronoun-hen/

- Here’s another article from Slate about the pronoun and how schools are using it, but they come off a bit critical as if to say that the schools are meddling:

- Novel: This is How It Always Is by Laurie Frankel
  This is a novel about revelations, transformations, fairy tales, and family. And it’s about the ways this is how it always is: Change is always hard and miraculous and hard again, parenting is always a leap into the unknown with crossed fingers and full hearts, children grow but not always according to plan. And families with secrets don’t get to keep them forever.
  https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/40409102-this-is-how-it-always-is
On the Unfurling of Nature:
- Video: Adult Butterfly Emerging from Chrysalis
  https://youtu.be/mjADshD3msk
- The Fibonacci sequence:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tv6Ej6JVho
- Biophilic Design: Biophilic design is a design style that draws from the natural world. This involves incorporating materials, colors, and visuals that occur in nature into one's home.
  https://www.thespruce.com/biophilic-design-guide-5218267
- Children’s books:
  - The Very Quiet Cricket by Eric Carle
    A cricket hatches from its egg and meets many meadow beings as he grows. His young body isn't ready to “chirp” like an adult until he matures.
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoPgbQ7JiR0
  - Leo, the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus
    Leo, a little tiger, isn't developing as other young tigers much to the consternation of those around him except his mother who knows he will gain all the skills when he is ready.
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXExqNPzsik

On the Unfurling of Evolution:
- Evolution of cities:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v74_mf2usc0
- Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari
  The author explores the evolution of Homo Sapiens from the Stone Age through the 21st century. The book is written in the graphic style.
  https://catalogplus.libraryweb.org/?section=search&term=Sapiens:%20A%20Brief%20History%20of%20Humankind
- Videos: TED talk by Yuval Noah Harari
  Seventy thousand years ago, our human ancestors were insignificant animals, just minding their own business in a corner of Africa with all the other animals. But now, few would disagree that humans dominate planet Earth; we've spread to every continent, and our actions determine the fate of other animals (and possibly Earth itself). How did we get from there to here? Historian Yuval Noah Harari suggests a surprising reason for the rise of humanity. (Humans can cooperate flexibly and cooperatively in mass numbers)

On the Unfurling of the Season:
- Spring events in the Rochester/Finger Lakes Region
  1. Lilac Festival - 5/12-21 https://rochesterevents.com/lilac-festival/
  2. Flower City Days at the Market – Sundays in May/June
     (www.cityofrochester.gov/flowercitydays/)
3. Finger Lakes Celtic Festival – 5/20 (Lincoln Hill Farms, Canandaigua – more on allevents.in)  
4. FLX Pride Festival – June TBD (Lake Front Road in Geneva)  
5. 100th Anniversary of the UU Flower Ceremony:  
   a. June 4th at UU Church of Canandaigua & First Unitarian of Rochester  
   b. June 18th at First Universalist of Rochester

MEMES & COMICS

--- Bill Watterson

--- LyricalZen.com