

# The Growth Season Widening *July/August 2024*



*Photo credit to D. Burnet*

How do we **widen** in our **growth** season during our long summer days?

## **GRATITUDE**

This spiritual deepening packet was created by Suzy Farrell with support from the packet team, as well as input from the three-church worship team comprised of First Universalist Church of Rochester, First Unitarian Church of Rochester, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua. This includes ministers, religious education, and music leaders of all three churches.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, Keepers of the Western Door and part of the Haudenosaunee People, on whose unceded ancestral land First Unitarian Church of Rochester, First Universalist Church of Rochester, & the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua now exist.

Greetings Dear Ones,

Summer is an expansive time, isn't it? It might not be that you have time off and it might not be that your schedule changes, but I think one thing we can all share is that so much feels possible when the sun is out and the weather is good. One of the things I love about the cycles and the rhythms of the seasons in Western New York is that when summer arrives, so many of us come out of our homes and just have to take advantage of the light, of the weather, of the time of year. As our days widen, our spirits widen. And somehow summer feels more precious in a place where it can be so cloudy and cold the other months of the year.

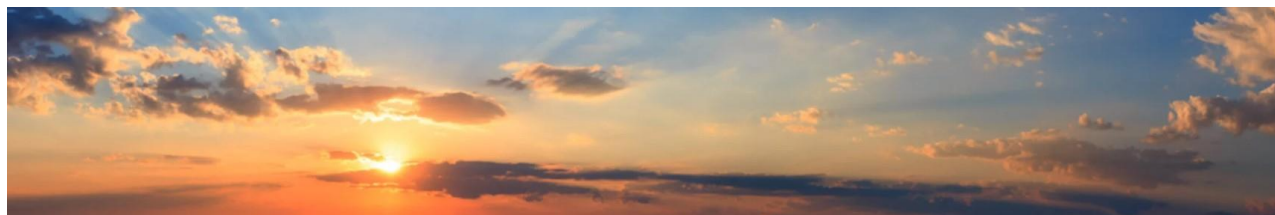
Expansive is one of the words I have used to describe the divine. And my entry point into that description is our Unitarian Universalist understanding of interdependence. That not one of us operates in isolation, that we are all connected with the Earth, with the elements, with the creatures, with other human beings – interdependence calls us to recognize just how expansive our networks really are. Each one of us supported and held, each one of us supporting and holding, some better resourced than others, some taking more of the share or more protected from life's difficulties by privilege and systemic advantage. If you do have time off this summer, if you are able to engage in time out of time, I wonder in what ways your sense of expansiveness this summer is connected to others, in what ways you can use that time to honor and acknowledge interconnectedness.

Out of fear, sometimes I want to contract and pull away and isolate. These days can be like that. Have you felt it too? It can be hard to engage our interconnectedness when so much is going on in our world and in our country, when our hearts are constantly reeling from witnessing violence, from an election year, from the probability of climate collapse, from the suffering we ourselves experience.

It is my hope that you can find time to feel expansive this summer, however that comes to you. It is my hope you can feel your connectedness to the world around you, that interconnectedness and expansiveness can call you back in moments of feeling afraid or shut down. Perhaps you can find in this packet a way to reconnect if you have been feeling contracted, small, shut off. Perhaps you can find just outside of your door a way to be in relationship with the Earth and all its beauty.

Let this be a summer of widening, of expansiveness, of interconnection.

*Rev. Lane-Mairead*  
First Universalist Church of Rochester



**Packet Angles:** choose between the following approaches to help in your spiritual deepening exploration. Look for specific tools that are essential for you.

**Widening Compassion:** Do we know ourselves well enough to open to the truth of others? Social connection makes a difference in our own well-being. Listen with a compassionate ear to one another. How does this widen your knowledge/perspective?

**Widening Spirit:** Visit a different UU church with family or friends. This could be done virtually or in person. Note the similarities and differences. How is your spiritual self affected?

**Widening Justice:** All living beings are in this life together. How do we acknowledge the pain of other beings as our own? Think in terms of racial justice or climate justice. How wide can our circle of concern become?

## READINGS FOR CHALICE LIGHTING/ EXTINGUISHING

### Chalice Lighting

#### **New Light**

We light this chalice to affirm that new light is ever waiting to break through to enlighten our ways:

That new truth is ever waiting to break through to illumine our minds:

And that new love is ever waiting to break through to warm our hearts.

May we be open to this light, and to the rich possibilities that it brings us.

— *Rev. Charles Howe, retired UU minister*

### Chalice Extinguishing

#### **Changes Abound**

Changes abound... around us, within us, between us; in our communities, our neighborhoods and our beloved faith communities.

Changes abound.

May we each find the balance point we need as we move through our ever-changing world:

the balance between the old and the new, between the known and the unknown, between the familiar and the perhaps bold and risky possibilities that may be there, waiting.

— *Michelle Collins, author, ministry leader*



*UU Congregation of Erie*

## SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

### Exercise A. Saying “YES!”

The words in one of our beloved hymns encourage us to, “Say Yes to life!”

<https://farfringe.com/2016/10/09/stlt6-just-as-long-as-i-have-breath>

Realistically though, how easy is that? Widening means “to expand and make space for,” but is it really that simple? Take this spiritual challenge and use one or more of the above angles to explore this theme as you engage in your daily life. Start small and see how you widen. As growth occurs, name any obstacles or advantages that arise. What are the mindsets you need at the beginning?

### 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. Think of a time you have “expanded your horizon...” What was that like for you?
2. How do others react/respond to us as we grow and change?
3. How has the term “late bloomer” shown up in your life?
4. Are there obstacles that prevent you from growth & widening? How can you move beyond them?



*Outivity Store Growth Chart*

## QUOTATIONS

**“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”**  
– Frederick Douglas

**“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”**  
– Viktor E. Frankl

**“Behold the turtle, he progresses only when he sticks his neck out.”**  
– James Bryant Conant



*Dreamstime photos*

## FURTHER ENGAGEMENT: PODCASTS, SONGS, ARTICLES, FILMS, & BOOKS

*Draw the Circle Wide* Performed by Orange County, CA UU churches collaboration  
[https://youtube.com/watch?v=Zij\\_FBddU0k](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Zij_FBddU0k)

*I am Open, I am Willing* Performed by Foothills Unitarian Church  
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=-7iUEi-VNNU>

**Film: *Come Sunday*** A film based on a true story about pastor Carlton Pearson, who begins to question his Pentecostal faith and has a drastic theological change that most of his followers could not accept. Found on Netflix <https://www.netflix.com/title/80152625>

