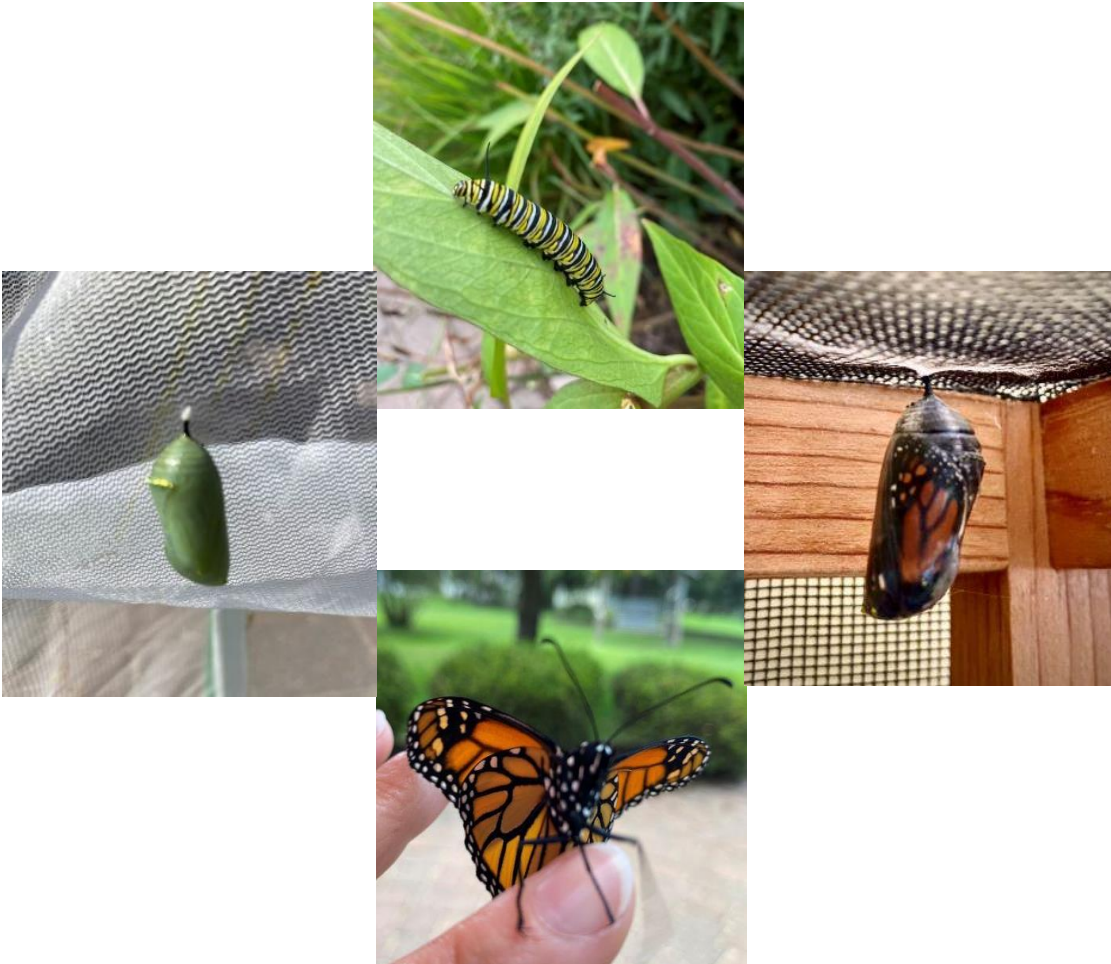


Darkness Season / Transformation



Photos: Linda Shanti McCabe

Without past experience or any awareness of future goals, the caterpillar simply has no idea what might happen when its chrysalis is created . . .

We adapt to the changing world.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

(This spiritual development packet is a collaboration of First Universalist Church of Rochester, Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua and First Unitarian Church of Rochester. Free use granted to Unitarian Universalist and related organizations.)

Dearest Unitarian Universalist kin,

This month of November and December bring us a chance to explore the theme of Transformation in our own lives. As November 20 marks Transgender Day of Remembrance, I thought I might begin this packet by speaking to one of my personal process of transformation: the process of accepting my own gender identity and making the transition to being out as a genderqueer and transgender person.

A story like this often begins with disbelief. And I think that is how most transformations begin. With the wondering of, Is this actually true? In my experience, there continued to be a tugging after the realization that the label of genderqueer fit me, that pronouns like they/them fit me. This was who I truly was. It took great internal discernment and trying on - asking folks to refer to me with different pronouns, with a different name.

But it truly became real once I shared this newfound identity with my family first and then the good folks at First Universalist Rochester. Something about sharing a change we have realized about ourselves makes it more tangible, it makes the transformation stick. It is not as if the questioning stops, but that I have experienced feeling more settled in the change once I have been witnessed.

I discovered who I was in relationship to the natural world, in relationship with our theology as Unitarian Universalists, and in relationship to the change that changes all. It is my wish for you in this season to experience transformations large and small and find ways to be witnessed in it in community, in your congregation or in your family or in your friendships. As we explore transformation together, may we open ourselves up to processes of change, healing, acceptance, and questioning. And may we emerge better knowing who we are on the other side.

Blessings,
Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell (they/them)
First Universalist Church of Rochester

GRATITUDE

Gratitude to this season's packet team lead, Tom Perry, the inspiring 3-church worship team and the supportive contributions of the entire packet team. We hope you find inspiration to explore what transformation means for you and your community.

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 of Rochester, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua now stand.

READINGS FOR CHALICE LIGHTING

May This Flame

May this flame,
symbol of transformation since time began,
fire our curiosity,
strengthen our wills,
and sustain our courage
as we seek what is good within and around us.
— Rev. Bets Wienecke, UU minister, Goleta, CA, deceased



Thresholds

Thresholds.
We cross them every day.

From room to room,
from outside to inside,
and back again,
from here to there,
from anywhere to everywhere,
from age to age.

Each threshold offers an opportunity
for change, for renewal, for transformation,
from what we were and what we are
to what we can be.

In this hour and in this place,
we cross a threshold from
our day-to-day everydayness into
space and time attuned to the other,
to the sacred, to the holy,
into an awareness of new life
pregnant with possibilities.

How will we be renewed in this moment?
How will we be changed by this hour?
How will we be transformed through this
gathering of beloved community?
— Rev. E. Arlen Goff, UU Minister
Macon, Georgia

READINGS FOR CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

May the Flame Burn True and High and Strong

The flaming chalice is the symbol of Unitarian
Universalism.
It is an everlasting flame for this community.
It offers its warmth to those who are cold.
It provides light to those who would see.
It purifies and transforms this sanctuary into
sacred space,
this congregation into sacred community.
May its flame burn true and high and strong.
— Rev. Beatrice Hitchcock, UU minister

Teachers Everywhere

In every person we meet, especially those
who cause us discomfort, we find an
opportunity for us to grow, to learn, to go
further along the path of transformation that
is our purpose in life. Every single one is our
teacher. May the next week bring you many
such moments of meeting that help you
become the person you want to be, and may
you welcome them with joy.
— Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern, UU Church
of Palo Alto

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Exercise A. My Life Flows Like a River

Draw a map to illustrate the flow of your life... starting from a spring or several springs and growing to be a river flowing toward the sea. Annotate or label the map with the major influences and transforming events that shaped who you are and shifted the course of your life. Share the map with family members or friends. Talk them through the major transformations that have brought you to this place and time.

Exercise B. Intergenerational Photo Timeline

Gather some photos of yourself over the years. Include photos of where you lived and things that were important to you. Place photos in order of your age. Reflect on the transformations you have had throughout the years and share with family, young and old, or friends. If done with some youngsters, ask what they see in the photos.

Exercise C. Map Your Spiritual Journey

Do a map similar to that in Exercise A... this time illustrating your spiritual journey from the faith(s) of your parents to your current spiritual path(s). Add the major influences that shaped your journey. Include any periods of spiritual impasse and how you resolved each impasse (*ref. UU Love at Center excerpt*). Share the map – talk through the major transformations that have led you to your beliefs and practices.

Exercise D. Imagine Your Future

Transformations begin in the imagination (*ref. Rebecca Solnit in Quotations*). Imagine the world in five years and your place in it. Where do you want to be? Who do you want to be? Think through 2 or 3 alternate futures.

For each alternative: What barriers might stand in the way? What changes would need to occur to get to where you hope to be? What personal transformations would help you shape those changes?

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. What would it be like to live in a world where nothing changes?
2. Can society be transformed without individuals changing? What about vice versa?
3. What barriers (religious, psychological, social or cultural) stand in the way of transformation?
4. Is it better for change to happen slowly (perhaps to the point of not being noticeable), or quickly (perhaps even instantaneously, like "ripping off a band aid")?

5. Can transformation happen in the processes of everyday life, or does it demand stepping aside into a special context (e.g., a retreat or pilgrimage)?
6. What steps can one take to make an intentional transformation come about – whether in oneself, with others, or in society at large?
7. Have you experienced a transformation that has upended your sense of self and personal identity? What helped you to accept it or adapt to it?
8. How can you tell when a change is for the better, or for the worse?

RESOURCES

Just as we select spiritual exercises that speak to a diversity of experience, we draw from a diversity of sources and include a diversity of voices here. We explicitly seek voices and perspectives of people with disabilities, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), Women, Trans and NonBinary People, other members of the LGBTQ community, children and youth.

FROM UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

[Sovereign and Transforming Grace](#)

Singing the Living Tradition, Hymn #33

To the anxious soul impart hope,
all other hopes above;
stir the dull and hardened heart
with a longing and a love.

[Theological Reflection on the Proposed Revision to Article II](#) by Rev. Dr. Sheri

Prud'homme. *Note: clicking on the link downloads a .pdf file.*

Excerpt:

Transformation

We adapt to the changing world

One of the hallmarks of liberal religion, Unitarian Universalism included, is the idea that revelation is not sealed. That is to say, our religion can and will change by the discovery or unveiling of new truths and new ways of understanding all existence and the sacred. At its core, then, our theological heritage proclaims an abiding openness to change. From our early roots in Universalist and Unitarian Christianity; through the blossoming of humanism and ongoing dialogue with scientific developments; to the re-emergence of a sense of spirituality in creative interplay with humanism, process theology, liberation theologies, and religious naturalism; to a religious pluralism that embraces traditions and practices emerging from the organic multireligiosity of Unitarian Universalists today – Unitarian Universalism has evolved in the context of a changing American and global society and in response to new insights from an ever widening circle of voices and perspectives.

...

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, emerita professor of theology and former president of Starr King School for the Ministry, has asserted that the spiritual practice at the center of Unitarian Universalism is education. Transformation characterizes Unitarian Universalist religious life as we grow spiritually and ethically throughout the lifespan.

Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies, Sofia Betancourt, editor

Excerpt from Chapter 13 – There is a Love Holding Us – Page 90-96 of 238 by Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme

“... Theological reflection is a living process that arises at the intersection of religious tradition and life experience. Such reflection becomes a necessity when one’s long-held, traditional beliefs about love, for example, prove to be inadequate in the face of a profoundly difficult life circumstance. Pastoral theologians call such an experience spiritual impasse and regard it as important and fertile ground for faith development. During spiritual impasse, one of three things can happen: we can abandon our beliefs, we can hold rigidly to our beliefs but deny our experience, or we can “do theology” and evolve our beliefs. We do this by opening to new discoveries or coming to know more deeply in our own experience what our forebears taught.”

FROM SACRED TEXTS

Buddhist Wisdom

Thich Nhat Hanh, quote from [No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life](#)

"We are often sad and suffer a lot when things change, but change and impermanence have a positive side. Thanks to impermanence, everything is possible. Life itself is possible. If a grain of corn is not impermanent, it can never be transformed into a stalk of corn. If the stalk were not impermanent, it could never provide us with the ear of corn we eat. . . So instead of complaining about impermanence, we should say, ‘Warm welcome and long live impermanence.’ We should be happy. When we can see the miracle of impermanence, our sadness and suffering will pass."

Jewish Wisdom

[Quotes on Change and Society by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks](#)

"Torah does not change. But in one sense, *halachah* does change... [Halachah](#) is the application of an unchanging Torah to a changing world. *Halachah* changes so that the Torah should not change."

"We can only change the world if we can change ourselves. That is why the book of Genesis ends with the story of Joseph and his brothers. It tells on an individual level the story that the book of Exodus tells on a national level. Israel is charged with the task of transforming the moral vision of humankind, but it can only do so if individual Jews, of whom the forerunners were Jacob’s children, are capable of changing themselves."

Christian Wisdom

Presiding Bishop [Michael B. Curry: We need some crazy Christians](#). Sermon preached at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church 2012. Concluding paragraphs:

“We need some crazy Christians. Sane, sanitized Christianity is killing us. That may have worked once upon a time, but it won’t carry the gospel anymore. We need some crazy Christians like Mary Magdalene and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Christians crazy enough to believe that God is real and that Jesus lives. Crazy enough to follow the radical way of the gospel. Crazy enough to believe that the love of God is greater than all the powers of evil and death. Crazy enough to believe, as Dr. King often said, that though ‘the moral arc of the universe is long, ... it bends toward justice.’

We need some Christians crazy enough to believe that children don’t have to go to bed hungry; that the world doesn’t have to be the way it often seems to be; that there is a way to lay down our swords and shields, down by the riverside; that, as the slaves used to sing, ‘there’s plenty good room in my Father’s kingdom,’ because every human being has been created in the image of God, and we are all equally children of God and meant to be treated as such.”

[Native American Creation Stories](#)

An Iroquois Legend

“In the beginning, the world was not as we know it now. It was a water world inhabited only by animals and creatures of the air who could survive without land.

Up above, the Sky World was quite different. Human-type beings lived there with infinite types of plants and animals to enjoy. In the Sky World, there was a Tree of Life that was very special to the people of the Sky World. They knew that it grew at the entrance to the world below and forbade anyone to tamper with the Tree. One woman who was soon to give birth was curious about the Tree and convinced her brother to uproot the Tree.

Beneath the Tree was a great hole. The woman peered from the edge into the hole and suddenly fell off the edge. As she was falling she grasped at the edge and clutched in her hand some of the earth from the Sky World. As she fell, the birds of the world below were disturbed and alerted to her distress. The birds responded and gathered a great many of their kind to break her fall and cradle her to the back of a great sea turtle.”

[So begins this creation story... Humans are seen as owing a great debt to humanlike animal characters who transform the world in such a way that humans can successfully live in it.]

Afrofuturism

Excerpt from [The Parable of the Sower](#) by Octavia Butler

“All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.”

[Change Is Divine: How Sci Fi Visionary Octavia Butler Influenced This Detroit Revolutionary](#), by Adrienne Maree Brown, *Yes Magazine*, Summer 2014

“This idea that change is both constant and divine, and Butler’s further offering—that we can actually shape change—gives me a kind of mental and emotional space. My imagination can matter, it can shape change. Her work invites us to respect the change that is outside our reach, and to shape the changes we can make. The ideas in her fiction challenge us to contend with our own choices and take responsibility for our own power.”

POETRY EXCERPTS

To respect copyright laws and support artists, we provide links to the full work from which an excerpt is taken . . .

Chrysalis Diary by Paul Fleischman - [A Poem in Two Voices, on YouTube 3:37](#)

“November 13:
Cold told me
To fasten my feet
To this branch,
To dangle upside
Down
From my perch,
To shed my skin
To cease being a
Caterpillar
And I have obeyed.”



[aging by rupi kaur](#), Canadian poet, illustrator, photographer, and author

“i often daydream about the woman i'll be	laughing about the adventures
when i leave the rush of	we've had together
my insecure twenties	...
and pick up self-assurance on the way	what a privilege it is
...	to grow into the
at fifty i'll sit with my wrinkles and silver hair	finest version of myself



Artist: Paula Nicho Cumez

[The Old Threads Are Unraveling](#) by Julia Myers (UK lecturer and poet). Excerpt:

“The old threads are unraveling,
Get your needles ready.
We are stitching a new quilt
of Humanity.
Bring your old t-shirts,
worn out jeans, scarves,
antique gowns, aprons,
old pockets of plenty
who have held Earth's treasures,
stones, feathers, leaves,
love notes on paper.
Each stitch
A mindful meditation.
Each piece of material
A story.

...
The work is hard
Your fingers may bleed.
But each cloth stitched together
Brings together a community.
A world, our future world
Under one colourful quilt.
The new quilt of humanity.”

QUOTATIONS

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

— Leo Tolstoy

“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity”

— Sun-Tzu, A Arte da Guerra

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

— James Baldwin

“Sometimes one person inspires a movement, or her words do decades later, sometimes a few passionate people change the world; sometimes they start a mass movement and millions do; sometimes those millions are stirred by the same outrage or the same ideal, and change comes upon us like a change of weather. All that these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in hope.”

— Rebecca Solnit, [Hope in the Dark: The Untold History of People Power](#)

“I have been born again and again and each time, I have found something to love.”
— Gordon Parks, author, poet, film director

“Without shyness it is not possible to apprehend the new. Total confidence at the beginning of a new phase of life means we are misinformed, that we are deeply mistaken, that we think we know what is about to occur and who we are about to become. Shyness is an invitation to a dance with the unknown, ... the annunciation that it might just be possible to walk through the door of all our present besieging difficulties and make a new beginning.”
— David Whyte, [Excerpted from ‘SHYNESS in “CONSOLATIONS: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words.’](#)”

“Liminal space is where all transformation takes place, if we learn to wait and let it form us.”
— Sally Christiansen Boeckholt, member of UU Hysterical Society

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

[Can Unitarian Universalism change?](#) by Paul Rasor, UU World 2/22/2010

“Our move toward becoming a multiracial and multicultural faith challenges our safe and tidy way of being religious. In this sense, multiculturalism might represent for some a threat not simply to our illusion of control, but to our very identity.”

[We must change,](#) by Rosemary Bray McNatt, UU World 2/22/2010

“We must admit that Unitarian Universalism has a specific, sometimes alienating culture, and we must change it.”

“We—ministers and laypeople—want our congregations to be safe. But safety is a relative term when it comes to religious community. For if we are really practicing what it means to be human, in an ever widening circle of humanity, our congregations may become some of the most dangerous places we know, because they will become faithful communities of change, as we call each other into that territory of the soul that distinguishes the church from a social club, or a sorority, or a coffee house for the vaguely spiritual.”

[When a Major Life Change Upends Your Sense of Self](#) from Harvard Business Review
Five strategies to help cope with negative life transformations.

Metaphors of Transformation

[The way the nautilus moves forward](#) into new chambers as soon as a bigger one becomes available is symbolic of our quest to expand our own knowledge, leave outdated beliefs behind, and grow into more beautiful creatures.

[What Happens Inside a Pupa\(Chrysalis\)?](#) (4:49) Follow the hidden changes that transform a caterpillar into a monarch butterfly in this video.

[Symbols of transformation in art.](#) This beautifully illustrated blog post by artist Veronica Winters explores the multitude of natural forms and geometric symbols that have been used to represent concepts of transformation.

Music (music video on YouTube)

["I am Willing"](#) by Holly Near

Chorus lyrics: "I am open and I am willing, for to be hopeless would seem so strange. It dishonors those who go before us, so lift me up to the light of change."

["I Am Woman"](#) by Helen Reddy

["Blowin' In the Wind"](#) by Bob Dylan

["Changes"](#) by David Bowie

["It Don't Have To Change"](#) by John Legend

["A Change Is Gonna Come"](#) by Sam Cooke

[Sam Cooke- The Story Behind A Change Is Gonna Come-CBS News](#)

Movies/Videos

Moana (2016 Disney movie). Not only does she grow as a person, but she convinces her people to resume their tradition as voyagers. Comment: It's a cartoon... an entertaining but cartoonish misrepresentation of Polynesian history and culture. Read [more here](#).

Children's Stories (read along on YouTube)

[Each Kindness](#) by Jacqueline Woodson / Storytime with Ms. Jay

[What do you do with an idea?](#) by Kobi Yamada / Reading with Mr. Ramos

[Room on the Broom](#) by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler / Reading Rocket

Books (links to Monroe County Library availability)

[The Four Agreements](#) by [Miguel Ruiz](#). How to gain personal freedom by following the wisdom of the [Toltecs](#).

[The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck](#) by [Mark Manson](#). A counterintuitive approach to living a good life.

[The Alchemist](#) by [Paulo Coelho](#). The mystical story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who yearns to travel in search of a worldly treasure.

FAITH IN ACTION

November

- All Month – What to Watch: PBS is streaming **Native American & Alaska Native Heritage Month** programming (NOVA, POV, Independent Lens, et al). Access the [full list here](#).
- 11/5 Election Day – VOTE, ALL Y'ALL!
- 11/9 Saturday - UU Climate Justice Revival, 10am-3pm, First Unitarian Church of Rochester, [Register Today!](#) (lunch included)
- 11/28 Rochester's Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, 11:00am, Temple Sinai, 363 Penfield Road

December

- 12/21 Winter Solstice – Saturday services at First Unitarian Church of Rochester, 6 and 8 pm, all are welcome.
- 12/24 Christmas Eve & 12/25 Christmas Day – check your church newsletter for times.
- 12/25-1/2 Hanukkah
- 12/26-1/1 Kwanzaa
- 12/31 New Year's Eve

HUMOR

Jesus Is Down By The Gates To Heaven... when an old man approaches.

"Well, what have you done to deserve entry to Heaven?" Jesus asks.

"To be honest." replies the man, "I am merely a simple carpenter. It was my son who was truly great. Although he wasn't my biological son... his birth was miraculous, still I loved him very much. Later in life he went through many trials and transformations. He spread joy and his story is told all over the world even to this day."

Jesus looks at the man, with a tear in his eye, and says "Father?"

The man looks back. "... Pinocchio?"

— Posted to [UU Hysterical Society](#)



— Posted to [UU Hysterical Society](#)