

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bay County
1410 Airport Road
Panama City, FL 32405

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Fellowship of Bay County  Newsletter

May 15, 2020

- ◇ Welcoming Everyone ◇
- ◇ Growing in Mind & Spirit ◇
- ◇ Empowering People ◇
- ◇ Leading in Social Justice ◇

Any suggestions for news articles for publication in the E-news can be sent to:
info@uufbaycounty.com If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, please send an email,
or contact the UUFBC Office.

From Our President, Heather Ogilvie



To all my UU Family and Friends,

Greetings from UU on this amazing day - sunny, breezy, and GREEN!

I want to thank all of you for staying in touch. Even in regular (?) life it is great to hear from friends. In lockdown, it is life-saving. Thank you for the texts, FB messages, emails, and calls.

Everyone sounds so busy and productive! People are cooking, gardening, reading, writing, building, painting, hiking, biking, and playing. I am impressed by your initiative and resilience.

I hope we can all find time for joy, time for rest, and time to think, as we move forward in the new reality of pandemic.

You are all invited to Tea Time (Zoom Tea Party) at 4 PM on Monday 5/18. An email invitation will arrive before the event. Can't wait to see YOU. (If you need any help with the technology, please, give us a call!)

Peace and love,

Heather Ogilvie

P.S. I took pictures of everything new! The sunflowers area absolutely riotous!!!



Special Announcement

From the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association



As states around the country begin to loosen guidelines and take actions to reopen, even as COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to climb, we have received many questions from congregations about returning to in-person gatherings.

Over the past several weeks, the UUA has consulted with multiple public health officials in order to update the guidance we provided on March 12 recommending congregations stop gathering in person.

Based on advice from experts, we continue to recommend that congregations not gather in person. We also recommend that congregations begin planning for virtual operations for the next year (through May 2021).

Take a moment to breathe. I know this is significant.

While there is much public conversation about “reopening,” the reality is public health officials consistently predict a long trajectory for this pandemic. A majority of our congregational members, leaders, and staff members are in high-risk categories. Our care for the well-being and safety of our members and staff must be a priority in this pandemic.

This pandemic teaches us that our actions directly impact the health and well-being of our neighbors.

Additionally, religious gatherings are considered highly contagious events. The acts of singing, the familiarity of people across households, the multigenerational community of children, youth, adults, and seniors—the things that make our congregations so special—also create more risk for spreading the virus.

Given that so much uncertainty and risk remain, anticipating a year of virtual operations allows for more creative long-term planning, while still being flexible if conditions change significantly. We recognize that with time, and depending on the specific conditions and recommendations of local public health officials, small in-person groups of people and limited staff activities onsite may become possible while wearing masks, observing social distancing guidelines, and following diligent cleaning practices.

In making our recommendations, we are guided by science and our deepest held values. This pandemic teaches us that our actions directly impact the health and well-being of our neighbors and so it is imperative that we make choices that keep our congregations and larger community safer. As COVID-19 disproportionately impacts people with disabilities, Black people, Indigenous communities, Latinx people, the elderly, and essential workers, a majority of whom are women and women of color, religious communities have a moral responsibility to do all we can to reduce risks for those already at such high risk.

Public health officials are clear. There will need to be multiple weeks of reduction in infections, adequate testing, sufficient personal protective equipment available, contact tracing programs, and perhaps a vaccine before it will be safe for many of our congregations to fully gather in person again.

All this said, our ministries are essential services. I am moved by congregations who are increasing their services and generosity to the larger community during this pandemic. I am inspired by those who are keeping their “virtual” doors open. Many congregations have committed to keeping their services widely accessible and available to new people and visitors, while also creating more opportunities for virtual small groups to tend to the social, spiritual, emotional, and material needs of their members.

We hope that a vaccine or an effective treatment will be found soon to change this timeline. In the meantime, being able to plan the longer horizon of virtual services offers an opportunity to be creative in planning for life-giving, essential ministry across physical distance.

I continue to hold you, your community, and all of our people in my heart and in my prayers. I know adjusting to this new reality is heartbreaking. I also believe congregations who continue to lean into their mission and life-saving ministry will find ways to thrive in this time. Ministry is so deeply needed. As is moral leadership rooted in community care and in science. May we keep offering this to our communities.

Yours in love and gratitude,

Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray
UUA President





COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT *Things to know about services in our community...*

New Food Distribution Sites: If you are aware of someone who is hungry, please help them connect with one or more of the providers making food and other commodities available to our community.

"Grace Cares" Food Pantry has reopened. It is operated by Grace Presbyterian Church, across the street from our Fellowship. Now open for the first time since the pandemic began, the Pantry may be visited every Thursday morning from 8:00 until 11:30. Their address is 1415 Airport Road. The program can be contacted by using their email address, grace@gracechurchpc.com, or the church phone, 850-769-4000.

The **Family Service Agency** has just announced that it is also making food available by distributing 25 pound boxes of food every Monday in a drive-up process. The Agency is located at **114 E. 9th Street and can be reached at** (850) 785-1721 or by email at familyserviceagencypc@gmail.com for more information.

General Information: Call "211" at any time for additional community services information. You may also call the Community Resource Center at 850-215-8800, Monday through Friday.

Contact Jo Shaffer by email, jnshaffer@aol.com.

Sunday Programs



Facebook Live

"Fear Not" ~ Guest Minister
Reverend Melanie Morel-Ensminger
Sunday, May 17, 2020 @ 11:00 AM



This will be Rev. Melanie's 7th visit to our congregation since her first time in 2013, but the first time it will be a virtual video service. Her sermon topic is a common phrase in the Bible: "Fear Not" — an important message for this time in our lives.



Facebook Live

“Manners and Etiquette”

Stephen Harris-Dixon

Sunday, May 24, 2020 @ 11:00 AM



Former UUFBC member Stephen Harris-Dixon (affectionately known as Stevo) had to leave us following the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. In this video, he shares with us some insight as to the difference between manners and etiquette, his thoughts on Miss Manners (the pen name of columnist Judith Martin), some interesting facts and trivia about bridal and baby showers, and lots more!

“Songs of Hope” by Ken Sizemore



"Songs of Hope" - Ken Sizemore

We were so fortunate to have our own Ken Sizemore regale us with a 25 minute concert! From John Denver to Three Dog Night, he covered many different genres and eras. It was fantastic!

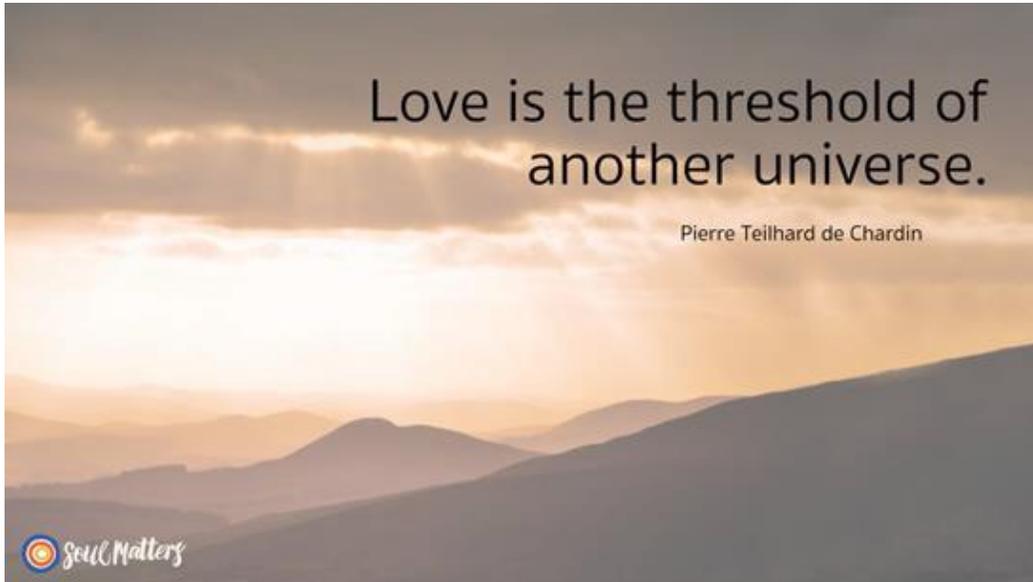
It will be on Facebook for a while longer, then moved on to the website for permanent archival.

If you haven't checked out <http://www.uufbaycounty.com> in a while, please do! All of our Facebook Live services from when quarantine began are accessible with one click. For in-person services before March, check out our YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/UUofBayCounty>



Spiritual Exercises



A Threshold Snapshot

One of the best ways to take ourselves back to the threshold moments of our lives is to revisit the pictures we took of them. So here are your instructions:

Find a picture of yourself after having gone through an important threshold or right in the middle of it!

Likely, you will stumble on a number of other pictures of the same moment. Take your time going through them all. Try to notice the subtle differences, and what those subtle differences might be trying to tell you. Bring your "threshold picture" to your group and be prepared to share the story that goes with it. What new thing did you notice about yourself as you looked at the picture again? Who was with you at the time? How did they help you get through that threshold moment or celebrate it? How are you the same person? How have you changed?

"All beginnings are delightful; the threshold is the place to pause."
Goethe

The Threshold of a New Day

Our Jewish siblings live with a heightened sense of threshold every day. Their practice of hanging mezuzahs at their doorways causes them to pause and be more intentional about what they want to bring with them and what they leave behind as they cross between their home and the world.

Imagine how your days might be different if you took a sacred pause at the doorway to your home and asked yourself, "What do I want to bring with me and what do I want to leave behind (or keep out) as I cross over? How does my house and family need to be protected from the energy I picked up from the world today? How might my day be better if I bring some treasured value of mine with me to work or school today?"

Why just imagine it?! This exercise invites you to live it. Allow the practice of hanging mezuzahs to inspire you. The goal is to alter something physical near the entrance of your home so you are reminded to pause as you go out and come in. Don't worry about literally hanging something on your doorway, although you can if you want. Maybe just change the location of your key bowl or key rack. Maybe move the place where you put on and take off your shoes, locating it instead by a chair that reminds you to physically sit down for 20 seconds longer and reflect rather than rush out or in the door. Whatever it is, use your "doorway change" for at least a week to make you pause and answer the all-important threshold question:

What do I want to bring with me? What do I want to leave behind (or keep out) as I cross over?

Come to your group ready to tell the story of what you did and how it made a difference to you.



"Lack of comfort means we are on the threshold of new insights."

Lawrence Krauss

Find or Create a “Thin Place” of Your Own

When talking about thresholds in a religious context, inevitably the topic of “thin places” will come up. It’s a term that is used to draw our attention to those spaces and moments when “the veil” between the ordinary and the sacred grows porous and we encounter the world and ourselves in a new way, even a transformative way.

This exercise is about having that encounter for ourselves.

Start with a bit of reading. Using the suggested articles below, spend some time this month learning about how others define and experience the thin places in their lives.

From there, figure out a way to find or create a thin place of your own. Many of us will likely remember a thin place experience from our past right away. Reconnecting with such memories is a gift in and of itself. But don’t stop there. The deeper gift lies in knowing that thin places are available in our daily living all the time.

So give yourself that gift, that encounter, this month. And come to your group meeting ready to share how it offered you a new experience of yourself and the world.

Suggested Reading on Thin Places

- Where Heaven and Earth Come Closer

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/11/travel/thin-places-where-we-are-jolted-out-of-old-ways-of-seeing-theworld.html>

- Thin Places

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/thin-places/>

- This column will change your life: where heaven and Earth collide

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/mar/22/this-column-change-your-life-heaven-earth>

- Finding “Thin Places”

<https://www.ruminatemagazine.com/blogs/ruminate-blog/finding-thin-places>

- Where Are the Thin Places?

<https://aleteia.org/2016/02/24/where-are-the-thin-places/>

- Stories of Personal Thin Places

<https://www.thinplacesproject.com/water>

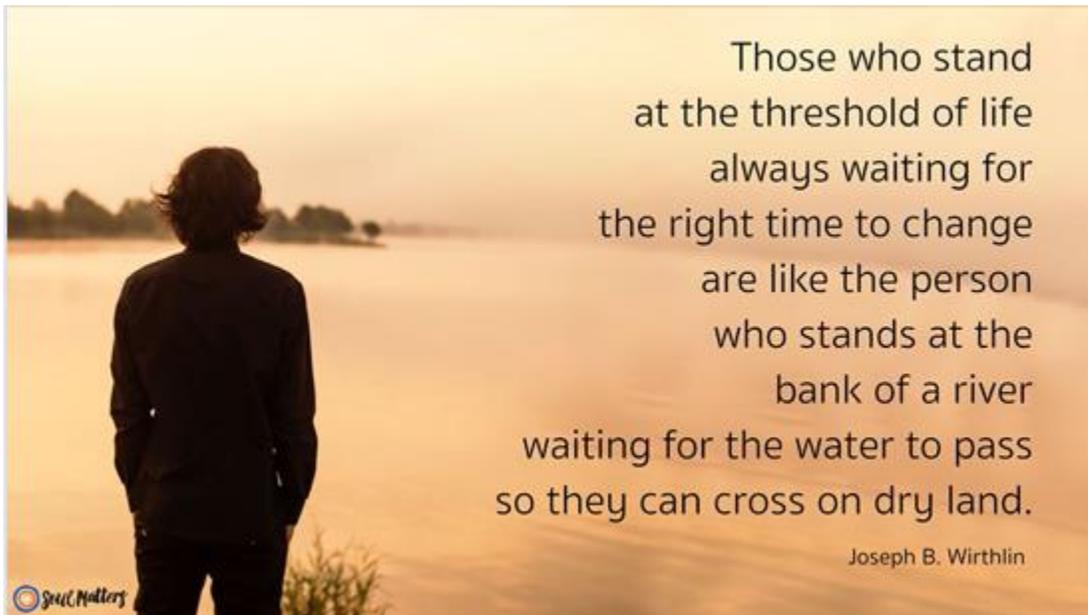
"The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind."

Kahlil Gibran

Find a “Threshold Call” in Our Recommended Resources

Our recommended resources are full of wisdom about what it means to be a people of and a person of thresholds. Engaging these resources and finding the one that especially speaks to you is a spiritual practice in and of itself. So, if none of the above exercises call to you, engage the recommended resources section of this packet as your spiritual exercise for the month.

Set aside some regular time throughout a week to go through them and meditate on them until you find the one that most expands or deepens your understanding of “a threshold experience.” After you’ve found it, consider printing it out and carrying it with you or pinning it up so you can continue to reflect on it throughout the weeks leading up to your group meeting. Come to your group ready to share where the journey led you.



“The self is only a threshold; a door between two multiplicities.”
Gilles Deleuze



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