



Transforming Times



*The Journal of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson*

February 2010

Love

*We are standing on the side of love;
hands held together as hearts beat as one.
Emboldened by faith, we dare to proclaim
We are standing on the side of love.*

William Sinkford

February arrives with love in the air, calling us to stand on the side of love.

An historic Unitarian covenant begins with the words, "Love is the doctrine of this church." When past president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Bill Sinkford said, "We are standing on the side of love," he was reiterating a spiritual virtue, one that has held us together as a religious people far back into our history. Sinkford, speaking in our modern times, was calling us to stand on the side of love as it is present in relationships between people of the same gender.

The month of February brings Valentine's Day, a day to celebrate and extol the virtues of love. Our modern culture has turned the day into a celebration of a certain kind of love: romantic or erotic love as expressed between two individuals in a heterosexual relationship. This narrow understanding of the nature of love can make Valentine's Day into an experience of loneliness and alienation for those who are single or in same-gender relationships.

Valentine's Day lifts up love as a feeling. An expanded understanding of love makes it more than something we feel, but also something we do. Love is also a verb.

The idea of standing on the side of love has been expanded. Recognizing that not all people are included in the benefits and privileges so many take for granted, we are being called to stand on the side of any who suffer the effects of misunderstanding and hatred.

To stand on the side of love is to work for human rights for migrants, for marriage equality for people in same-gender relationships, and to remove conditions of oppression and suffering, wherever they exist.

Love fills the air, animates our relationships, and connects us to each other. May we put love into action in order to create more justice in our world.

Yours truly,
Diane

Transforming Times is organized around theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings are by no means limited to the themes. They do provide common ground for community conversation, a way to gain more meaning and depth. We want to hear many perspectives on each theme. You are invited to submit your original poetry, artwork, or short essays of 350 words or less. Be warned: seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

September: Freedom
October: Covenant
November: Religious Authority
December: Concepts of God
January: Evil
February: Love
March: Brokenness
April: Forgiveness
May: Transformation

A Labor of Love

Submitted by Mary Wiese, Membership and Community Life Administrator

The reason I work for the church is because I love it. I love the people, and I love the job... 96% of the time. What I don't like is waking up at 4:00 a.m. worrying about it.

I began working for the church in November 2000. At that time, several people told me I needed to finish college to move ahead. So, in the spring of 2004, I enrolled in school. 32 months later, I graduated Sigma Cum Laude. I was lucky that year, I got a .30 an hour raise where as my co-workers only got a COLA. That was the last time we saw an increase of any kind. I work an average of 45 hours per week. I also work a second job to make ends meet.

There are 9 employees who work part time for the church due to last years agreed upon pay cuts. There has been talk of more cuts in the near future. The only full time employee is Reverend Diane. I know I am not speaking only for myself, but other employees who continue to work here because it is a labor of love. We come from various backgrounds with varying degrees of education and experience. However, I have never worked for a business where the employees work harder than they do here. This is not always a good thing as our history has shown with our previous administrator, Jean Griffiths.

In Reverend Diane's recent State of the Church sermon, she spoke of an inspirational future. I personally believe that future is attainable, *but not without a lot of hard work.*

I am worried about the church, and quite honestly, my future. I need to work full time but, I do not want to give up a job that I love. I may not have a choice. This is not about me, or my co-workers. It is about you and your church. YOU need to decide what it is YOU want and how you intend to make it happen. If you love the church, all that it has to offer, and you envision an even better future, you must commit to giving more of your resources to the vision. It cannot, and will not, happen otherwise.

You need to make it a labor of love.

*With Faith and respect,
Mary*



Every Sunday morning during our Family Singers' rehearsal, we allow a little time for sharing. As we were preparing to sing for Sunday morning worship on January 17th in remembrance of Martin Luther King, Helen O'Brien shared some of her experiences of being a fifth grader during the effort to integrate schools in the South. I asked her to write this article so our UUCT friends and members could also share in this meaningful part of her life. Agnes Paulsen

My family is from south Louisiana in an area north of Baton Rouge and just south of the border with Mississippi. In 1970 it was a region with a long history of racial and religious intolerance, although fully 50 % of the residents of the parish were African American. I was not raised in East Feliciana Parish, although my family had been there for several generations. I was an Air Force brat but we visited my grandparents' farm for long vacations in the summer. Because my family had never embraced racism and I had been raised on military bases I had little experience with the deeply ingrained systemic racism and segregation that permeated life in the deep south.

When I was 10 years old and entering the 5th grade, my father spent a year in Viet Nam, and my mother and we four kids returned to her parents' farm. It took me a week or two in my new school to learn to answer "yes Ma'am" instead of "yeah" when my teacher called on me, but kids are adaptable and I caught on quickly. During Christmas break that year the public schools in our parish came under court-ordered integration. Before Christmas I was in a class with 36 students, 5 of whom were black. After Christmas I was with the same teacher in a class with 25 students, 5 of whom were white. The First Baptist church opened its basement for classes and the public school board supplied the newly opened whites-only private school with text books.

It was an exciting time for me – a strange school, new kids and a different principal – and also sad because many of my friends were gone. Even the boy who had quietly and unexpectedly slipped a Christmas gift onto my desk left for the 'white school'. In this small town, I and the other white kids whose families supported school integration were met with tolerance and tentative friendship by the black students whose school we entered. There must have been some who were not glad to see us there, but no one was hostile or nasty or hateful. What might have been a frightening and miserable experience was pleasant, even welcoming.

Singing in remembrance for Martin Luther King brings back those days and moves me deeply. I am gratified that I could play a small part in an important effort and I have hope for the future when I can see how far we have come in the past 40 years.

Helen O'Brien