



Transforming Times



Transformation

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Change is a given, an unavoidable part of life. Night turns into day, which quickly turns into night again. Seasons come and go. We grow older with the passage of the years. Every cycle and season of life brings change.

Transformation is a dramatic or thorough change in form, appearance, or character – caterpillar to butterfly, tadpole to frog, water to wine. Transformation happens around us all the time. When flour, water, and yeast are mixed together, kneaded into dough, allowed to rise, and then baked in an oven, the ingredients are transformed into bread. When a fire is kindled, wood is transformed into energy and warmth.

The butterfly is a universal symbol of transformation. The emergence of a butterfly from the chrysalis involves struggle. In a solitary pursuit, the butterfly must make its way free from the womb of transformation, strengthening its wings in the process. Without struggle, the wings would be weak, incapable of the freedom flight. Emergence strengthens muscle for the journey ahead.

When we shy away from the difficulties and struggles of life, avoiding the realities of pain, despair, and broken-heartedness, we truncate the possibilities for transformation.

Flour, water and yeast are necessary ingredients for a full-bodied bread. The transformational magic happens in the kneading. Human hands apply pressure, pushing soft dough against a hard countertop, breaking down wheat into gluten, creating air pockets for gasses released by living yeast, causing the dough to rise. Something life-giving is created in the process.

Life exerts pressure on us. Pain and suffering are inescapable realities of life. We are broken down, pushed into relationship with those elements of life which can give rise to something new, something life-giving, something greater than the sum of its parts.

Transformational communities create environments where change is embraced and encouraged, change of the type Gandhi spoke of when he said, “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

Transformational communities are like bread-makers – bringing together individual people, and then, exerting pressure and pushing us into relationship, giving rise to something only achievable when our individual strengths are combined. When we are intentional about the change we want to make, working together by “being the change,” we just might transform ourselves and our world.

Yours in the spirit,
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 400 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

Are We a Caring Congregation?

Submitted by Kathleen Hogue-RE Coordinator

As we move forward purposefully and intentionally during these transforming times, let us take some time to think about what it means to become a “welcoming congregation”. According to the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Unitarian Universalism is committed to making our congregations and resources accessible to all, so that people living with physical, sensory, emotional, and cognitive disabilities can fully participate in our worship, service, and leadership. (UUA.org)

Consider our first three principles:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person,

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations,

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

Is it possible that in our progress towards becoming an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, multicultural community, we have overlooked those in our community who suffer from emotional or cognitive disabilities? Last week I was at a training on becoming a *caring congregation* led by Rev. Barbara Meyers, a community minister affiliated with the Mission Peak UU Congregation in Fremont, California. Her ministry focuses on education, healing, social justice, pastoral care and other priestly functions as they impact mental health issues.

Who among us does not suffer or know someone who suffers from a mental disorder? The prevalence of mental disorders in the US is 26%, so chances are that on Sunday morning you are sitting next to someone with a mental disorder. How do we treat these people, who need spiritual healing and growth as much as the rest of us? When introduced to a woman with Alzheimer’s, do we get away as quickly as possible? When we meet a young man with depression on Sunday morning, do we greet him with the same warmth as we do others? What is our reaction to a child who just cannot sit still in the service?

I believe that in order to deepen and expand our “Welcoming Congregation” status, we must first become a “caring congregation”. A caring congregation includes and addresses the needs of children, youth and adults with mental disorders in worship, programs, and social occasions.

May we transform into a caring congregation by welcoming people with mental disorders and their families into the congregation.,—welcoming not only their presence, but the gifts of their lives as well.

Answer: They were all considered to have a mental disorder.

Question: What do the following people have in common?

*Emily Dickinson,
Edgar Allan Poe,
Charles Dickens,
Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Ernest Hemingway,
Virginia Woolf,
Sergey Rachmaninoff,
Peter Tchaikovsky,
Michelangelo*

Grace in the Midst of Depression

Come along with me
as a sojourner in faith.
Bring along
a sense of expectancy
a vision of high hopes
a glimpse of future possibility
a vivid imagination
For creation is not done.
We are called to pioneer forth
toward a future yet unnamed.
As we venture forward,
we leave behind our desires for
a no-risk life,
worldly accumulations
certainty of answers.
Let us travel light
in the spirit of faith and expectation
toward our hopes and dreams.
Let us be a witness
to the future breaking in.
Come along with me
as a sojourner in faith
secure in the knowledge
that we never travel alone.

(Gregg-Schroeder, 1997)