



# Transforming Times



## RITUAL

*The Journal of the  
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*By Rev. Diane Dowgiert, Minister*

Seasons and cycles mark our lives with change. We mark the changes with ritual. A child is born, an educational program completed, a committed relationship formed, a loved one dies: these life passages are traditionally observed with ceremony. Public ceremonies mark times of personal change by creating memories in the participants. These memories become touchstones for living. This is the power of ritual.

Public rites of passage transcend the present moment because they evoke the power of memory. When a couple formally declares their love and commitment by making vows in a wedding or service of union, every other couple present remembers their own commitments and promises. At a graduation, every person present remembers his or her own achievements, hopes, and aspirations.

The power of ritual is in the opportunity to revisit important life transitions, those events that change, form, and transform us – and to visit them from a new perspective. In this way, we weave a tapestry of meaning from the events of our lives.

Life is a spiral journey. Each season and cycle bends forward and then back around in a never ending pattern. Poet T.S. Eliot noted :

I.

What we call a beginning is often  
the end  
And to make an end is to make  
a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.

II.

We shall not cease from exploration  
and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
and know the place for the first time.

Congregations are imbued with the power of ritual. When we gather together, we create time out of time, those touchstone memories that transcend the present moment. Together we remember who we are at the core. We remember our deepest values and highest aspirations. We are challenged, in a good way, to live lives of purpose and meaning.

In this season of Spring, may your life be blessed with the power of ritual.

See you in church,  
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: **Diversity**

October: **Hospitality**

November: **Reflection**

December: **Contemplation**

January: **Trust**

February: **Justice**

March: **Discernment**

April: **Credo**

May: **Ritual**

June: **Beauty**

**“I’d like to teach the world to sing,  
in perfect harmony . . .”**

*By Brian Moon, Associate Director of Music*

This beautifully effective Coke jingle might have something to teach us about music and ritual. On the one hand, it’s an old piece of pop culture now relegated to the surprisingly rich archives of you tube. Its importance and impression on me is both subtle and silly, but perhaps profound. I attended Coke University well, Emory University, whose enormous endowment was created by the family that owned the Coke company. I’ve never quite trusted Pepsi products, and when I was asked as a college graduate what I’d like to do with my life, I responded by singing the line from the advertisement above.

So, what does this advertisement have to do with rituals? The Christmas-themed Coke commercial that featured this song originally begins by filming candles, and the ethnically diverse people holding them. The camera pans out to show that these people are sitting, happily with one another, interspersing closer shots of diverse individuals with group shots of communal singing. In other words, it shows a ritual of good cheer and fellowship at holiday time.

Rituals - moments of organized, prescribed, communal, often religious activity invariably feature or use music. In fact, I am unaware of any religious tradition that does not employ music in some aspect of its rituals. Music serves to join disparate people into a single, unified voice. If they were merely speaking a text, it would sound cacophonous, with a multitude of independent voices. But, singing together allows for people to express the same idea at the same time, literally in harmony with one another. This truth of music and ritual is what makes the joke, “Why don’t UU’s sing hymns more loudly?” funny (Because they have to read ahead to see if they agree with the lyrics).

The next time you sing a hymn together within our sanctuary’s world of people, I’d like to ask you to reflect not upon singing in perfect harmony. I don’t even want you to focus on the words, although they will have been carefully chosen to highlight a deeper theme of the day’s message. Instead, please reflect on the power of singing together, and expressing a single idea or sentiment with others at the same time. The power of music in ritual, I think, is about building commonalities between people. It’s something that you feel, just like the warm fuzzies that the coke commercial still gives to me.

Have some peace and a smile!

Brian

## Share the Plate

Nominations for Share the Plate recipients in the upcoming church year are now being sought. Share the Plate is a program of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson that connects our congregation with the greater Tucson community. Each month, a local agency is chosen to receive half of a Sunday’s loose, non-pledge offering. So far this year, we have donated over \$1200.00 to organizations doing good work in our community. Past recipients have included Habitat for Humanity, Primevera, Community Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, and our own No More Deaths.

Tells us about your favorite charity in Tucson! We’re looking for those whose mission aligns with one of our four social justice working groups: Immigrant Rights, Economic Justice, Green Sustainable Living, and Peace. Your nominee should also be an organization or group that:

- 1) has activities in southern Arizona or northern Sonora ( our broader community)
- 2) has been in existence at least two years (a track-record of accomplishments); and
- 3) are established as a non-profit organization or have a non-profit as their fiscal agent (some level of accountability for how they spend their funds).

We’re also looking to strengthen our connections with the groups who receive our donations. Two ways of doing this in the coming year will be:

- 1) to invite a representative to present at a Sunday Speaker Series, and
- 2) to provide our members and friends the opportunity to share their gifts through volunteer service.

To make a nomination, please send the name of your favorite charity along with a description of the work they do to [ddowgiert@uuctucson.org](mailto:ddowgiert@uuctucson.org). You may also mail your nomination to the church office. Nominations must be in writing. The Empowerment Team will choose from among the nominations. To be considered, the nominations must be received by Wednesday, May 20.



**Ritual and Celebration in Honor of  
April Lynn Emerson Fowler**

*by Mary Wiese, Membership and Community Life Administrator*

One of the online definitions of Ritual is a ceremonial act. The anniversary of April's death was April 5<sup>th</sup>. We will be honoring her with a short ceremonial service and a beautiful banner in the near future. It is my personal intention to continue to honor April, as often as I am able, with a short ritual of meditation as I look north at Finger Rock, one of April's favorite Tucson landmarks.

April was a remarkable human being. She was born into a man's body but told me she identified as a woman as early as nine years of age. April grew up on a farm in rural New Hampshire in the 1940's. This was very difficult for her. She was married, served in the armed services, raised two biological children and two stepchildren. When she turned 40, she made the decision to become the woman she felt she was born to be. April did not have a lot of money. She was able to save enough for hormone treatments, but not enough for the surgery required to change her gender. However...when April put on a dress, and she had *many*, she became more of a woman than me! April had so much fun dressing up, painting her nails, and putting on lipstick before she went anywhere. I once said to her, "April, that seems like a lot of work just to go out." She responded with a smile and said, "Yeah, but I have 40 years to make up for!"

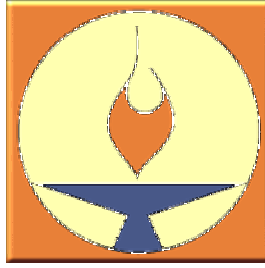
While the story behind her gender identification is amazing, I found that the most extraordinary thing about April was her generosity. Many people that experience adversity such as April's become withdrawn, and understandably self-centered. Not April. She was proud, happy, and full of energy. She shared this energy in productive ways. When she lived in Florida, she was very active in an HIV/AIDS awareness foundation. When Kathleen and I notified the agency of her death, they were saddened and spoke very highly of her dedication.

I was not surprised. In April's time here at the church, she became the most committed volunteer I had ever worked with. She ran the sound system, helped me shop, managed our Food Bank, built storage shelves, performed custodial tasks, answered phones, assisted with Newcomer dinners, and just about anything else she was asked to do.

The generosity did not stop there. April lived on a fixed income of about \$700 a month. However, she always gave gifts to her grandchildren and friends on special occasions. And, she pledged close to \$200 to the church every year and *fulfilled* her pledge! She was truly an inspiration.

When the ceremony takes place and the banner is hung in honor of April's memory, I hope that it will always remind us of her generous spirit.





## Mothers' Day – Past and Future

Mothers' Day is a day to show appreciation to those who dedicate their lives to raising their children. Many countries celebrate mothers in different ways and the origins of this can be traced back to ancient times.

In Greece, a celebration occurred around the vernal equinox to honor Cybele, a goddess who represented the fertile earth and the complete life cycle from birth to death and then rebirth.

The Romans had a holiday known as Matronalia, celebrating the goddess of childbirth, Juno. All women were honored on this day and would receive gifts from their husbands and children. Prior to Julia Caesar's Roman calendar, this day was considered the first day of the New Year, as it represented new life.

The United Kingdom celebrates Mothering Sunday. The origins of this holiday initially had nothing to do with mothers, but with churches. During the sixteenth century, people returned to their "mother church" for a service to be held on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Anyone who did this was commonly said to have gone "a-mothering".

The Mothers' Day holiday, as observed today in the U.S., celebrates motherhood generally and the contributions of mothers to society. It falls on the second Sunday of May. It is the result of a campaign by Anna Marie Jarvis. In 1907, Mothers Day was first celebrated in a small private way by Anna in Grafton, W, VA. to commemorate the anniversary of her mother's death two years earlier. Jarvis' mother, Ann Jarvis, had been active in Mothers' Day campaigns for peace and workers' safety and health since the end of the Civil War. The younger Jarvis launched a quest to get wider recognition of Mothers' Day. The celebration organized by Jarvis in 1908 involved 407 children with their mothers at Andrew's Methodist Episcopal church in Grafton. (This church is now the International Mothers' Day Shrine.) The subsequent campaign to recognize Mothers' Day was financed by Philadelphia clothing merchant John Wanamaker. As the custom of Mothers' Day spread, the emphasis shifted from the pacifism and reform movements to a general appreciation of mothers. President Wilson signed a proclamation in 1914 designating the second Sunday in May as Mothers' Day.

Last Mothers' Day Sara Sautter, director of religious education at Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church in Overland Park, KS, got more than 500 people to stand along a busy street in a peace vigil. Sautter had a media hook that worked—that Unitarian Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," later turned antiwar and founded Mothers' Day as a day of peace.

The group that Sautter formed last year, Julia's Voice, is gearing up for another event this year in conjunction with All Souls UU Church in Kansas City, MO, and she is hoping many other congregations will organize events in their communities. For more information, please visit [www.juliasvoice.org](http://www.juliasvoice.org)

No matter how Mothers' Day originated, be sure to honor the ladies that have one of the highest callings in life.