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New Horizons – February 2020

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto
Vol 8, Issue 4

Radical Inclusion

“Come, come, whoever you are.” These words from the Sufi poet Rumi make up the chant so cherished by Unitarian Universalists everywhere. “Whoever you are.” What a powerful promise. What an incredible vision. And what a daunting challenge to make real in daily practice. While we sing these words with gusto, we have some distance still to go before we can declare them to be true in our congregation, as is the case for many UU congregations in North America.

Hearing that, I wonder what immediately comes to mind for you, as you consider the gaps in our congregation? What barriers keep us from being fully, radically inclusive?

It’s sometimes said that, in the context of community, to accommodate someone’s needs at the barest minimum is a form of mere tolerance. But to be truly inclusive means that a community (and the building it inhabits) has been designed from the start with truly everyone in mind. That difference in approach can mean everything. And it’s where the notion of radical inclusion begins.

In the weeks ahead, we will explore what it might mean for us to accept the invitation to move towards being radically inclusive. How could we reshape ourselves to be a place where every person who resonates with our principles and values finds a welcoming home for their soul? What would it mean for us to sing “Come, come, whoever you are” and know that we mean absolutely everyone?

In faith and love,
Shawn

Upcoming Services

Sun, February 2, 10:30AM
Those Cracks in Everything
Rev. Lynn Harrison

Sun, February 9, 10:30AM
All Kinds of Love - Poetry Service
Rev. Lynn Harrison

Sun, February 16, 10:30AM
Broken and Whole
Rev. Christopher Wulff

Sun, February 23, 10:30AM
Vision - Sharing our Faith Sunday
Rev. Shawn Newton

Questions to Live With

As has become our practice, be sure to engage these questions in advance of your group meeting and find the one that “hooks” you most. Then let it take you on an adventure. Live with it for the entire month. Allow it to break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts.

And then come to your Journey Group meeting prepared to share that experience with your group.



1. When were you “the stranger” and someone invited you in? How are you repaying that gift in your living and loving today?
2. What is it like to be the minority? How does it feel? What do you do with those feelings? How do you react?
3. When you feel uncomfortable with someone who is different from you, how do you respond? What can you do to connect with that person?
4. Consider a time when you sensed that someone was being excluded. Did you respond, and if so, how? If you had it to do over again, how might you respond differently?
5. What can you do to create a more inclusive environment – at your school, workplace, First Unitarian Congregation, and/or in your community?
6. If the questions above do not speak to how you want or need to engage with the theme, what is your question?

For Inspiration

As always, the following texts are not “required reading”. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our groups. They are simply meant to spark your reflections—and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about this month’s theme.

Inclusivity: Acceptance and inclusion occurs when an organization reflects the visible and invisible diversity of the community and all are accepted and respectfully included as valuable members of their faith community, their physical surroundings, and in their personal relationships. Inclusivity honours the diversity of all individuals. When people from under-represented groups are not included in organizational decision-making, the established culture is reinforced and new perspectives are consequently silenced.

— First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto’s Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Group

Relationships and trust foster inclusion, a greater sense of belonging, and ultimately better...results for all. It is important to recognize biases, micro-inequities, and non-inclusive behaviors that may ultimately hinder and isolate members of various communities. Aim to embrace and foster an environment where everyone feels a sense of empowerment to take risks and innovate. Make time to get to know people.

— Nellie Borrero

...the practice of radical hospitality...includes an ongoing process of awareness, sensitivity, and inclusion.

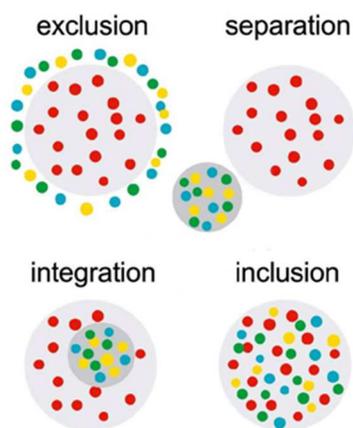
— Rev. Jessica Purple Rodela

Inclusion is a mindset. It is the way we treat others and the way they treat us. Inclusion is the opportunity to learn together and from one another.

— Lisa Friedman

It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.

— Audre Lourde



— Rory Ridley Duff, www.researchgate.net

[The] difference between diversity and inclusion is [the difference between] being invited to a house and being able to rearrange the furniture.

— Jane Silber

Growth toward openness means dialogue, trusting in others, listening to them, particularly to those who say things we don't like to hear, speaking together about our mutual needs and how we might grow to new things. The birth of a good society comes when people start to trust each other, to share with each other, and to feel concerned for each other.

— Jean Vanier

The greatest challenge of the day is how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution that has to start with each one of us.

— Dorothy Day

Don't leave your broken heart at the door;
bring it to the altar of life.

Don't leave your anger behind;
it has high standards
and the world needs vision.

Bring them with you,
and your joy
and your passion.

Bring your loving,
and your courage
and your conviction.

Bring your need for healing,
and your power to heal.

here is work to do
and you have all that you need to do it
right here in this room.

— Angela Herrera

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes as an
unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house empty of its
furniture,

still treat each guest honourably.

He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes . . .

— Rumi

We don't learn at the core of similarity but rather
at the edges of difference and discomfort.

If no one feels uncomfortable, you haven't
stretched far enough (either in praxis or
reflection)...by cultivating awareness of diversities
and a willingness to grapple with our discomfort,
we grow spiritually.

— Rev. Jessica Purple Rodela

Martin Luther King Jr. said *agape* love doesn't make a separation between worthy and unworthy people or between a friend and an enemy. It's a love fixed on creating community...that kind of love is exactly what our [Unitarian Universalist] faith is all about...What unites us is the way we live, the way we approach relationships, the kind of community we want to create.

We are leaning in the direction of the beloved community. We are *leaning* in the direction of our joy. This is sacred work, and it is ours to do. Together we can build the world that we dream about.

— Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones

Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without.

— William Sloane Coffin

A society which discards those who are weak and non-productive risks exaggerating the development of reason, organisation, aggression and the desire to dominate. It becomes a society without a heart, without kindness - a rational and sad society, lacking celebration, divided within itself and given to competition, rivalry and, finally, violence.

— Jean Vanier

Even the littlest and weakest person has a gift for the community, and that gift must be honored. Each one of us is very different one from the other. But all together we are like a symphony, an orchestra; all together we make a beautiful bouquet of flowers. That means, however, that we must learn to live difference, to see it as a treasure and not as a threat.

— Jean Vanier



In a new member ceremony, Mark, a man with developmental disabilities, joined our congregation...It's become a point of reference in the congregation - that we touched up against something - that place where we often fear to tread. We created a special ceremony for Mark so that he could participate on his own terms...We promised to open our hearts to receive Mark, to be changed by his presence, and to be willing to open our hearts to the gift of his ministry among us.

— Rev. Shawn Newton

Is it possible to discover that I am more governed by my fears than by anything else? I don't want to hear the cry of the poor because if I do, I will have to change. And I will feel lost and not know what to do—a feeling of complete inadequacy and powerlessness. And this will reveal to me that I have everything except the essential. I have friends, I have money, power, knowledge; but I do not have the capacity to share, to listen and to love. Not only do I feel helpless but I discover that maybe I'm all wrong, that all my values are upside down. I suddenly discover that I am not so good and, finally, that I am more governed by fear than by anything else. I begin to put my finger on the fear, and out of that culture which told me that I must be the best, I discover that the poor are teaching me that I am poor.

— Jean Vanier

The primary goal of Radical Inclusivity is not to imitate or change the mainline church, but rather to be Church. Radical Inclusivity:

- requires a new way of seeing and a new way of being.
- requires awareness, information and understanding.
- does not hide and works to undo shame and fear.
- recognizes, values, loves, and celebrates people on the margin.
- demands hospitality.
- is best sustained and celebrated when everyone in the community is responsible and accountable.

— Yvette A. Flunder

When we talk about making changes [to rituals], people wonder if we are talking about changing something that is essential to who they are, something that is familiar to them. But the thing we have to realize is that much of what we are familiar with and the thing we have grown comfortable with...has been forged in a fire that says fundamentally that some lives matter more than others. Those same rituals and ceremonies that we value may actually be barriers to others that we say we want to be in community with...Rev. Kent Mathias of Germantown UU Congregation always used to say that when you are in an environment where you feel very comfortable, very safe and very welcome, you need to look at how that same environment would be problematic for someone else, would be a barrier or a place that is doing harm to others. And you need to pay attention to that so that you can envision an ever-widening circle of inclusion in the sacraments of your faith community.

— Dr. Takiyah Nur Amin

If we join spirits as sisters and brothers, the pain of our aloneness will be lessened. In this spirit, we build community and move toward restoration.

— Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley



Inclusion elevates all.
— Elaine Hall

You can't be inclusive if you're not paying attention.
— Maria Bridge

Acceptance is seeing with your heart, not with your eyes.
— Rev. Kane

Let's celebrate that what we each bring to this world is truly a gift.

— Lisa Desatnik

Go where you are celebrated – not tolerated. If they can't see the real value of you, it's time for a new start.

— Author Unknown

We don't have to agree on anything to be kind to one another.

— Random Acts of Kindness Foundation

Poverty is not just a lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being.

— Amartya Sen

Gay Pride...was not born out of a need to celebrate being gay. It evolved out of our need as human beings to break free of oppression and to exist without being criminalized, pathologized or persecuted... Instead of wondering why there isn't a straight pride, be grateful you have never needed one.

— Anthony Venn-Brown

See the person, not the disability.

— Unknown

There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more.

— Robert M. Hensel

Racism is a complex system of social and political levers and pulleys set up generations ago to continue working on the behalf of whites at other people's expense...Hate is just one manifestation. Privilege, access, ignorance and apathy are others...[Racism is] a set of socioeconomic traps and cultural values that are fired up every time we interact with the world. It is a thing you have to keep scooping out of the boat of your life to keep from drowning in it.

— Scott Woods

Equality is a necessity...the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human condition. It is life out of balance, and that imbalance is sucking something out of the soul of every man and woman who's confronted with it.

— Joss Whedon

Moral outrage doesn't lead us to solutions - it keeps us from them. It keeps us from moving forward toward a fuller, more compassionate response to members of our community who belong to us, no matter what they've done.

— Gregory Boyle

Being inclusive is having a human connection without placing judgements before it.

— Sarah Greichen

We look at the same stars and see different things.

— Efstathia

Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

— Henry Ford

Join a Journey Group!

Journey Groups are the best way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with small gathering of people for a couple of hours each month.

Groups meet at First and in people's homes and are scheduled at different times throughout the month.

For more information about joining a group, please visit our website, look for the link in First Light, or visit the Engage & Connect Table on Sundays.

Upcoming Themes

Owning Our Story (March), Our Whole Lives (April + May).

Exploring Further

<http://cuc.ca/congregational-life/tips-for-intentionally-inclusive-congregations/>

<https://transforming-hearts-collective.teachable.com/p/transgender-inclusion-in-congregations>

Shakil Choudhury, *Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us vs. Them*, Between the Lines, 2015

Yvette A. Flunder, *Where the Edge Gathers: Building a Community of Radical Inclusion*, Pilgrim Press, 2005

Mark I. Pinsky, *Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion*, The Alban Institute, Inc., Herndon, VA., 2012

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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



Seek • Connect • Serve

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