THE BODY

As the new year begins, many of us are taking stock of the year gone by and looking ahead with new purpose. In usual years, January is a busy time for gyms and health clubs, as many people make resolutions to start new and healthy habits. At the start of 2021, despite the ways our social patterns have changed, the new year still can offer an invitation to reconnect with our bodies in ways that are newly nourishing.

Wise teachers remind us that we can trust the wisdom of the body, and that our relationship with our physical selves can help us create lives of meaning and purpose. Yet many of us have struggled with that relationship—especially, perhaps, if our bodies have experienced abuse or trauma, if we have lived with pain or illness, or if we are struggling with the challenges of aging.

In the past several months, perhaps like never before, we have become collectively aware of the body’s impact on our shared well-being. With a tiny virus threatening the lives of millions each day (and soon, a vaccine coming), the relationship of one body to another has never been clearer. With the world’s attention on health, it’s a meaningful time to reflect on our own bodies and how we’re relating to them now.

What ails us? What strengthens and heals us? What “shape” is our life taking now, and how might it change? What are our bodies saying to us, in this time of solitude and care?

I hope this month’s collection of readings and reflection questions allows you to reconnect with your body in ways that are deeply nurturing. Affirming that each of us is an integral part of the interdependent body of life, may we honour and celebrate our bodies, today and always.

Love,
Lynn

Upcoming Services

- Sun Jan 3 10:30 a.m.
  Fire Communion, a “letting go” ritual for the start of the new year, Rev. Shawn Newton

- Sun Jan 10 10:30 a.m.
  Lives Lived, Rev. Lynn Harrison & Rev. Shawn Newton

- Sun Jan 17 10:30 a.m.
  Coming to our Senses, Rev. Lynn Harrison

- Sun Jan 24 10:30 a.m.
  Keeping in Touch, Rev. Lynn Harrison

- Sun Jan 31 10:30 a.m.
  Bodies in Motion, Angela Klassen & Rev. Lynn Harrison
Questions to Live With

1. How has your relationship with your body changed over the years, and how has that changing relationship influenced other aspects of your life?

2. What wisdom is your body offering to you today? How is it a teacher for you?

3. How has the coronavirus pandemic changed the way you experience the body? What changes do you foresee, as a vaccine is on the horizon?

4. How is the health of your body influencing the state of your soul or spirit?

5. How do you see your body as being part of a larger body of life?

For Inspiration

"Your Body Is Welcome Here"
- Sean Neil-Barron

Your body is welcome here, all of it.
Yes, even that part. And that part. And yes, even that part.
The parts you love, and the parts you don’t.
For in this place we come with all that we are
All that we have been,
And all that we are going to be.
Our bodies are constantly changing, cells die and cells are reborn
We respond to infections and disease
Sometimes we can divorce them from our bodies, and other times they become a permanently part of us.
Your body and all that is within it, both wanted and not wanted, has a place here.
Our bodies join in a web of co-creation, created and creating.
Constantly changing, constantly changing us
Scarred and tattooed, tense and relaxed
Diseased and cured, unfamiliar and intimate
Formed in infinite diversity of creation
Your body is welcome here, all of it.
So take a moment and welcome it

Take a moment to feel in it.
Take a moment, to be in it
Dancing is bigger than the physical body. Think bigger than that. When you extend your arm, it doesn't stop at the end of your fingers, because you're dancing bigger than that. You're dancing spirit.
- Judith Jamison

"The Church says: the body is a sin. Science says: the body is a machine. Advertising says: The body is a business. The Body says: I am a fiesta.”
- Eduardo Galeano

New Horizons Vol 9, Issue 5 - January 2021
There is deep wisdom within our very flesh, if we can only come to our senses and feel it.

- Elizabeth A. Behnke

The body is a multilingual being. It speaks through its color and its temperature, the flush of recognition, the glow of love, the ash of pain, the heat of arousal, the coldness of nonconviction. . . . It speaks through the leaping of the heart, the falling of the spirits, the pit at the center, and rising hope.

- Clarissa Pinkola Estés

"For What Binds Us"

- Jane Hirshfield

There are names for what binds us:
strong forces, weak forces.
Look around, you can see them:
the skin that forms in a half-empty cup,
nails rusting into the places they join,
joints dovetailed on their own weight.
The way things stay so solidly
wherever they’ve been set down—
and gravity, scientists say, is weak.
And see how the flesh grows back
across a wound, with a great vehemence,
more strong
than the simple, untested surface before.
There's a name for it on horses,
when it comes back darker and raised: proud flesh,
as all flesh,
is proud of its wounds, wears them
as honors given out after battle,
small triumphs pinned to the chest—
And when two people have loved each other
see how it is like a
scar between their bodies,
stronger, darker, and proud;
how the black cord makes of them a single fabric
that nothing can tear or mend.

“Bodies are terrifying; they’re powerful and fragile,
bloody and imperfect, uncanny, impressionable
vehicles that carry our minds from birth until death.
And of course they’re inherently haunted. Haunting is
a kind of impression; a lingering effect from a physical
act like a shoeprint or a cloud of perfume left in the
air. In the same way, bodies carry trauma and choices
of our ancestors. Our DNAs are blueprints of the
past.”

- Carmen Maria Machado

"It is lovely to meet an old person whose face is
deeply lined, a face that has been deeply inhabited, to
look in the eyes and find light there.”

- John O'Donohue
"Notice" - Steve Kowit

This evening, the sturdy Levi's
I wore every day for over a year
& which seemed to the end
in perfect condition,
suddenly tore.
How or why I don't know,
but there it was: a big rip at the crotch.
A month ago my friend Nick
walked off a racquetball court,
showered,
got into his street clothes,
& halfway home collapsed & died.
Take heed, you who read this,
& drop to your knees now & again
like the poet Christopher Smart,
& kiss the earth & be joyful,
& make much of your time,
& be kindly to everyone,
even to those who do not deserve it.
For although you may not believe
it will happen,
you too will one day be gone,
I, whose Levi's ripped at the crotch
for no reason,
assure you that such is the case.
Pass it on.

There's a world of difference . . . between that
information to which we now presumably have access
by way of computers, libraries, and the rest of it, great
stockpiles of data, and the knowledge that people have
in their bones by which they do good work and live
good lives.

- Wendell Berry

If your ego starts out, 'I am important, I am big, I am
special,' you're in for some disappointments when you
look around at what we've discovered about the
universe. No, you're not big. No, you're not. You're
small in time and in space. And you have this frail
vessel called the human body that's limited on Earth.

- Neil deGrasse Tyson

When you carry out acts of kindness you get a
wonderful feeling inside. It is as though something
inside your body responds and says, yes, this is how I
ought to feel.

- Harold Kushner

Join a Journey Group

Journey Groups are the best way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with a small group of
people for a couple of hours each month. Groups meet online on Zoom and are scheduled at different
times during the month. For more information, visit our website https://firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-
groups/, or look for the link in First Light.

Upcoming Monthly Themes
February: Grace | March: Patience | April: Acceptance | May: Truth & Lies | June: Time

New Horizons Editing Team: Wendy Peebles, Jeanne Van Bronkhorst, Margaret Kohr, Rev. Shawn Newton, Rev. Lynn Harrison

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

Seek • Connect • Serve

175 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P7
416-924-9654

New Horizons Vol 9, Issue 5- January 2021