

NEW HORIZONS

*Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First
Unitarian Congregation of Toronto*

April 2021

Vol 9 Issue 8

ACCEPTANCE

The third principle of Unitarian Universalism calls us to “acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.” Across almost twenty-five years of UU experience, I’ve come to believe this to be the principle we often think we’re better at upholding than we actually are. It’s not that we’re necessarily intolerant; after all, we strive to embrace a diversity of beliefs and human identities. But, the truth is, people don’t always feel they can fully be themselves in our congregations. They are hesitant to share the reality of their lives for fear they will be judged.

In another congregation I served was a woman who was a pillar in that religious community. She gave so much of herself in every respect to the well-being of the congregation. And, yet, no one besides the ministers knew her son was in prison and that this was a source of great shame for her. She worried that if people knew the truth, she wouldn’t be accepted. I think of her often when people tell me something about their lives they feel unable to share with others.

Life is messy. And people are complicated. And a community that seeks to build up genuine connections asks that we open our hearts as much as we can to hold the reality of one another’s lives. So, as we take up the theme of acceptance this month, I encourage you to consider how you might make more room for people in your life—not just in our congregation—to share more of themselves with you.

Over the weeks and months ahead, may we grow in our capacity to truly accept one another.

In faith and love,

Shawn

Questions to Live With



1. When (or How) has acceptance been transformative for you?
2. Is there something or someone you are struggling to accept? What would help you find acceptance?
3. How has acceptance challenged you?
4. What is it in yourself you find hard to accept?
5. What are the limits of your acceptance? What are the limits of our acceptance as a UU community? Does that fit with our UU values?
6. If you fully accepted that our time is finite, that death is or may be imminent, how would that change how you choose to live?
7. If these questions don't resonate with you, what is your question about acceptance?

For Inspiration

You are accepted...fully and totally accepted...now, always, without condition, without deserving, without question. To be accepted in this way means to be cherished, to be loved...It means that who we are is valued, honored and respected. It means that we don't have to earn or deserve such care; it is simply there for us, ours as a gift outright.

- Margaret Guinness

Acceptance is something we're taught not to do. We're taught to improve uncomfortable situations, to change things, alleviate unpleasant feelings. But if you accept the reality that you have been given...you free yourself to begin filling up again.

- Anne Lamott

We need souls that can take in the world in all its complexity and diversity, yet still maintain our integrity. And we need souls that can love and be in relationship with all of this complexity. Instead of fight or flight, we need a spiritual posture of embrace.

- Rev. Rob Hardies

My happiness grows in direct proportion to my acceptance, and in inverse proportion to my expectations.

- Michael J. Fox

The best way is not to fight it, just go. Don't be trying all the time to fix things. What you run from only stays with you longer. When you fight something, you only make it stronger.

- Chuck Palahniuk

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.

- Alan Watts

The moment that judgement stops through acceptance of what it is, you are free of the mind. You have made room for love, for joy, for peace.

- Eckhart Tolle

We cannot change anything unless we accept it.

- Carl Jung

Acceptance is not submission; it is acknowledgment of the facts of a situation. Then deciding what you're going to do about it.

- Kathleen Casey Theisen

Acceptance is an active choice and requires an inner commitment.

- Debra Weaver

Tolerance and acceptance and love is something that feeds every community.

- Lady Gaga

Nothing brings down walls as surely as acceptance.

- Deepak Chopra

I believe it's our responsibility to show our communities the value of all people, to celebrate different, and to take a stand for acceptance and inclusion.

- Julie Foudy



To have privilege in one or more areas does not mean you are wholly privileged. Surrendering to the acceptance of privilege is difficult, but it is really all that is expected. What I remind myself, regularly, is this: the acknowledgment of my privilege is not a denial of the ways I have been and am marginalized, the ways I have suffered.

- Roxane Gay

Acceptance is not love. You love a person because he or she has lovable traits, but you accept everybody just because they're alive and human.

- Albert Ellis

Accepting all the good and bad about someone. It's a great thing to aspire to. The hard part is actually doing it.

- Sarah Dessen

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us, not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing.

- Rachel Naomi Remen

There is no point in fighting this battle
Wave a white flag at your inner being
Call for peace and bilateral talks
Over a cup of tea and a mug of coffee

- Blue Cosmos, "A War With Self"

The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.

- Maya Angelou



It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth -- and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up -- that we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

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,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

- Jalaluddin Rumi, "The Guest House"

One morning you might wake up
to realize that the knot in your stomach

had loosened itself and slipped away,
and that the pit of unfulfilled longing in your heart
had gradually, and without your really noticing,
been filled in—patched like a pothole, not quite
the same as it was, but good enough.
And in that moment it might occur to you
that your life, though not the way
you planned it, and maybe not even entirely
the way you wanted it, is nonetheless—
persistently, abundantly, miraculously—
exactly the way it is.

- Lynn Ungar, "The Way it Is"



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

May: Truth & Lies | June: Time

Upcoming Services

Sundays at 10:30

April 4 – The Hardest Won Hope
Rev. Shawn Newton

April 11 – Our Mission, If We Choose to Accept It
Rev. Shawn Newton

April 18 – Earth Day Sunday
Rev. Lynn Harrison

April 25 – Work in Progress
Rev. Shawn Newton

New Horizons Editing Team: Wendy Peebles, Jeanne Van Bronkhorst, Margaret Kohr, Josée Thibault, 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



