

July 2021

Vol 9 Issue 11

PLAY!

NEW HORIZONS

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

The ritual always began with a knock on the door or the ringing of the doorbell. Whether I was the one standing outside the door waiting for it to open, or the one standing behind my mother as she opened the door to find one of my friends waiting, the question was always the same. Only the names changed. “Can So-and-So come out and play?” It was—and is—a question filled with such hope. Though this ritual today more likely involves parents phoning or texting to arrange play dates for their children, the invitation to play brings excitement. It beckons with the possibility of fun, and even meaning and connection.

As our day-to-day lives begin to shift away from the lockdown restrictions of the pandemic, we may find that the invitation to come out and play takes on an entirely new level of meaning. Many of the activities and friendships that brought us joy have, over these past many months, been put on hold. And, now, more than a few of us have a pent-up desire for fun. After all, human beings are made for play. Play is the exuberant expression of our being. It points us to our true selves and is the fount of creativity and spirituality. The sages have known the spiritual value of play for eons; they have known that play keeps our search for meaning humble.

This month, I invite you to consider the place of play in your life—and to reacquaint yourself with the feelings of joy and recreation it brings.

So, *can you come out and play?*

I certainly hope so!

In faith and love,
Shawn

Questions to Live With



1. How do you define play?
2. What does play mean to you at this point in your life? How has it changed for you over time?
3. Has the pandemic changed how you play—or how you think about it?
4. Are you waiting for an invitation to come out and play? If so, why? What are you waiting for?
5. What do you need to say “no” to in order to say “yes” to more play in your life?
6. If not one of these questions, what is your question this month?

For Inspiration

To play is to listen to the imperative inner force that wants to take form and be acted out without reason. It is the joyful, spontaneous expression of one’s self. The inner force materializes the feeling and perception without planning or effort. That is what play is.

- Michelle Cassou and Stewart Cubley, *Life, Paint and Passion*

When we play, we sense no limitations. In fact, when we are playing, we are usually unaware of ourselves. Self-observation goes out the window. We forget all those past lessons of life, forget our potential foolishness, forget ourselves. We immerse ourselves in the act of play. And we become free.

- Lenore Terr in *Beyond Love and Work*

Play exists for its own sake. Play is for the moment; it is not hurried, even when the pace is fast and timing seems important. When we

play, we also celebrate holy uselessness. Like the calf frolicking in the meadow, we need no pretense or excuses. Work is productive; play, in its disinterestedness and self-forgetting, can be fruitful.

- Margaret Guenther in *Toward Holy Ground*



It is a happy talent to know how to play.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is a mystic in every one of us, yearning to play again in the universe.

- Matthew Fox, *Wrestling with the Prophets*

It is utterly false and cruelly arbitrary to put all the play and learning into childhood, all the work into middle age, and all the regrets into old age.

- Margaret Mead

In most animals, playfulness begins to disappear as the individuals become adults.



However, human beings have bred dogs to keep many puppylike characteristics, and with this comes the lifelong desire to play. This is important for people, because we humans also retain our childhood curiosity and playfulness through our whole lives. In effect, as perpetually juvenile apes, we have created a playmate for ourselves in a perpetually juvenile wolf.... To watch dogs run in play is to appreciate grace and joy. It is also a key to understanding something about their psychology: Running is to dogs what dancing is to people. It is their way to get into the rhythm of the universe.

- Dr. Stanley Coran, University of British Columbia

Play is a powerful mode of response to new experiences where the content and meaning

are ambiguous and the outcome uncertain. A playful attitude enables the mind to remain open to explore and imagine a wider range of possibilities when seeking answers to new experiences.

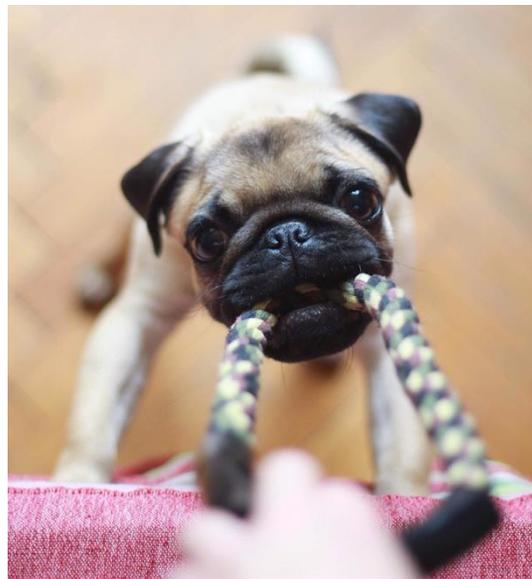
- Ingrid Chalufour, Walter F. Drew and Sandi Waite-Stupiansky, *Learning to Play Again*

...if we want a category of activity that embraces both subatomic particles and carnival goers, then we may as well call it play. And if we want to know what God is doing, should there be such an entity, and why he (or she or it) is doing all this, our best guess is that he is playing.

- Barbara Ehrenreich

To play is to participate in the creation of the human being in its fullest context.

- William R. Meyers, *Transcendence in the Play of Remembrance*



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 Themes

August– Imagination | September– Place
October– Possibility
November– Reconciliation and Racial Justice
December– Blessing | January– Intention
February– Contentment | March– Money
April– Awakening | May – Beauty



Upcoming Services

Sundays at 10:30

Jul 4 – “Two Types of Humanism”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Jul 11 – “The Well-Laid Plan of Eternal Flexibility”
Dallas Bergen, Musical Director

Jul 18 – “Be Right or Be in Relationship”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Jul 25 “Potluck Ethics”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Aug 1 – “The Wisdom of Our Stories”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Aug 8 – “Free and Responsible”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Aug 15 – “The Limits of Reason”
Rev. Ben Robbins, Summer Minister

Aug 22 – “Imagine That!”
Rev. Lynn Harrison

Aug 22 – “Radical Hospitality”
Rev. Shawn Newton

Sep 5 – “How is it with Your Spirit?”
Nicole McKay, Seminarian



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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto



Seek • Connect • Serve

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