

THE PRACTICE OF EMBRACING CHANGE

OCTOBER 2025

Meeting this Moment with Love & Justice

There is much advice about change: how to manage it, experience it, avoid it, choose it, survive it.

Change can be exciting and unsettling, joyous and uncomfortable. Whether we choose the change or it chooses us, there are always surprises. Some surprises are sharp and in focus, others float beyond our ability to put into words.

Lynn, Fiona, Arran and I put 'change' at the beginning of this year's Meaning Making series for a reason. Our theme for this year, "meeting this moment with love and justice," is ambitious. What my swim coach used to call a stretch goal.

I'm glad I don't have to wake up at 4 am to get to early morning swim practices anymore. But I do appreciate what I learned during that time:

- daily practice is what matters
- the first step in achieving a goal is understanding where I am at right now.

The spiritual work of embracing change starts with noticing and acceptance. If I try to paper over my grief at my losses (for example), I miss out on an important experience. When I sit with my grief, when I share it with my community, and we are able to hold that grief together, a shift happens. The grief that was inside me is now in our communal space and this shifts my relationship to it. When we can look at it together, it doesn't go away, but I am a little bit less overwhelmed by it.

We won't be able to meet this moment with love and justice if we cannot meet ourselves and one another with acceptance, if not love. This is not a new idea. It is our legacy from the earliest Unitarians and Universalists: we are loved, we have inherent value. Accepting this message for ourselves will help us bring love and justice to one another, and to all the beings on this planet.

A big goal, for sure. But what could be more important?
I look forward to this year with you.

Yours in community,
Karen

Meaning Making Packets are created by a team of Canadian UU ministers:
Karen Fraser Gitlitz, Fiona Heath, Arran Morton, & Lynn Harrison
with administrative support from Crystal Ironside
www.MeaningMakingProject.com

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The Practice of Embracing Change

- What helps you to stay grounded in the midst of change?
- When so much is in flux, how do you stay true to your values? How do you find the strength to act?
- How are you in relationship with the changes that you are experiencing right now – both the changes you have chosen and the changes that have been imposed or chosen you?
- What have you learned about the role of change in growth and transformation?

QUOTES

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
is Change.

God
is Change.

Octavia E. Butler

When we are no longer able to
change a situation, we are
challenged to change ourselves.

Viktor Frankl

It doesn't matter how strong your
opinions are. If you don't use your
power for positive change, you are
indeed part of the problem.

Coretta Scott King

God grant me the serenity to accept the
things I cannot change, the courage to
change the things I can, and the
wisdom to know the difference.

Reinhold Niebuhr

You never change things by fighting
the existing reality. To change
something, build a new model that
makes the existing model obsolete.

Richard Buckminster Fuller

Accepting that the chaos is normal
and natural will help us claim our
creative potential in it. Accepting
the chaos allows us to stop
demanding impossible things from
each other (such as clear prophetic
answers on how everything in the
future is going to work) and shift
into inviting each other into co-
creation of futures that work for us.

adrienne maree brown

QUOTES

The change that comes our way will come in many forms. In sights that are mysterious to our eyes, in sounds that are grating on our ears, in ways of thinking that will crash like thunder in our hearts and minds. But we must learn to ride each one of these horses of change. It is what the future asks of us and our survival depends on it.

- Richard Wagamese in Indian Horse

So how do we encourage change in our congregations? First of all, we have to let go of our belief in quick solutions. Patience for the process is everything. What took a long time to create takes an even longer time to change ... Allowing for playfulness and for chance and serendipity can bring us unexpected and welcome surprises. Chance can actually move us toward major shifts in how we perceive ourselves. Beyond that, we need to reframe the questions we ask. Have we gotten stuck trying to solve the same problems, or have we failed to see tension as a rich resource to be mined? Finally, we need to stay calm and present to each other. Change is more likely to come if we are able to step back and see ourselves clearly.

- Rev. Diane Rollert, “Embracing Change,” Nov. 2010, UCMontreal

We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing.

- Murray Sinclair

Every change involves some loss. Each new idea or concept can threaten our sense of security and identity, causing us to close down and shut our doors. Are the threats we feel real? Are our identities that fragile? . . . Can we be the people who risk our comfort to create the life-changing realities that are needed to bring a world of love and justice into being?

- Rev. Julie Stoneberg, 2023 Confluence Lecture “Open Minds | Closed Doors”
Watch the whole lecture [here](#).

**Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced. - James Baldwin**



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

One of the late Joanna Macy's legacies is 'The Work that Reconnects.' The work is a set of practices that help people honour their pain and grief for the world and find ways to activate hope and action for change.

One of the practices is to "see from our hopes." A practice of creating active hope – choosing to act from our values.

This practice can be done alone, using writing, drawing, or simply closing your eyes and thinking. It can also be done in pairs, with one person asking the questions and the other taking a minute or two to respond. Then the pairs switch roles.

Seeing from Our Hopes

Starting point. Take a couple of minutes to see what words follow this sentence starter:

Facing my concerns, what I deeply hope for is . . .

This is you, looking at your hope, daring to let it into your awareness and your imagination.

Imagine, just for a moment, that your hopes have happened, that things have worked out as well as they possibly could, from the starting point you face.

Picture yourself stepping into that hoped for future. You may want to mark the "time travel" of this step in some way. Perhaps with some movement, deep breaths, sound, or anything else that enables this shift in time perspective for you.

For example, you could visualise a natural landscape that you are travelling across, following a path, from the valley or plain of your present, to a mountain that symbolises your hoped for future . . .

Let yourself be playful and explore whatever will enable you to take this leap of imagination.

Standing in the place of your hope, what does it feel like to look from here? What can you see and hear (or, even, touch, taste or smell)? What do you like or love about things working out this way?

What I like or love about things working out this way is . . .

You might start this sentence several times, each time describing a different aspect of what you like or love.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 2

Seeing From our Hopes – Continued

Looking Back. Having taken a really good look around at your hope, from the inside, then look back – from that point – at this time we live in now. What did they do back then that helped this hoped-for version of the future come about?

Spend some time describing one or two things that people did in the 2020s that played a role in helping your hopes happen.

A possible sentence starter to use is:

One of the things they did back then was . . .

And also: Something else they did was . . .

Now, remembering that you were (and are) one of those people. Ask yourself:

How did I find the strength to act?

What sustained me?

How did I nourish my capacity to play my part?

Coming back. Allow yourself to step back to this time now using whatever time travelling technique you used earlier. Bring with you your sense of the changes that happened in this potential timeline, and consider what role or roles you could play that might help these changes come about:

Something I could see myself doing is . . .

Or: I could help this happen by . . .

From <https://www.activehope.info/>, created by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy.
(As long as this work attributed correctly, it is free to share)

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 3

In *My Grandmothers Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, Resmaa Menakem shares body-based practices to help people of colour and white people stay grounded, healing the wounds that get in the way of justice work. **Anchoring** is one of the useful practices for challenging moments. What follows is a brief highlight of a few of the practices of anchoring. Many more examples are shared in the book—we highly recommend it.

- **Anchor 1: Soothe yourself: quiet your mind, calm your heart, settle your body.**
 - Stop talking. For a few seconds, don't say anything. Just breathe.
 - Do something to slow things down. Take a long, slow drink from your mug; open or close a window; pet the cat; excuse yourself to go to the bathroom.
- **Anchor 2: Notice the sensations in your body.**
 - Notice sensations: your back against the chair, your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Name what you notice: heat, cold, constriction, pressure, etc..
 - Thoughts, emotions, and reactions will arise. Don't run off with them. Come back to your body and its sensations.
- **Anchor 3: Accept the discomfort—and notice when it changes.**
 - When your mind spits out actions, sit with them. Notice when the speed or focus of your thoughts changes.
 - Remind yourself that discomfort is protective, not defective.
- **Anchor 4: Stay present and in your body as you move through the experience.**
 - When your mind moves to what's wrong with you or with the other person, use the first three anchors to bring yourself back to the present moment.
- **Anchor 5: Safely discharge any energy that remains.** *Use this anchor after you have worked through the conflict, or disengaged from it for a time.*
 - Move your body consecutively for at least 20 minutes: exercise, walk, play sports (except those with long pauses), dance, do physical labor.
 - Follow your body's guidance. If you experience an urge to push your hands in the air or shake, do it. Unless your body wants to do something harmful, such as putting a fist into the wall. In that case, discharge the energy in a less harmful way—by punching a cushion, for example.

IN FOCUS: CHANGING YOUR VIEW

THE WORLD CHANGES ACCORDING TO THE WAY PEOPLE SEE IT, AND IF YOU CAN ALTER, EVEN BY A MILLIMETER, THE WAY PEOPLE LOOK AT REALITY, THEN YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

JAMES BALDWIN

Want to change the world? According to Ojibway author and journalist Richard Wagamese, it's easier than you think—all you have to do is talk to your neighbour.

"It's an elemental thing," he explains. "The boundaries and perceived limits of your world change when you stop and talk to another human being. When you exchange stories—where you came from, how you got there, how your life is going—the addition of that one story to your reality changes your world."

Seem too simple? For Wagamese, that's the beauty of it. "It's not a huge undertaking, it's not an enormous task or a quest," he says. "It's just talking. If you multiply that exponentially over seven billion people, where everyone is sharing one story with each other, the number of strangers in the world shrinks by the same process—you actually affect change by sharing stories."

From an Interview by John Threlfall | Mar 15, 2011

LETTING GO - NEW BEGINNINGS

Rev. Rosemary Morrison

**Watch and learn from the trees,
their leaves are dying.
They do not suffer in silence,
they are shouting death from
the tree tops...
"Look, look!" each leaf
proclaims in vibrant colour.**

**This is the season of new beginnings,
of fresh starts, another chance to try again.**

**Do the trees know they will leaf out again?
Is this why they bravely allow each
precious little one to fall from their grasp?
Learn from the trees.
As they let go, beauty emerges
with each falling leaf, each bare branch,
and the promise of new life in the spring.**

VISUAL PRACTICE

Make a change collage

Brainstorm all the ways that the change is affecting you, including losses, gifts, ambiguous experiences. Browse magazines or the internet, letting the images speak to you. Tear the images or take screenshots. If you find words that speak to you, tear those out or take screen shots of them.

- If you are making a physical collage, compose the images and words on a blank sheet and paste them down. You might circle, outline, or paint over some of the images or words. Write about the experience in a journal or share with your small group.
- If you are making a digital collage, import your images into a program with collage capabilities and move them around into a pleasing pattern. You can alter the tone and hue of photos, creating a unified whole. (Canva is a good example of an online design program. It is relatively easy to learn and has a free option).

Pay attention to your other senses while making the collage. .Drink something warm (or cold). Play some favourite music.

