

# Interdependence and Identity

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Morning glories display their livelihood, blooming every morning again and again, praising the sun as their flowers open. They are ritualistic through the lens of my human eyes.

For me, flowers are a big part of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. My dedication ceremony was on Flower Communion. So, I feel that I have an affinity for flowers and flower Communion's rituals.

During the flower communion we are reminded of our personal beauty and how that beauty is compounded by being together in community. We each bring our unique flower and put them together in one vase at the center of the worship space. When we leave, we leave with a different flower, one of our neighbors'. Sharing and enjoying each other's beautiful contribution as the ritual ends. This ritual helps me make sense of how our simultaneous interdependence and independence allow us to flourish.

It's not just the rituals and symbols of flowers that remind me of my connection to my faith but active engagement with them too. Gardening and connecting with the flowers and other plants is a spiritual practice for me. And I've talked to many other UUs who feel the same.

I am brought to the garden over and over again. To make sure those morning glories can perform their ritual of thanks to the sun, and to see that the peas will have good sunlight too and that the mosses and strawberries are doing well under their shade.

Physically, putting my hands in the dirt, feeling the ways that plants and soil are connected reminds me that there is something bigger than myself. It reminds me why I'm agnostic. There is something divine there.

And on a large scale it comforts me to think about how morning glories will probably continue to take over Toronto yards long after human beings can't live

here anymore because of climate change. Finding comfort doesn't remove my angst.

I am enraged about the injustices which have led, and continually lead to environmental and social disintegration. Capital greed at the expense of life.

And from my position of immense privilege, I am grieving the certainty and stability I was raised to believe should exist for me. Since I was raised with the Unitarian principals I believe that security, safety and joy should be available to all people.

I won't lie to you: I, and many of the people in my life are scared, most of the time, about climate change, social injustice and violence.

This image of morning glories stays with me because, certainly, I'm scared but I'm also hopeful. I know that I alone can't change everything, but I might as well get comfortable changing myself and getting my hands dirty working for justice.

We hold not just a little bit of hope with the flowers of the spring, but an undying garden of hope.

Let's take a step back, into this room and to the words which we hear each week, put your feet down on the ground and breathe in.

"Let us live into the sacred truth, that what touches one of us affects us all", from the Joys and Sorrows section of our service which we heard only a few minutes ago.

The first time I facilitated joys and sorrows I was struck that this is the part that matters. This is what community means.

I was choked up at the sorrows and almost moved to tears again when the joy started to flood in, the responsibility to create safe space is ours.

Joys and Sorrows is a deep honoring of the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Honoring how each thread, each of our lives, are essential to the web of existence. Weaving sacred fabric. Art so beautiful and painful and joyful that it chokes us up and holds us safely in its warmth.

Weaving cloth has a deep history and ongoing presence around the entire globe. When need be people have always made clothes to protect themselves, mats to sleep on and pray on and blankets to keep their babies covered from the cold and heat.

When weaving, especially on a small scale, the cloth shows the resources that we had at the time.

Is it woolen? Weaved plastic? Or plant materials?

How tight is it? This might indicate how tense our hands were as we weaved, or the tools or machine we used to weave it. If I were to weave for the first time my lack of skill would be jarring, but a skilled weaver's craft would shine through in the quality of cloth and style. How even and consistent is the cloth? What colors and patterns did you choose? Who taught you the ways to do the things you do? Hand weaved cloth has personality and is reliant on context as well.

We make cloth for self protection and community protection.

Joys and Sorrows are a reminder of the way that our many spools of thread, stories and histories, that make up our individuality and are intertwined actually. We might not remember that we are made of the same carbon until we call it out. We might not remember that we hold our unique patterns in our core. We might forget that our fears are similar and that our empathy is deep.

After the joys and sorrows we unified our voices in song, coming home in our hearts at the end of a phrase. Harmony fulfilled.

But, I wonder, is the song over?

Have we heard every phrase that needs to be sung?

Are we thriving?

Sometimes Youth and Young adults often feel like they do not bridge between the youth and young adult communities, but rather face a cliff between the two communities.

Sometimes new members and guests with marginalized identities and those coming from different economic backgrounds don't feel welcomed or included.

So, I wonder, is the song over?

Have we heard every phrase that needs to be sung?

Are we thriving?

I think that where there is intentionally placed space for listening, there is space for growth. But these are just my thoughts. What are yours? What makes you feel welcomed into the community?

Bring us back to this community and back to ourselves for personal discovery this month as we explore our interdependence. To nourish each other and ourselves and each other. To realize our similarities and differences in conversation, worship, the garden and in the cloth we weave together over and over again.