

## **Change? No Thanks, I'm Fine Here!**

Rev. Victoria Ingram  
First Unitarian Congregation, Toronto  
Sunday, October 19, 2025

A few years ago, our Canadian Ministerial Association announced the details of our annual meeting for that year, to be held in May. Prior to COVID, we'd choose a location and everyone who was able traveled to that location, stayed in a retreat center, and participated in an agenda of several days including business, worship, collegial dialogue, and professional development. (There's also laughter, charades, and singing involved, as well. I don't want you to think we are boring to spend time with!)

The first big change we had to make was because of COVID, when suddenly we had to rethink how we might be able to be in connection and support of one another given the challenges of travel, meeting, restrictions, and busy schedules. We'd already done a bit of experimenting on ZOOM, so we knew that could be one of the possibilities, but it didn't solve all of the dilemmas.

Frankly, I was already feeling overwhelmed when the announcement arrived, and as much as I enjoy our collegial retreats, I was having trouble absorbing the instructions. The meeting would be conducted entirely on ZOOM, with agenda times adjusted to coordinate between all of Canada's time zones. Each day would start and end at a different time.

Okay - I can figure this one out. What's next?

Well, all of our documents and agendas and materials would be available in a file shared on Google Drive. Hmm...what's Google Drive? How do I find that? I have to admit that I'm not the world's most techie minister, so new programs and applications make me more than a bit nervous. I asked one of my younger and more tech-savvy staff members to interpret for me and show me what to do. A bit unsure, I moved ahead.

Then, we were asked to download and learn to use a new networking program that would help with discussions and capturing minutes.

And, I lost it. In the normal course of my life, people often comment that I seem so calm and easy-going. That would not have been their feedback at that moment. I was angry, and frustrated, and belligerent about the need to learn ANOTHER THING to enable my participation in this meeting.

Disgusted and more overwhelmed with a bit more drama than the situation warranted, I closed my laptop and refused to finish registering for the event.

That's it! I WILL NOT HATCH. THANK YOU.

The situations vary, I'm sure, but I imagine that most of you can relate to this sort of frustration. Or, some version of it, at least. I speak to a common human thread when I say that there are times when we just want to scream "ENOUGH" and shut the world of demands, changes, input, and "another f...ing growth opportunity" completely out of our awareness. At least for a little while.

Our contemporary commentary on the nature of change is not a new insight into the human condition. Ancient cultural stories - Greek, Egyptian, Celtic - often referred to as myths - speak of the gods of chaos and stability constantly at war with one another in their attempt to shape and control the world. There are narratives which reflect this sacred confrontation in the world's religions. We aren't the first who've had these experiences, we're just the ones NOW.

We may experience the onrush of change as like analogy of drinking from a firehose - we're trying to take in all of the input, but it's just too much! We cannot seem to swallow fast enough to grasp the meaning, the usefulness, or the application of what's coming at us in time.

And it leaves us feeling defeated, incompetent, clueless, inadequate to life's pace, and despairing for ourselves and for the world. Because it's never just one change at a time. No! It's prices and fashion, it's international situations and conflict, it's shifting priorities and smaller budgets, it's technology and your refrigerator breaking down when it's only 2 years old, it's jobs and making time for yourself and your family. There's always a lot going on.

Maybe it's not so much more than in the past, really, but our awareness of what is going on has increased exponentially over the last 20 or so years. We have the internet, 24 hour a day world news, television, cable, telephones that allow us to be connected to the world continuously. It's impossible to ever be unavailable. And I'm not convinced that we mere mortals are truly wired for this level of input, information, insight, and inundation.

We are encouraged to embrace change, welcome change, dance with change, learn to love the ambiguity, see the limitless possibilities...

And sometimes all we can see is one more damned thing we have to do.

I know that in my younger years, I felt more in tune and amenable to the changes apparent around me - more excited and energized to check and try things out and find ways to incorporate those that caught my fancy for some reason. As we age, we may find that the changes we confront are not of our choosing, making it harder to be enthusiastic about embracing them.

Choice is a huge factor in how we view change. I heard years ago that "people don't resist change, they resist being changed," and I find wisdom in that insight. I'm much

more willing to engage in changes I choose as opposed to those presented to me as a fait accompli over which I had no influence. It's also helpful in situations where I know changes need to be considered. I know that things go smoother when everyone involved feels that they've been offered a choice, instead of a demand.

Some people are naturally more inclined to welcome change and be comfortable with the risk. They are able to move forward into ambiguity sooner, accept the possibilities, and decisively take action. And other folks are just not wired that way. They need time to research and gather data, time to ponder the possibilities and plan a course of action.

We have different approaches to change.

The common emotion behind our reservations about change is often fear.

Fear of the unknown outcomes that we cannot predict or control. Fear that we may prove inadequate to what is asked of us. Fear that we or someone we love will be hurt or damaged in the process. Fear that what we have created will be destroyed or taken from us. Fear because we have no back-up plan or options that help us see a better, happier, or more desirable future.

James Baldwin reminds us that nothing is fixed, nothing is forever, but is forever shifting. We know this is true, and at times we try to convince ourselves otherwise. Especially when we are afraid. When we perceive that change may mean something is being taken from us, affecting our comfort and security, snatching from us our sense of control and mastery over our own life. In those moments when we resist knowing that change and chaos are natural. When we deny that we are creative and capable, resilient and strong, especially when we hold hands and go together. When we stop demanding "clear prophetic answers on how everything in the future is going to work", in the words of adrienne maree brown, and start seeing ourselves "as co-creators of futures that work for us."

Each of us, alone, is not able to halt the changes around us, to stem the arrival of chaos again and again in our lives. And that's not what we are here to do.

We are here to pay attention to what is happening, to us and to others, to the world, and to acknowledge that we have a role in what happens next.

We are here to learn that we are creative responders who are courageous enough, bold enough, and capable enough to shape the future.

We are here to offer and accept help from each other. To join our various talents and skills and perspectives to make something better than any one of us might have imagined by ourselves.

And, sometimes, when it's all just too much, we are allowed to take a moment - but just a moment - to step aside from the fray, to express our frustration, to admit we are tired right now, and to take a break.

And then, to get back to the work of life, because for generations to come, we are the only witnesses they have.

Amen.