



MCUUF NEWSLETTER—November 2018

MINISTER’S MESSAGE

The stunning cliffs along the Columbia River Gorge represent thousands of years of nature’s handiwork. Water has sculpted rock plates and boulders from their amorphous state into myriad shapes over an interval that exceeds any one human life. The geological timeclock ticks at a slow and steady pace.

In many respects, our spiritual time clocks operate at a similar speed. Though we might wish for a sudden flash of enlightenment—a spiritual “quick fix,” those epiphanies are rare. Human nature wants things to change—right now—and in a big way.

As I think about this month’s theme of Gratitude, I would definitely say that practicing gratitude didn’t come about quickly for me. Though I was raised in a religious tradition that was riddled with teachings about gratitude, I can say I surely didn’t practice what was taught. I can’t put a finger on it exactly, yet sometime before my second child was born, I began to notice a shift in my life—one that I now recognize as significant. I had endured a period of several years of more downs than ups before Grant was born. There’s a Buddhist prayer that says, “May I be given the appropriate difficulties so that my heart will open and grow.” I had gotten my fair share of problems—and then some.

During this period of challenge, I began dabbling in meditation. Sporadic meditation happened often enough that I experienced a bit of relief. I began noticing what was happening in the present moment, instead of lamenting the past while on my pity pot or daydreaming about a problem-free future. That provided just enough wiggle room so I didn’t feel I was in a choke-hold. From there, I could begin to see way to cope. If it weren’t for the distress I was experiencing, I doubt I would have even attempted meditation.

This time of difficulty was a time of increasing ability to simply notice what was happening in the play-by-play unfolding in the moments of the day. Most days, there were sprinkles of goodness that I ignored or took for granted because I was so mired in my problems. As Henry David Thoreau said, “It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look.” Cultivating our capacity to notice what is unfolding in the present moment is one of the gateways to joy. Even in the midst of muck, we have the choice to notice a smile on someone’s face, to savor a whiff of crisp autumn air, or to recognize that we have more than one thing to eat in our pantry. The ability to choose is our human birthright. This is a capacity that can never be taken away, no matter how hard things are. Developing this skill in *noticing*—as Thoreau suggests—can put us in greater touch with the wonder and awe of daily life.

Once this practice of *noticing* begins, awareness of the mystery and miracle of life becomes a greater part of our days, and gratitude flows forth. Noticing and gratitude are like muscles. The more we use them, the stronger they become. They come about more readily. Why are we waiting to experience the well-being that comes from feeling gratitude?

The Touchstones Journal for this month discusses the practice of holding a “Gratitude Circle” at a family meal and sharing something for which you’re grateful. In my household we did this with our children for a time, and they resisted, but we continued anyway. Though they struggled, the message about our values was clear. If you eat alone regularly, it’s still possible to take a moment and identify one thing for which you feel gratitude. Let’s experiment during this month of November and see what happens when gratitude practice becomes a larger part of our lives. I hope we’ll share with one another what’s happening with this spiritual experiment.

In love and faith,
Rev. Judy



SUNDAY SERVICES
10 a.m. at the Rockford Grange
This Month's Theme: "Gratitude"

Daylight Savings Time:
Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour this Saturday night.

November 4: Ajahn Sudanto from the Theravada Monastery in White Salmon will speak to us about “Mindfulness”; with Paul B, celebrant. The Theravada Monks have vowed not to store or prepare food, and eat only one meal a day, so we will be feeding them after the service. Aera A. will be serving her delicious soup and Debbie O. will be bringing other dishes.

November 11: Veterans Day, "From the Front," Rev. Gary Young, with Richard W, celebrant. "From the Front" will provide us an opportunity to meet two of the young men who served in World War II through their letters home and in their own words. Though it is observed this year on November 12, November 11 is Veterans Day, a day when those who have served in the armed forces are remembered and honored. Those joining us will have an opportunity to share their stories and reflections about service in the armed forces.

November 18: "Revering Risk," Rev. Judy Zimmerman, with Elaine C, celebrant. What would it mean for Thanksgiving if this year you gave thanks for risks—both those you have taken and

those you are still gathering the courage to attempt? How might you look differently at your life and what you have cause to be thankful for?

November 25: “Words of Gratitude,” Kristen D. A reflective service using the words of the assembled and others as we close the Thanksgiving holiday.

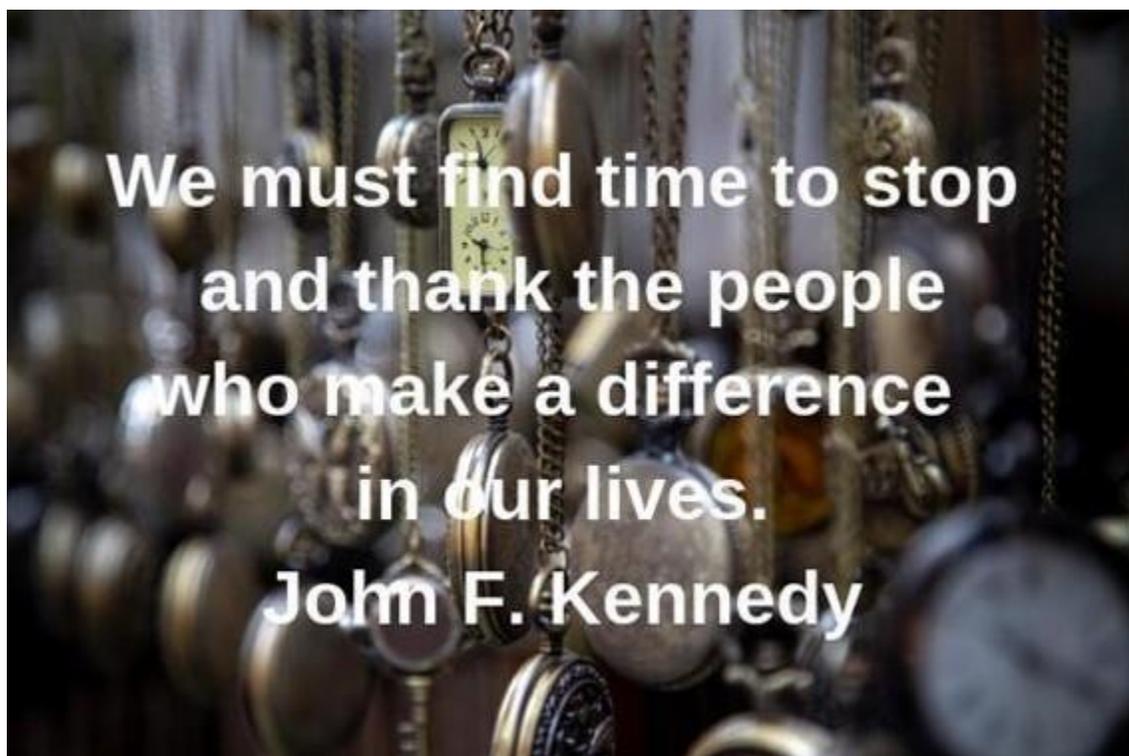
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Calling all volunteers: The MCUUF Religious Education program is looking for a volunteer teacher to help teach once a month for the school year. We are looking for someone comfortable with elementary-aged children and supporting them through our current nature-based curriculum. If you are interested, please contact Alicia B.

Parent group: We are currently seeking interest in an MCUUF parent group. Members of this group would take turns hosting faith- and life-based curriculum in a comfortable setting where care is provided for the kids and the conversations are guided by a host. If this sounds like something that would feed your spirit or you have interest in attending a parent group event, please contact Alicia B.

The course “Coming of Age” has begun for our youth. It is taught twice monthly in the teen room. This is a heavy curriculum to get through during the service hour, so we ask teens to join us in class at the start of our service instead of coming down after the Time for All Ages. We have space left in this class, if you have a youth interested. (This course is preferable for ages 12-15).

The RE staff is looking for volunteer mentors for our COA students. The volunteers are meant to meet with students a handful of times during our service to work through planned curriculum and connect with youth through multi-generational communication.



MOMENTS IN UU HISTORY

By Bonnie W.

Did your high school participate in forensic contests? If so, you may possibly remember one of your classmates tackling the popular and demanding poem, “Thanatopsis.” This poem, whose title means “views of death,” was written by Thomas Cullen Bryant, who was born on November 3, 1794. Although he never graduated from college, he was a scholar in law, English, and physical science and fluent in several languages. He edited the *New York Evening Post* for almost 50 years and during his later adult life was a member of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York. It is unclear when Bryant wrote the poem. He started it when he was 17 and finished it a few years later. Sections of it were found on his desk by his father, who submitted them to a publisher. It was later revised and included in collections of Bryant’s poetry.

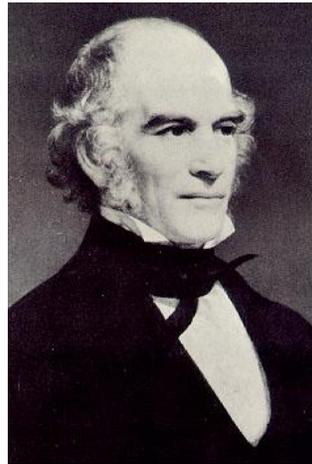
In the poem, Bryant attempts to reassure those who are afraid of death. There are two main themes. The first is that death is the fate of all, from rich to poor; all lie together in the earth.

*“Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulcher.”*

The second theme reminds the reader that nature is a healing balm, and that all who die join in the endless cycle of life.

*“Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again.”*

These themes reflect Bryant’s study of Wordsworth and other Romantic poets and would have, no doubt, resonated well with the beliefs of his fellow Unitarians, then and now. Bryant, remembered as one of America’s literary greats, died in 1878.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONNECTION

When to Contact the Care Team: Our Care Team stands ready to contact anyone in our UU community who may need help. They may be in a tight squeeze and wondering if they can make rent this month. Their moving help may have fallen through. They may need a ride to MCUUF events or

Sunday Service. They may be laid up for a while from surgery or illness. They may be having difficulty caring for a loved one.

These are but a few of the circumstances where our Care Team coordinates assistance with fellowship members, a private conversation with our minister or a care team member, or a referral to community or social services. We walk through the challenges of life together. You are not alone.

Circle Suppers. Our Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is again hosting Circle Suppers in members' homes. Debbie O. will host a Circle Supper Friday night, **November 9**, beginning at **5:30** p.m. Elaine C. will host a Circle Supper on Saturday, **November 10**, beginning at **5:30**p.m. And Irene K. will host her supper on **November 10** beginning at **6 p.m.** Please contact Peggy N. to reserve a spot.

The UU Men's Group will meet on Wednesday, November 14, at 6:30 at the Rockford Grange. The topic for discussion will be "Parenting." All UU men are welcome.

Women's Awareness Circle: The Women's Awareness Circle is looking for a new leader and a new direction and will not meet again until then. Suggestions are always welcome and can be directed to Debbie O. Many thanks to Irene K. for sharing her home over the past years. It was such a welcoming place in which to meet.

SOCIAL ACTION:

Come join the MCUUF team to serve in the Hood River Warming Shelter! Training for new volunteers is scheduled at Riverside Church on October 24 and November 8 from 6 to 8 p.m. and November 10 from 9 to 11 a.m. The shelter will start operation on November 18. Please join our team of MCUUF volunteers in serving our neighbors without home or heat this winter season. For questions, please contact Fran F.

MEMBERSHIP:

Second Sunday. If you are interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism and MCUUF, or if you just wish to chat with our Rev. Judy, we'll have an informal conversation after the service on the second Sunday of the month. There's no obligation; just bring your curiosity and questions. We'll meet from approximately 11:45 to 12:30.

New Member Ceremony. We plan to hold a new member ceremony November 18 during the Sunday service. If you are interested in becoming a member of our Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (MCUUF), please contact Rev. Judy at 503-970-0564 or jzimmerman@uuma.org

**If you want to find happiness,
find gratitude. Steve Maraboli**



Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Curious about what's happening, when, and where? Go to www.mcuuf.org

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The deadline for inclusion in the weekly eNews is midnight (11:59 p.m.) Monday. The MCUUF Newsletter comes out on the first Wednesday of each month (unless otherwise announced).

The deadline for inclusion is midnight of the prior Monday.

Please send your submissions to Brad at mcuuf1@gmail.com