

Beauty

*Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day,
there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten
joy or unremembered peace.*

—Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*

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May summer be the time for you to hear the singing of the angels. We need a time to let go of the wheel of our days and float up toward heaven. We need to carve a space between the items on our to-do list and breathe in the awesome presence of being. May summer be that time for you.

Howard Thurman relates in a vast array of his meditations to the singing of angels—to a sound so beautiful it seems to reside beyond time and space. Thurman was in many respects a mystic. He was grounded wholly in a worldly reality—an African-American theologian and preacher, a Civil Rights leader, the dean of chapel at Howard University and Boston University, a philosopher, an author, and an educator. Still, Thurman in his writings calls us out of the clatter of days to the song of the angels—to an experience of beauty. He writes:

There must be always remaining in every man's life some place for the singing of angels—some place for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful and by an inherent prerogative, throwing all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness—something that gathers up in itself all the freshets of experience from drab and commonplace areas of living and glows in one bright light of penetrating beauty and meaning—then passes. The commonplace is shot through with new glory—old burdens become lighter, deep and ancient wounds lose much of their

old, old hurting. A crown is placed over our heads that for the rest of our lives we are trying to grow tall enough to wear. Despite all the crassness of life, despite all the hardness of life, despite all of the harsh discords of life, life is saved by the singing of angels. (*The Inward Journey*, 1961)

Life is saved, he says, by the singing of angels. My dear congregation, we live in Northern Virginia. The Beltway's buzz is a vast cry from the sweep of angels wings. The smartphone's beep carries no glory. The scrape of your feet on hard ground running yourselves or your children to untold activities is not by itself breathlessly beautiful. The necessity we live among might steal our souls.

May you find, this summer, salvation in the singing of angels. It won't be found by looking for the miraculous, but by looking deeper at the usual. Thurman notes, "Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace." The stresses are real—the tensions are palpable—but they are not all that is.

Take up a practice this summer—I dare you. Practice meditation, prayer, yoga. Practice stillness, attention, kindness. Practice something, anything other than business. Reconnect to the holy blessing of your life.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Summer's Provocation



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Beauty

Webster's dictionary defines *beauty* as

The quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind, whether arising from sensory manifestations (as shape, color, sound, etc.), a meaningful design or pattern, or something else (as a personality in which high spiritual qualities are manifest).

I believe beauty is very subjective, albeit there are moments, sights, sounds, or other things that many people agree are beautiful. Some thoughts that come to mind which may fall into this idea are a sunrise or sunset, the smile of an infant, the sound of the ocean, or Rev. Anya's sermons—to name a few.

Our friends and members in our congregation have witnessed many beautiful events this year and two will remain vivid and lasting memories for me.



Bob Brown,
Board President

The first was the ceremonial marriage of two wonderful (and I also say beautiful) people, deeply in love but not currently able to be legally married in this state, the Commonwealth of Virginia. Rev. Anya and one of the couple's father performed the ceremony. The couple performed the magic in their personae, their vowels, their singing, or their being sung to. There was barely a dry eye in our sanctuary. In the end, we

were all left with the feeling of, "This is what it's all about."

Unfortunately there are some people in this world who may not find this ceremony beautiful—and this reminds me of a quote by Miss Piggy from the Muppets: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and it may be necessary from time to time to give a stupid or misinformed beholder a black eye."

The second event that I found beautiful was the Coming of Age ceremony for five of our wonderful and beautiful young adults. Every speech by the young adults was outstandingly vibrant, thought provoking, heartwarming, and exceedingly wiser in content than their age. The entire ceremony was so special and again, there was hardly a dry in our sanctuary and again we were all left with the feeling of, "This is what's it's all about."

Recently, I was talking to a friend in our congregation who shared with me a conversation she had with one of her friends. The gist is that they were discussing what defines each respective religion. Upon conclusion, her friend said that being a Unitarian Universalist is much easier because you can believe whatever you want. My friend replied that

that's what makes it harder; creating your own theology is hard work.

UU is beautiful to me because the principles allow a person to be free of creed, free of dogma, and free to think and create. Free to help others seeking the same vision in this world and beyond. I am reminded of a quote from Tom Hanks's character Jimmy Dugan in the movie *A League of Their Own*. When one of his baseball players was complaining about the rigor of playing baseball, Dugan says, "It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard...is what makes it great."

For me, beauty is a thing that even if you try your best to describe it, your description does not do it justice. It's something that has to be witnessed and experienced.

And one last point: Never Mess With Miss Piggy.

Peace and Blue Jeans!



Waiting for the "all clear" before the big Easter Egg Hunt!

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Beauty of Our Stories

Hearing one another's stories can help us form more meaningful connections and can transform our lives. I recently had the honor of experiencing a day full of beautiful stories. After a year of learning about themselves and their faith, our seventh, eighth, and ninth graders celebrated their growing independence and responsibility in a Coming of Age ceremony on the morning of May 18. During the ceremony, the teens shared statements about their lives, what they care about, and what they believe. That afternoon continued to be filled with the beauty of deeply shared stories, as adults and one teen gathered for a worship creation retreat. Members of UUCS and Accotink UU Church talked about transformations in their lives and how they might share these stories in worship.



Linda Weaver,
Director of
Religious Exploration

The sharing that took place that day demonstrated the beauty and power of story. Those who heard the teens speak were moved by the depth of care and understanding the teens expressed and by the courage they showed in baring their hearts. They talked of finding meaning in the depiction of friendship and community in their favorite movies, books, and video games. They talked of overcoming hardship to find the love and care that now sustains them. They also talked about their appreciation for our UU principles that guide them to respect and care about all people, that encourage them to search for truth within their own consciences, and that inspire them to work for peace and justice and care for the world. Participants in the afternoon retreat formed powerful bonds of understanding and friendship through their stories of fears, challenges, and joys that helped them become the people they are today. By listening deeply to each other's stories, we get to know each other much more deeply and we learn more about the world by seeing what issues, events, and relationships look like from the perspective of someone with a different set of experiences and beliefs.

I have also experienced this in conversations with my brother recently. We started sharing our own stories about life growing up in our family. Our father and grandfather talked with him more than they did with me, and our mother and grandmothers talked more with me. Because of this we heard different sides of a story. We were often present at different times, so we directly experienced different parts of the same story. Our difference in age and the experiences and ideas we brought to situations also affected how we interpreted the stories. By sharing our stories we are getting to know each other and our parents and grandparents much better. This has also helped me better understand myself and the assumptions I bring to

relationships and my understanding of the world.

I encourage you to listen deeply and appreciatively as another person tells the story of his or her life, beliefs, or transformation. Their sharing from the heart is a great and beautiful gift.

Children's Religious Education topics and a list of programs and events for children and families is on the calendar at the UUCS website, www.uusterling.org.

Want to share something in the September newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the September liturgical theme, *mission*
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in September and the first two weeks of October)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned coming up, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUS or during UUS events

Please send anything you'd like to include to newsletter@uusterling.org by August 15.



On Father's Day!!
Sunday, June 15th, 12-3:30pm

ANDREW'S FINAL WORDS

Pay it Forward



Andrew Mertz

This month marks the end of my highly successful ministerial internship at UUCS. You have helped me grow into a minister over this past year. I preached 10 Sundays; participated in 20 other services leading joys and sorrows, prayers, stories, and more; supported the Board of Trustees; the Journey Towards Wholeness team; the pastoral care team; the stewardship team; and helped several couples enhance their relationships, including officiating at two weddings. I was stretched beyond my comfort zone, took risks in order to grow, and always felt loved and supported.

Many of you have asked what is next for me. I am getting married in August to Annie Pierpoint, who will become an Episcopal Priest in December. We will live in my home in Manassas, VA, for at least the next year. In July, I will return to full time work at the Joseph Priestley District supporting youth and young adults. I will see the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in April 2015, where I will have my first chance to be granted fellowship as a minister. I have one year of seminary left and will be graduating from Meadville Lombard Theological School in May 2015. Rev. Annie's position also ends in June 2015, so our timing for potential relocation overlaps well. The earliest I could look for a settled UU congregational ministry would be starting in 2016. However, while I am still in the area, I will be accepting preaching opportunities, possibly showing up once or twice during Rev. Anya's sabbatical.

My last Sunday preaching at UUCS is June 8. I will be at the annual picnic on June 15, but unfortunately these are the last two opportunities you will have to see me for the next year. Even with all the evaluations completed and not being in the office or at meetings, there is one last learning goal of the internship that still needs to take place. The act of saying good bye, letting go, and severing communication to the entire congregation.

When ministers leave a congregation, there is a requirement that they completely step away from the community, which includes severing all communications. This is often very painful for all, even more so when it comes as a surprise. This is especially painful for those that have only known the church community with that minister in place. This creates space for a new minister to find their way, instead of living in the shadow of his or her predecessor. It is usually punctuated by a "rebound minister" called an *interim*.

Unfortunately, there are no interims for intern ministers—

just loss. There is no rebound to catch you on the other side, just the pain of not being able to reach out to someone. Rest assured my heart will keep you present. I will lament the separation we must endure. There can be solace in knowing that the pain of separation does have a purpose. It forces me to experience the act of letting go of a community, which, as a minister, I will have to endure several times in my career. But more importantly, you can also grow from this—congregations also must learn to let go, which will have to be my final gift to you.

You are a wonderful congregation and a great place for an intern to grow from a timid seminarian to a confident minister. Keep it up. I adopted a philosophy for my internship: If it's scary, makes me anxious, or something tells me to shy away, lean into it. It was the only way I was able to really grow. Many of you know that transition is coming to UUCS with Rev. Anya's sabbatical, moving to two services in 2015, and exploring the purchase of a building after that. It will be scary, intimidating, and anxiety producing. Lean into that transition and you will grow by leaps and bounds.

Finally, UUCS is one of the most generous congregations I know. Many of you have been sharing your gratitude for my role over the last 10 months, and I am very happy to have served you while I was growing. If you are looking for a way to show your gratitude for my ministry, Rev. Anya as my mentor and supervisor, or the Internship committee for their work, I ask that you consider paying it forward. Nothing would make me happier then to see you host another ministerial intern in the next couple of years. It is a gift to the denomination, not to me, that this opportunity provided. You are a gem that should not be kept away from its true potential.



A SUMMER OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

June – August: Beauty

Members of our congregation are invited to engage the practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or holy reading, and represents a traditional practice of scriptural reading intended to promote communion with that which is ultimately meaningful. It is a way of praying or meditating with sacred words that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, rejoice within the soul. Unitarian Universalists embrace a wide-reaching definition of scripture, finding words of profound meaning in the works of the world religions, scientists, poets, and the experiences of our own lives.

Find the time in your day to read each piece every day. Read, pause, read again, pause, and then reflect. You may choose to write each quote in a journal and add notes from your reflections. You may choose to read each piece to your family at the dinner table. You may choose to read in the morning or before sleep. You may choose to use the piece to gather your spirit for prayer or meditation.

June 5–11

*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness...*

—John Keats, “Endymion”

June 12–18

*Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and
frightened. Don't open the door to the study and begin
reading. Take down a musical instrument. Let the beauty we
love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and
kiss the ground.*

—Jelaluddin Rumi

June 19–25

*With beauty before me, may I walk; with beauty behind me,
may I walk; with beauty above me, may I walk; with beauty
below me, may I walk; with beauty all around me, may I
walk. Wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, I walk.*

—Traditional Navajo Blessing

June 26–July 2

*When I'm working on a problem, I never think about beauty.
I think only how to solve the problem. But when I have fin-
ished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong.*

—R. Buckminster Fuller

July 3–9

*Beauty is not a need but an ecstasy. It is not a mouth thirsting
nor an empty hand stretched forth, But rather a heart en-
flamed and a soul enchanted.*

—Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

July 10–16

The human soul needs actual beauty more than bread.

—D. H. Lawrence

July 17–23

A beautiful thing is never perfect.

—Traditional, Egypt

July 24–30

In such an ugly time the true protest is beauty.

—Phil Ochs, *Pleasures of the Harbor*

July 31–4

Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.

—Dorothy Parker

August 5–11

*Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or
usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.*

—Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*

August 12–18

*The most beautiful people we have known are those who have
known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss,
and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have
an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life
that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving
concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.*

—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

August 19–25

Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.

—Confucius

August 19–25

*There is no exquisite beauty...without some strangeness in the
proportion.*

—Bacon, Lord Verulam, in “Ligeia” by Edgar Allan Poe

SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

“The Second Suit”

by Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

A man once came to the Chassidic master Rabbi Yerachmiel of Pshischa with this tale of woe: “Rebbe, I am a tailor. Over the years, I have earned quite a reputation for my expertise and the high quality of my work. All the nobles in the area order their livery and their ladies’ dresses from me. Several months ago, I received the most important commission of my life. The prince himself heard of me and asked that I sew him a suit of clothes from the finest silk to be gotten in the land. But when I brought him the finished product, he began yelling and cursing: ‘This is the best you can do? Why, it’s atrocious! Who taught you to sew?’ He ordered me out of his house and threw the garment out after me.

“Rebbe, I am ruined. All my capital is invested in the cloth. Worse still, my reputation has been totally destroyed. No one will dare order anything from me after this. I don’t understand what happened! This is the best work I’ve ever done!”

“Go back to your shop,” advised Rabbi Yerachmiel. “Remove all the stitches in this garment, sew them anew exactly how you sewed them before, and bring it to the prince.”

“But then I’ll have the same garment I have now!” protested the tailor.

“Do as I say, and G-d will help.”

Two weeks later, the tailor was back. “Rebbe, you saved my life! To be honest, I had little faith in your strange idea. But having nothing to lose, I did as you said. When I presented the result to the prince, his eyes lit up. ‘Beautiful!’ he cried. ‘You have more than lived up to your reputation. This is the finest suit of clothes I have ever seen.’ He rewarded me handsomely, and promised to send more work my way. But I don’t understand—what was the difference between the first suit and the second if the cloth was cut and sewn in exactly the same way?”

“The first suit,” explained Rabbi Yerachmiel, “was sewn with arrogance and pride. The result was a spiritually repulsive garment, which, though technically perfect, was devoid of all grace and beauty. The second suit was sewn with a humble spirit, investing in the garment an inner beauty that evokes awe and admiration in everyone who beholds it.”

Questions for Discussion

Where do you find beauty?

What do you think makes something beautiful?

What do you think is meant by inner beauty?

What contributes to inner beauty?

ANNUAL MEETING RESULTS

We had our Annual Meeting after the service on May 18. We unanimously voted in our Board of Trustees slate, our slate of delegates to the General Assembly of Unitarian Universalists, and our Leadership Nominating Committee slate. Our budget also passed unanimously. The vote to approve the plan from our Open Doors Two Services Task force passed with 57 *yes* votes and 10 *no* votes. The vote to approve the continuation of the Partner Church relationship with the New Life School in Uganda passed with 53 *yes* votes and 15 *no* votes. Thank you to all who participated. Thank you to Stevens Miller, our parliamentarian, and to the Youth Group, who provided sandwiches. More information on our Annual Meeting can be found on our website, <http://uusterling.org/wordpress/leadership/governance/2014annual-meeting/>

COMING OF AGE

Congratulations to the five seventh, eighth, and ninth graders who completed the Coming of Age program and were recognized in a ceremony on Saturday, May 17. These five youth explored world religions and Unitarian Universalism as a foundation for discovering their own beliefs and their places in the world. They interviewed adult members about the history of UUCS and about leadership opportunities and social justice projects in the congregation. They completed a community service project, making toys and cat blankets and holding a bake sale that raised almost \$150 for the Loudoun County Animal Shelter. They acted as greeters, led activities for children, and engaged in worship. As a culmination of the year, they expressed their beliefs in credo statements that they presented during the Coming of Age ceremony. The wisdom, depth, and compassion that they shared in these statements was a testament to their hard work and to what can happen in a community that respects children for who they are, that encourages them to think for themselves, and that is willing to listen deeply to what they have to say.

SAVE THE DATE:

UUCS 20th Anniversary Celebration

UUCS will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a “Broadway Night” gala on Saturday, September 20. There will be performances by the UUCS Choir, jUUCStUUS, and others at the Cherry Blossom Hall in Sterling, VA. Additional information, including information about purchasing tickets, will be forthcoming.

COVENANT GROUP: READING

Covenant groups at UUCS engage the monthly themes in deep and meaningful ways. They read passages together, then respond to a set of questions, offering one another the opportunity to reflect unchallenged. New groups begin every October, and all UUCS members, friends, and visitors are encouraged to join a covenant group by contacting our covenant group coordinator, Deb Rose, at drosept@gmail.com.

Reading

I have a friend who's an artist and has sometimes taken a view which I don't agree with very well. He'll hold up a flower and say, "Look how beautiful it is," and I'll agree. Then he says, "I as an artist can see how beautiful this is, but you as a scientist take this all apart and it becomes a dull thing," and I think that he's kind of nutty. First of all, the beauty that he sees is available to other people and to me too. I believe, although I may not be quite as refined aesthetically as he is, that I can appreciate the beauty of a flower. At the same time, I see much more about the flower than he sees. I could imagine the cells in there, the complicated actions inside, which also have a beauty. I mean it's not just beauty at this dimension, at one centimeter; there's also beauty at smaller dimensions, the inner structure, also the processes. The fact that the colors in the flower evolved in order to attract insects to pollinate it is interesting; it means that insects can see the color. It adds a question: does this aesthetic sense also exist in the lower forms? Why is it aesthetic? All kinds of interesting questions which the science knowledge only adds to the excitement, the mystery and the awe of a flower. It only adds. I don't understand how it subtracts.

—Richard Feynman, The Feynman Series: Beauty (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRmbwczTC6E#t=115>)

Questions

1. What words do you associate with *beauty*?
2. How comfortable are you with the term beauty? Does it elicit any ambivalence or judgment? If so, how?
3. Can you recall and describe a time when beauty played into a decision you made?
4. Can you describe any spiritual connotation beauty may have for you?

CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

JUNE	
Sunday, 6/1	10:30 am — Worship service: "Sharing Our Gifts" Throughout this year, children, teens, and adults worked together in religious education classes to recognize each others gifts and to find ways to use their strengths. During this annual Religious Education Service, we will explore our individual gifts and the gifts of Unitarian Universalism as participants in the RE program share stories, words, music, and art. Noon — Inquirer's Class in Rev. Anya's office
Sunday, 6/8	10:30 am — Worship service: "Seeing Beauty in the Impermanent" Why is it that we are more likely to see beauty in that which is more impermanent? Explore impermanence in the last worship service lead by our ministerial intern, Andrew Mertz.
Sunday, 6/15	10:30 am — Worship service: "Service of the Living Tradition" Rev. Anya offers this annual appreciation of our life together, recalling the deaths, the births, the losses, and the hopes that have touched and transformed our lives. Our band will play. Noon — Annual picnic at Claude Moore park.

Sunday, 6/22	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Seeing Clearly”</i> A reflective service to engage our hearts and minds created by our worship associate and member of the Board of Trustees, Rosalie Clavez.
Sunday, 6/29	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “A Spiritual Call to Service”</i> Kurt Aschermann, whose program Community Table of Loudoun will launch on June 11 to provide an elegant dinner for those who seldom have that chance, talks about his evolving spiritual life and how it has become less centered on dogma and creeds and more on deeds and how it closely mirrors Unitarian Universalist values and principles.
J U L Y	
Sunday, 7/6	10:30 am — <i>Worship service</i> Noon — <i>Inquirer’s Class in Rev. Anya’s office</i>
Sunday, 7/13	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “The Man Who Gave It All Away: Moncure Conway”</i> Rev. Scott swaps pulpits with our own Rev. Anya to examine the life of a Unitarian minister born into a slaveholding family in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and how he walked away from his family fortune to follow his conscience.
Friday, 7/18	6:00 pm — 9:00 pm — <i>Board Retreat Dinner</i>
Saturday, 7/19	1:00 pm — 6:00 pm — <i>Board Retreat</i>
Sunday, 7/20	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Stuck”</i> Rev. Anya explores the experience of being stuck, walled in, bound to a reality that does not serve.
Sunday, 7/27	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Love Reaches Out”</i> What does it mean for Unitarian Universalists to reach out in love? Members of our congregation explore the spiritual commitment of welcome and hospitality.
A U G U S T	
Sunday, 8/3	10:30 am — <i>Worship service</i> Molly Scher is coming of age in our congregation and in our world. Come hear the wisdom that youth and wonder bring.
Sunday, 8/10	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “The Risk to Blossom”</i> Rev. Scott swaps pulpits with our own Rev. Anya. Join us as we explore the beauty that can only be found when we risk letting ourselves be stretched, release the hold of the bud, and allow ourselves to blossom.
Sunday, 8/17	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Lughnassadh”</i> Patty McKay and the Women’s Earth Based Spirituality group offer this annual celebration of the first harvest.
Sunday, 8/24	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Saved by Relationship”</i> How we are saved by love, theologically speaking. Rev. Anya reflects on the gifts of the Universalist faith.

Sunday, 8/31	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Saved by Love”</i> How we are saved by love, theologically speaking. Rev. Anya reflects on the gifts of the Universalist faith.
S E P T E M B E R	
Sunday, 9/7	10:30 am — <i>Worship service: “Water Communion”</i> Our space will fill with music and joy as we celebrate our annual ingathering. Bring a glass of water to add to our common vessel. This service is multi-generational.
Saturday, 9/20	6:00 pm — <i>UUCS 20th Anniversary Gala</i>