

Brokenness

In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions: When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop finding comfort in the sweet territory of silence?

— Gabrielle Roth

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How do we heal our brokenness? None of us make it through life without a chip or fracture or a wholly rent soul. We have been injured by the callousness of others, we have been told we are not good enough, the systems we have served have taken more than they have given, we have had aspects of our character rejected by those we love. We are in pieces. We similarly look at our world and ask, Why have we drawn lines about creation, splitting the human family into factions, sectarian groups, races, even religions—calling some good and others anathema?

Answering that question would take tomes. It has something to do with our social evolution, and it has something to do with the snail's pace of our spiritual evolution. We can conceive of wholeness, of a unity, but we do not have the fortitude to bring this dream to life, save in moments of transcendence.

There is a place, though, where we can practice wholeness and unity—where we can bring our full selves and ask our community to witness and embrace our fullness, our wholeness, and our brokenness. This place may surprise us: we may find ourselves swimming in our own tears as the choir sings or the band plays; we may hear our own joyous laughter, a sound we had long forgotten, after we bare our truths to our Covenant Groups; or we may look up from a deep sadness to realize our ache has been seen and someone we barely know has reached out

to hold our hands and ask “How can I be of service?”

A congregation is nothing if it does not invite wholeness—the wholeness of the individual as well as of the human family. And this invitation is an invitation for reciprocity: it is a call to give and to receive, to open and to be opened, to heal and to be healed. This is the nature of a spiritual community.

My father is a professor and I learned from him that you don't really know something until you teach it to another. We don't really know our own wholeness until we see the wholeness of another or work to serve wholeness in our world. Wholeness, a sense of our own fullness, a spiritual realization of our own strength and beauty, is given when we give of ourselves.

After the Community Table of Loudoun dinner, offered jointly by our congregation and two others to serve the needy, the teenagers who had served as wait staff thanked the leaders for the opportunity to serve. Why? We heal our own aches by healing the

aches in others. We put back the pieces of our own souls by helping others redeem their own wholeness.

When you are asked to give—to sustain this place that serves us all, and will serve multitudes for generations—know that you are being given not a task, but an opportunity.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Healing Brokenness



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Religious Challenge



*Paul Roche,
Board President*

I was raised a Catholic. And although I have some fond memories of the church, eventually my own beliefs led me to Unitarian Universalism. Why do I bring up the Catholics? Well, it is now annual giving time in our church and I am reminded of a simple fact. The Catholic Church does more to feed the poor and shelter the homeless in one day than all of Unitarian Universalism does in a year!

The reason is not because they are more generous than we are, but because there are a *lot* more of them than us. In any listing of religions in the United States, UU does not even warrant its own percentage. We are almost always grouped with “other,” which I imagine includes Pastafarianism.

Why are we such a small denomination (some say as few as 125,000 people)? I believe there are a number of reasons, but foremost among them is that we do not proselytize. Many of us feel uncomfortable talking about our religion even when we know it has profoundly changed our lives.

So... In our twenty years as a Congregation, we have always been very generous and welcoming to all. But we must do more. We must see our mission as nothing less than bringing UU salvation to thousands of people in Loudoun and Western Fairfax Counties. Yes, salvation! We can claim the word.

So... No one is helping us. We, each of us, have to examine not just what we get out of our church but what we can bring to others.

What does the UU Congregation of Sterling mean to you? Is it a meeting place for like-minded folks to socialize? Or is it a calling to spiritual growth and commitment?

When my wife Stephanie and I first began attending a UU church, we had no idea of how the budget worked or how rent got paid or even whether a minister got a salary! At first when people asked us to give to the church, we gave \$100 per month thinking that was generous. When I became a founder of UUCS and was treasurer for the first several years, we

eventually increased our giving to \$1,750 per month. Now that we are retired and on fixed incomes, we have scaled back to about \$1,000 per month. Of course we are blessed to be able to give at that level, but it is a stretch for us.

Just imagine if every family in UUCS gave at a “stretch” level. We could do magnificent things. Besides our own infrastructure support (we could finally pay Rev. Anya and the rest of the staff members what they deserve), we could do wonderful things in the community. We could launch an after-school tutoring program in our church. We could sponsor inexpensive childcare for the working people of Sterling. We would be limited only by our imaginations!

When you are filling out your pledge form during March, please stretch. Think in terms of at least 5% of your household income. Doing so will literally change lives for the better in our area.

March Justice Allocation

Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS)

In March, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS). LAWS seeks to empower survivors of personal violence so that they may live lives free from fear, anxiety, and danger. Prevention and education programs are presented throughout the county to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. For more information, please visit www.lcsj.org.

MARCH ARTWORK

Our new painting display is by artist Rachel Kazan. A member of UUC Fairfax, Rachel has studied watercolor painting at the Torpedo Factory and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She recently won an Honorable Mention award at the Vienna Treasury of Art show.

Did you know that if you buy artwork that is displayed in our sanctuary, the church receives 20% of the money?

If you are interested in purchasing any of Rachel's paintings, please contact Judy Gruner or write to Rachael directly at rachelkazan@mac.com.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Joy of Giving and Serving



*Linda Weaver,
Director of Religious
Education*

A few months ago, our children packed bags of food for Loudoun County students to take home over the winter break. The children were excited to help in this way and they focused on making sure each bag was filled well. Young children, who are often more concerned about what they want for themselves than the needs of other people, knew they were making a difference and they talked about how happy they were to be able to help. They didn't even ask for treats for themselves. I have seen the same looks of joy and pride I saw that day when children place a dollar in the offering basket, when they place hymnals on chairs, or when they welcome a younger child on Sunday morning.

Participating in stewardship (taking care of something we value and enabling it to grow by giving time, treasure, or talent) has many benefits for our children. Within the family, setting the table for dinner or being responsible for feeding a pet helps a child feel like she or he has something important to contribute. By using their gifts and skills to help a classmate or to respond to a need in the community, children can gain both hope and a deeper feeling of self worth, because they discover they have the power to make a difference. When children help their families decide on a cause to donate to or when they donate a part of their allowance, they can experience a sense of abundance and joy in giving to something larger than themselves. As they give and serve, children develop compassion and optimism and they experience competence and success. All are valuable traits that help us live lives of meaning, purpose, and connection.

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.

GENERAL NEWS

Parent Circle

Want to connect with other parents and caregivers at UUCS? Wonder how to apply your UU values to parenting? Experience challenges interacting positively with family, friends or neighbors because of religious differences? Wish you could balance time and money in a way that makes more space for the things that are important to you? You are not alone. Gather with other parents and guardians to explore these issues or others the group identifies. Sessions will be facilitated by Director of Religious Education Linda Weaver, Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael, and guests invited to address the topics. The Parent Circle will meet after worship service (12:15 am–1:15 pm) on March 15 and April 19. Childcare will be available.

Become a Mystery Pal in March and April—Sign Up Today!

Mystery Pals is a fun way to build a richer multigenerational community by creating new connections between children and adults. Everyone can sign up at the Event Table in the Fellowship Hall or by emailing Linda Weaver.

Adults and High School–Age Teens: You will be a Mystery Pal to a child or young teen. Each Sunday from March 15–April 26, you will secretly provide a small gift (such as stickers or a pencil) and a note with a hint about yourself. (Don't worry—Linda and Kathy can provide ideas and place your gifts/notes in children's bags when you are away.)

Children in Preschool–Eighth grade: Sign up to get a Pal by answering a few questions. Read the hints your Pal sends you and try to guess who your Pal is!

Mystery Pals' identities will be revealed on Friday, May 1, at the May Day and Mystery Pal Celebration.

For more information, contact Linda Weaver (re-director@uusterling.org) or Kathy Ashland (540-454-7268).

A MONTH OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Brokeness

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.

March 1–4

From “Choices” by Nikki Giovanni

*When i can't express
what i really feel
i practice feeling
what i can express
and none of it is equal
I know
but that's why mankind
alone among the animals
learns to cry*

March 5–11

A quotation from Rumi

The wound is the place where the Light enters you.

March 12–18

From Leonard Cohen’s “Anthem”

*Ah the wars they will
be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold
and bought again
the dove is never free.*

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

March 19–25

“Dreams” by Langston Hughes

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.*

*Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.*

March 26–31

Psalm 121, Revisited by Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Love that made heaven and earth.
Love will not let your foot be moved; the Love that keeps you
will not slumber.
Love is your keeper; Love is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
Evil will not weigh you down or capture your life.
Love will keep your going out and your coming in from this
time on and forevermore.*

Want to share something in the April newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the April liturgical theme, *salvation*
- ✓ Announcements (including those related to events that will take place in April and the first two weeks of May)
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned for next month, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUCS or during UUCS events.

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

SACRED STORY FOR ALL AGES

“Cracked Vessels” by Chaya Sarah Silberberg



Please read this month's sacred story online at www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/644295/jewish/Cracked-Vessels.htm. (The original author and publisher have requested that the story not be reprinted without permission.)

Questions for Discussion

When have you felt broken?

How have you healed?

What helps you when you feel broken or fragile?

What beauty have you seen come from brokenness? Perhaps you have seen beauty in a weathered building or layers of peeling paint. Perhaps you know someone who has overcome an injury or a disability to do amazing things. Perhaps you know someone who has experienced challenges and uses that experience to help others. Perhaps you know someone who glows with beauty from within.

MARCH IS PASTA! *Support Our High School Youth Group's Endeavors*

The UUUCS High School Youth Group is sponsoring a collection for LINK, a local non-profit providing emergency food to people in need in Herndon, Sterling, and Ashburn. Place donations of food and personal hygiene items in the boxes in the lobby at UUUCS.

Upcoming Food Themes:

March – Pasta

April – Canned fruits and vegetables

May – Rice and canned tuna

June & July – Cereal and peanut butter

August – Pasta



GENERAL NEWS

New Life School Partnership Update: Congratulations to the Recent Graduates!

Three years ago, UUUCS entered into a partnership with New Life School (NLS), a primary school in rural Uganda started by Rev. Mark Kiyimba, the minister of a UU church in Kampala. We were paired with the fifth grade class and developed a relationship that involved sending letters and drawings back and forth between our children and the students in our partner class. We also welcomed visitors who shared their experiences at NLS with our congregation. Additionally, the funds raised by our congregation helped to pay teacher salaries and provided the students with books, classroom supplies, uniforms, and lunches.

Fast forward three years, and our fifth grade class became a class of seventh graders who graduated from NLS this past December. Achieving this success required determination and hard work on the part of the students, their families, and the teachers and staff members. We celebrate their accomplishment, and also the part that we played.

UUUCS has now fulfilled our three-year commitment to our partner class. Recently Rev. Kiyimba informed us that, although they were grateful for our support, the school has decided to operate independently of its UU partners. Hence, we will not begin a new partnership with another class at NLS.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved with and supportive of this project. Let us remember that our small congregation made a bold decision to reach out beyond our borders and, in so doing, made a difference in the lives of these students halfway around the world. And along the way, we (and especially our children) learned about other cultures and ways of living, and had our worldview enriched by new ways of understanding.

UUUCS Partner Church Circle

Lindy Reeder, Rosalie Clavez, Gus Douoguih, Kim Monroe, Art Rose, and Linda Weaver

CALENDAR

Stay Up to Date With UUCS Events

MARCH	
Sunday, 3/1	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “Believe in Us”</p> <p>The ideas of Unitarianism and Universalism have been around for more than 2000 years because souls in far reaches of the world believed the tradition worthy of emulation. Many of these souls sacrificed and struggled for their faith—some dying as martyrs. What is worth believing in now, in our congregation, and in our wider faith movement? Our rock band will play.</p> <p>Noon — Inquirer’s class in Rev. Anya’s office</p> <p>All newcomers are welcome.</p>
Sunday, 3/8	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “An Unholy Partnership”</p> <p>Rev. Anya explores the ancient partnership between violence and religion, mourning what has been broken and affirming what might yet be healed. Meditative music will accompany our service.</p>
Sunday, 3/15	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “Life Should Come With Hard Hats!”</p> <p>Every day we live, we are constructing and deconstructing something: walls to keep others in or out, religions and beliefs to help explain our world, or our own stories. Guest minister Rev. Scott McNeill will reflect on how and what we build with our lives—and the danger that comes our way when we take risks and live courageously. Ashley and Jim Cash of the sacred rock group Woven Green will fill our sanctuary with powerful music.</p> <p>12:15 – 1:00 pm — Parent circle</p> <p>See article on page 3.</p>
Wednesday, 3/18	<p>6:45 pm — Evening worship service: “Brokeness”</p> <p>Join in this contemplative and participatory service honoring the bonds of community and providing us a space of peace, mid-month and mid-week.</p>
Sunday, 3/22	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “When You Shouldn’t Be a Unitarian Universalist”</p> <p>Our tradition is often belittled by the statement, “As a UU, you can believe anything you want.” It’s not so—Rev. Anya will reflect on exactly when beliefs and values conflict with our religious calling. The Accotink Unitarian Universalist choir and music director, Brad Rinoldo, will join our choir for a stellar set of songs.</p> <p>12:15 — Pizza and pledge lunch</p> <p>We will learn more about the 2015 stewardship drive.</p>
Sunday, 3/29	<p>10:30 am — Worship service: “Filled with Loving Kindness”</p> <p>This all-ages service explores the gift of compassionate communication through story and song. Special music will be provided by choir members and youth musicians.</p>