

REFLECTIONS

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 1, Issue 7 • March 2015

Theme: What does it mean to live a life of Freedom?

March Services:

Sunday 10:30

March 1st

Freedom is Coming

March 8th

Freedom of Speech

March 15th

“In a Just World...”

March 22nd

Free to be Yourself

March 29th

Freedom’s Boundaries

Soulful Sundowns (7:30pm)

March 4th

Living Between the Lines

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” —Nelson Mandela

Last month, we were challenged to ask: what is our passion? But what happens if a person isn't free to pursue that thing that would make them feel alive? Many of us are fortunate and privileged in that we have, at least to some degree, the opportunity to pursue our passion. Others have little or no opportunity to do such, and find themselves without the possibilities that we cherish so much in Canada.

Sometimes, this is because a government or other agency has restricted, by rule or law, the people's freedoms. This is especially apparent in countries such as China, North Korea, and Iran, where dissent is punished with loss of freedom and time in prison. But there are other, more hidden losses of freedom that sneak in and are often unrecognized, such as the current cases of racial profiling in the United States.

It's easy to feel helpless when we encounter cases of oppression and not know what to do. We can take the advice of the late Nelson Mandela, a South African freedom fighter, and live our lives in ways that respect the freedoms of others. We can choose not to be complicit when others' freedoms are taken away by rule of law or by systematic oppression. We can

be the change we want to see in the world.

We can do this by recognizing the ways in which people's freedoms are taken away by governments and individuals, whether intentionally and unintentionally, and refusing to participate in these injustices. We can take public stands on behalf of those who have lost their freedom, even when such stands don't directly benefit us. And we can educate ourselves about our own privilege and on issues of oppression and injustice and refuse to be silent when such inequalities are before us. As our spiritual exercises this month challenge us, we can also be that escape people need to help them find freedom, just as we can find our own freedom sometimes in a moment of rest.

There are many in the world not blessed with privilege, but those of us with privilege can use our freedom to help others achieve the same benefits we have and to truly build Beloved Community. Let us each find our freedom song and sing it, awakening the sense of freedom that exists in others and creating a more just and equitable world.

In faith,
Chris Rothbauer

Upcoming Services

March 1st *Freedom is Coming*

Description: As we begin our monthly theme of freedom we hope to deepen our understanding of what freedom means for us as individuals and as a community. Freedom is a multi-faceted concept with nuances like ‘freedom from’ and ‘freedom to’. Come join the exploration.

Presenter	Rev Debra Faulk		
Service Associates	Danielle Webber, Student Minister	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia

March 8th *Freedom of Speech*

Description: We list a number of freedoms as being important in defining a progressive society. This morning I claim that the most significant is freedom of speech.

Presenter	Rev Debra Faulk		
Service Associates	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director

March 15th *“In a Just World...”*

Description: A humanist view of the worth of every person compels us to seek justice – even though this may require changing the structures of justice and of governance. We need the courage to “call our shots” on the basis of educated and informed citizenry.

Presenter	Bruce Godwin		
Service Associates	Penney Kome	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director; Multigen Choir and UUphonia

March 22nd *Free to be Yourself*

Description: We like to think we have freedom to choose our own destinies, but what happens when forces beyond our control prevent us from reaching our full potential. This service will look at the connection between oppression and freedom in contemporary society and ask: what can we do to build a more just society?

Presenter	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister		
Service Associates	Rev Debra Faulk	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director

March 28th *Freedom’s Boundaries*

Description: Are there any reasonable boundaries to freedom, any freedoms that need to be limited? The notion of freedom may be embraced as boundless in the ideal, can it be in reality?

Presenter	Rev Debra Faulk		
Service Associates	Danielle Webber, Student Minister	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director

All above services are Sunday mornings at 10:30am

Wednesday Soulful Sundown Service – March 4th

Held on the first Wednesday from 7:30 – 8:15 p.m. (third Wednesday Soulful Sundown cancelled this month)

Living between the lines: Join us for this young adult led service as we reflect on what freedom means as we navigate living within social constructs. This is an interactive worship, so expect movement and lively discussion.

Getting Started: February's Spiritual Exercise

Thinking About Freedom

OPTION 1: Share Your Freedom Song

Is there a better image of freedom than watching someone dance and sing to their favorite song? What song leaves you feeling free? What song has turned up in your life and set you free? What song do you regularly turn to feel free again? What song reminds you how important freedom is—even *what* freedom is? To honor the remarkable link between music and freedom, this assignment invites us to keep it simple:

1. Pick a song that has set your free or regularly leaves you feeling free.
2. Using the device of your choosing, bring a recording of it to your group. (Make it only a 30-second version so to leave room for everyone's sharing.)
3. Come prepared to share a particular moment in your life when you turned to this song and it set your free.

To inspire you, here are some links to freedom songs that rank high on many people's lists:

- Pharrell Williams - "Happy" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM>
"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_DKWlrA24k
The Dixie Chicks - "Goodbye Earl" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRdrBCamno0>
Bach "Suite No. 1 in G major" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiTdrFTe0zI>
Colin Hay - "Beautiful World" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvu_iYOiluo
Namoli Brennet - "We Belong" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgdzz_UEuMM
Katrina & The Waves - "Walking On Sunshine" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPUmE-tne5U>
Richie Havens - "Freedom" at Woodstock 1969 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5aPBU34Fyk>
Jimmy Cliff - "I Can See Clearly Now" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jsw_r0hILQ
Bruce Springsteen - "Born to Run" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxuThNgl3YA>
Leonard Cohen - "Hallelujah" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrLk4vdY28Q>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdyTXBT5CQE>
Demi Lovato - "Let It Go" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHue-HaXXzg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17QQcK4I6Yw> (Jimmy Fallon's version)

OPTION 2: Your Moment's Freedom: Find Your Escape

There are some things we can never escape even if we want to: A diagnosis, a loss, the responsibility of caregiving, regret, worry, the draining busyness of daily life, the joy-filled but nonstop responsibility of parenting. Some of these burdens are extraordinary; some are routine. But regardless of their weight or intensity, we find ourselves longing for a reprieve. A spiritual timeout. A temporary moment of renewal that lets us feel carefree just long enough to be refilled or to gain a new perspective.

That's what this spiritual exercise is all about: **Find a way to feel carefree, a sense of freedom!** Find a way to step outside the weight of whatever you're carrying—even if only for a moment or a day.

To be specific, here is your task:

1. Find a moment of quiet and watch this video-all the way through!: <http://www.utrend.tv/v/one-second/>
2. Spend some time identifying the burden, weight or responsibility from which you need (or would just like) a brief time of escape.
3. Then do something to give you that escape. *Do something that leaves you feeling carefree!*
4. Come back to your group prepared to share the gift that this moment of freedom gave you.

OPTION 3: Help Them Escape, Find Respite, Find A time for a sense of Freedom

Sometimes it's not us that need a moment of escape, but someone we care about. Stepping away, renewing oneself, taking a break are not gifts that some people are good at giving themselves. Sometimes they need a friend to give it to them or make them do it. So maybe life is calling you to help *them* escape.

If so, here is your task:

1. Find a moment of quiet and watch this video-all the way through!: <http://www.utrend.tv/v/one-second/>
2. Spend some time identifying someone in your circle of concern that is carrying a burden, weight or responsibility from which they need a brief time of escape.
3. Then do something to give them that gift, to leave them feeling carefree. You can be direct about it or sneaky. Sometimes gifts like these require a surprise or even anonymity. It might be important for you to drag them into it. Then again, it might be important for them to never know you are behind it. Your assignment is simply to orchestrate it, to make it happen.
4. Come back to your group prepared to share the gift that this moment of freedom gave them... and you.

For Inspiration

Remember that these readings serve as “jumping off points.” They are not here to tell us how to “do it right.” Rather they serve as windows into how others have thought about what it means to be a person of deep listening. Hearing about the journeys of others, we are better able to think through our own.

There’s a lot here. Don’t attempt to absorb or analyze it all. Rather, think of it as a treasure chest that you are sifting through to find the jewel that speaks most strongly to your heart. Come to the meeting prepared to share the selection that resonates with or speaks most powerfully to the story of your own life right now.

Freedom for Others:

“There is something in the very nature of my freedom that inclines me to love, to do good, to dedicate myself to others. I have an instinct that tells me that I am less free when I am living for myself alone. The reason for this is that I cannot be completely independent. Since I am not self-sufficient I depend on someone else for my fulfillment. My freedom is not fully free when left to itself. It becomes so when it is brought into the right relation with freedom of another.” —Thomas Merton

“Freedom is actually a bigger game than power. Power is about what you can control. Freedom is about what you can unleash.” —Harriet Rubin

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” —Nelson Mandela

“Well I know it wasn’t you who held me down/Heaven knows it wasn’t you who set me free/So often times it happens that we live our lives in chains/And we never even know we have the key.”
—Jack Tempchin, Robert Arnold Strandlund from “Already Gone,” by The Eagles

“If you have come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because

your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” —Aboriginal Activists’ Group

“The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.”
—David Foster Wallace

“Freedom is not about being able to do whatever we want, when we want. It has nothing to do with listening to our heart or following our dreams or whatever else we put on greeting cards and bumper stickers. Real freedom comes from learning to get out of our ‘skull-sized kingdoms’ long enough to pay attention to the human being next us so that we might treat them with decency and kindness and respect. Then perhaps we’ll have our authenticity, but we’ll have it because we’ve stopped caring about it.”
—Michael Sacasas, “The Frailest Thing” blog

Freedom beyond Boundaries:

“Water does not resist. Water flows. When you plunge your hand into it, all you feel is a caress. Water is not a solid wall, it will not stop you. But water always goes where it wants to go, and nothing in the end can stand against it. Water is patient. Dripping water wears away a stone. Remember that, my child. Remember you are half

water. If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does.”

—Margaret Atwood

“Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose/And nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free.”

—Kris Kristofferson, “Me and Bobby McGee”

“I like geography best,” he said, “because your mountains and rivers know the secret. Pay no attention to boundaries.” -Brian Andreas, *Story People*

Freedom from Expectations:

“What if we choose not to do the things we are supposed to do? The principal gain is a sense of an authentic act—and an authentic life. It may be a short one, but it is an authentic one, and that's a lot better than those short lives full of boredom. The principal loss is security. Another is respect from the community. But you gain the respect of another community, the one that is worth having the respect of.” —Joseph Campbell

“Choosing independence of mind is always more challenging than simply drifting obediently with the herd; but it is also far more rewarding and more satisfying in the end. Those who refuse to choose independence of mind lead lives of quiet boredom and malaise, for they merely drift through life. It is only the bold who truly live.” —J. Todd Ring

“Having Freedom from being held hostage by your ego and all its fears and demands, and just being who you really are at any moment, are elements of authenticity. Playing in roles that are a true expression of who you are is a way we show authenticity. Connecting with others without masks, willing to ‘get naked’ and let others see you for everything you are is how intimacy plays a crucial part in authenticity. Willingness to walk away from situations where you cannot be yourself is a way we maintain authenticity.”—Kevin Rafferty

“Freedom,” by Jacob Gifford

I'm a weed on

A cliff, I hang out with

An eagle, but maybe the

Flowers are the weeds.

I'm free and they

Are not, I cling to rocks,

They cling to a pot of dirt.

When there is an earthquake

I will be safe but the flowers

Will not. They are plucked

And put into jars of water

They will die, but I will

Live free and long.

“Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” —Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Freedom from Suffering:

“The moment I have defined another being as my enemy, I lose part of myself, the complexity and subtlety of my vision. I begin to exist in a closed system. When anything goes wrong, I blame my enemy. If I wake troubled, my enemy had led me to this feeling. If I cannot sleep, it is because of my enemy. Slowly all the power in my life begins to be located outside. And my whole being is defined in relation to this outside force, which becomes daily more monstrous, more evil, more laden with all the qualities in myself I no longer wish to own. The quality of my thought then is diminished. My imagination grows small. My self seems meager. For my enemy has stolen all of these.” —Susan Griffin

“No hurt survives for long without our help, she said, and then she kissed me and sent me out to play again for the rest of my life.” —Brian Andreas

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.” —Khalil Gibran

“To forgive somebody is to say that one way or another, ‘You have done something unspeakable, and by all rights I should call it quits between us. Both my pride and principles demand no less. However, although I make no guarantees that I will be able to forget what you’ve done and though we may both carry scars for life, I refuse to let it stand between us. I still want you for my friend...’ When somebody you’ve wronged forgives you, you’re spared the dull and self-diminishing throb of a guilty conscience. When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you’re spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom to again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each other’s presence.”

—Frederick Buechner

“As long as you make an identity for yourself out of pain, you cannot be free of it.” —Eckhart Tolle

Freedom from Success & Stuff:

“In America I saw the freest and most enlightened people placed in the happiest circumstances that the world affords. Yet it seemed to me as if a cloud habitually hung upon their brows, and I thought them serious and almost sad, even in their pleasures... Their taste for physical gratifications must be regarded as the original source of that secret disquietude which the actions of the Americans betray and of that inconstancy of which they daily afford fresh examples. They who have set their hearts exclusively upon the pursuit of worldly welfare are always in a hurry, for they have but a limited time at their disposal to reach, to grasp, and to enjoy it.”

—Alexis de Tocqueville

“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be

spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.” —Carl Sandburg

“You are all worked up chasing after this and trying to avoid that. These things are not coming to you, so to speak, but you are going to them. Stop desiring the one and fearing the other, and they will stay where they are, and you will not be seen pursuing or fleeing them.” —Marcus Aurelius

Be Content with what you have;
Rejoice in the way things are.
When you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you.
—Lao Tze

Freedom to Be Yourself

“At least once a day, allow yourself the freedom to think and dream for yourself.” —Albert Einstein

“A friend is someone who gives you total freedom to be yourself.” —Jim Morrison

“You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now, and nothing can stand in your way.” —Richard Bach

“Denying yourself a life of personal freedom is denying yourself of a life worth living.” —Michelle Cruz-Rosado

“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our minds.” —Bob Marley

“The amount of happiness you have depends on the amount of freedom you have in your heart.” —Thich Nhat Hanh

“The most important kind of freedom is to be what you really are. You trade in your reality for a role. You trade in your sense for an act. You give up your ability to feel, and in exchange, put on a mask. There can’t be any large-scale revolution until there’s a personal revolution, on an individual level. It’s got to happen inside first.” —Jim Morrison

How do we Talk with our Children about “Freedom?”

How do we talk with our children about “freedom”? This is the question I’ve been working on as we approach the month of March and the Theme of Freedom. Through some stimulating conversations, some great resources have come my way and I’d like to share them with our “Beloved Community”.

Freedom must be made concrete for young children to grasp. Here are some books that talk about many different kinds of freedom:



Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg and Three Cups of the Tea, by Greg Mortenson and Susan L. Roth, illustrated by Susan L. Roth. Published by Dial Books for Young Readers ©2009.

This is a story about how the respectful friendship between Greg Mortenson and the children and adults in the village of Korphe, Pakistan, transformed the lives of everyone. The village as a community was empowered to build a school, which then meant that they could have a teacher come and teach their children full-time instead of two or three days a week. The illustrations are collages and are stunning works of art in their own right.



Someplace to Go by Maria Testa; Illustrated by Karen Ritz. Published by Albert Whitman & Co. © 1997.

Davey and his family are homeless. *Someplace to Go* follows Davey between the time school ends and the soup kitchen opens. The everyday freedoms that come to those of us who are lucky enough to have homes, are laid out with stark clarity in Davey’s story.



Violet by Tania Duprey Stehlik; Illustrated by Vanja Vuleta Jovanovic. Published by Second Story Press © 2009.

In Violet’s world of blue, red and yellow children, she is the only person she has met who is violet, the daughter of a red mom and a blue dad. Violet learns that she has the freedom to choose to embrace her mixed race heritage.



Nazreen’s Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan written and illustrated by Jeanette Winter. Published by The Global Fund for Children, Beach Lane Books ©2009.

Nazreen’s grandmother narrates a story of how Nazreen’s father was taken away by police and when her mother went to search for him and learn about his fate, she too never returned home. This is a story of hope in the midst of deep trauma and fear. Going to a secret school for girls at the height of the Taliban rule was very dangerous, but the freedoms that were won for Nazreen and her grandmother were worth the risk of being found out.

I have discovered a resource created by the Canadian Civil Liberties Education Trust that will be used with the children through March. The Acorn Test is a set of three simple questions to ask with children when evaluating the balance between rules and freedoms. The web site provides resources for children to learn about civil liberties. For a prezi about the Acorn Test, visit <http://bit.ly/1ED0trH>.

Submitted by Shannon Mang, Director of Religious Education

Questions for Discussion

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply look them over and find the one that "hooks" you most. Then let it take you on a ride. Live with it for a while. Allow it to regularly break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts. And then come to your TLC (Theme-based Listening Circle) meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.

1. **What does freedom mean to you?**
2. Many of us have privilege by virtue of birth or status (such as white privilege, heterosexual privilege, cisgender privilege, male privilege, and class privilege) that means, at least to some degree, we have an advantage in society over other, less privileged people. **What privileges do you carry? How can you use your privilege to help make the world a better place for those without such advantage?**
3. **What have you used your freedom to unleash?** Harriet Rubin writes, "Freedom is actually a bigger game than power. Power is about what you can control. Freedom is about what you can unleash." **Is freedom still waiting for you to use it to release something in the world? Or are you somehow stuck in the smaller game of pursuing power and control?**
4. **When have you been freed by love?**
5. **When was quitting an act of freedom for you?** Have there been times in your life where you needed to stop doing something in order to find freedom?
6. **Has freedom for you been in one big leap or a slow and steady process?** Are you trying to make it one big leap when it needs to be slow and steady? Or are you trying to be slow and steady, when you really need to take the leap?
7. The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said humanity is "born free, and everywhere...is in chains." **How can a person be free but still be in chains?**
8. **Do you have ways in which you help others find their freedom?** Many within our church engage in social, environmental, and economic justice activities because they value creating a more just and equitable world. Others help out those who are less fortunate to find some sense of freedom for themselves. **What ways can you help others find the best within themselves?**
9. Eckhart Tolle writes, "As long as you make an identity for yourself out of pain, you cannot be free of it." **Have you trapped yourself in your wounded-ness and victimhood? Are you trapped in the escape from pain? Are you trapped in a story about yourself or others?** We all have our stories: "I am the victim." "He will never change." "I'm not smart enough." "This is as good as it gets." "She can't be trusted." Is it possible that your story is wrong, or old, or only a piece of the picture? **What would happen if you put your story on the shelf and tried to live out of an alternative one for a month?**

Extra Resources for Reflection on Freedom

Videos on Freedom

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech, August 28, 1963: <http://youtu.be/smEqnnkIfYs>

"Rupal Patel: Synthetic voices, as unique as fingerprints," TED Talk, <http://bit.ly/1fYUtlS>

"Gretchen Rubin Discussing 'Obligers'" <http://youtu.be/CUU99WhRu5Q>

"See Why We Have an Absolutely Ridiculous Standard of Beauty in Just 37 Seconds" <http://tiny.cc/tblvcx>

"Utah Man Proposes to Boyfriend in Lumber Aisle of Home Depot" <http://tiny.cc/u5xocx>

Books on Freedom

Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Book of Negroes by Lawrence Hill (There is also a six-part video adaptation of the book available.)

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Impulse: Why We Do What We Do Without Knowing Why We Do It by David Lewis

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom by Don Miguel Ruiz

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience by Henry David Thoreau

Articles on Freedom

"How Not to be Offended" <http://bit.ly/1j2eCtR>

Wadjda, 2013 <http://bit.ly/1L9n321>

"The Treasure at the Heart of Pain" <http://bit.ly/1FoDAPl>

"Sitting on the Stoop: Let Go of the Banana!" by Rev. Scott Tayler <http://bit.ly/1ABBsmb>

"NY Times: Making a Scene Movies" <http://nyti.ms/1FziEFi>

"How to Eliminate Junk Stimulus" <http://bit.ly/1AiDsfN>

"Top 10 Books on Simplicity and Minimalism" <http://bit.ly/1BjHM1d>

Looking Ahead

The content for these packets is a group effort. We welcome submissions of your ideas of readings, stories, videos, visual images, questions, and spiritual exercises for each month's topic. While not everything will make it into this collection, it is useful for our worship team and our group facilitators. You can send submissions for April's topic of "Sustainability" by the third Sunday, March 15th, to debra@unitarianscalgary.org

Themes for Spring 2015

April – Sustainability

May – Honesty

June – Imagination

Theme-based Listening Circles (TLCs) for 2014-15

Theme-based Listening Circles are now meeting all over the city! This is your opportunity to connect with others within the church while, at the same time, delving deeper into the theme of the month. If you still need to sign-up, spots are available in many of the groups and new groups will be forming soon to meet demand. These are the current groups.

4th Sunday, 12:00-2:00 pm, Unitarian Church of Calgary, Chris Rothbauer and Ev Dewar, Facilitators

4th Tuesday, 7:00-9:00 pm, Renfrew, Liz Webster and Susan Bradt, Facilitators

4th Wednesday, 2:00-4:00 pm, Kensington, Bev Webber and Martin Watson, Facilitators

4th Friday, 10:00 am-12:00 pm, Unitarian Church of Calgary, Bonnie Evans and Sylvia Fenn, Facilitators

A TLC is also available especially for families that will meet at various locations and times throughout the year, as well as a virtual TLC.

To sign-up for any of these TLCs, e-mail Chris Rothbauer at tlc@unitarianscalgary.org or phone (587) 585-5141.

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Thanks to all who contributed and appreciation for the Canadian Unitarian Congregations participating in the thematic ministry sharing circle, and Rev. Scott Tayler's Soul Matters Sharing Circle.