



REFLECTIONS IMAGINATION

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 1, Issue 10 • June 2015

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

"We tend to consider imagination too lightly, forgetting that the life we make, for ourselves individually and for the world as a whole, is shaped and limited only by the perimeters of our imagination. Things are as we imagine them to be, as we imagine them into existence." — Thomas Moore, *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*

Thomas Moore says that we take imagination too lightly, even forget about it. Our forgetfulness seems verified all the time when I talk to people. I hear comments like: "I'm not creative" or "I'm not one of those imaginative types." But here's the thing; I don't buy it. Indeed, our Unitarian Universalist faith doesn't buy it either. Even if the word imagination isn't used much in our churches or by our theologians and preachers, it is clearly at the center of how Unitarian Universalism sees the world and understands "salvation."

So this month, we wrestle with the idea that "Imagination Saves!" As we take a closer look at our lives, we notice that imagination is the thing that helps us break out of self-centeredness and see ourselves as connected to the greater whole. It is what allows us to put ourselves in other people's shoes and bring empathy and compassion back into our lives. It is what allows us to trust and assume good intentions with others, even when people seem threatening or of ill intent. It is what allows us to – as the saying goes – turn lemons into lemonade. It is what helps us paint the picture of what the world could be and thus inspires us to work for that better world. It helps us paint a picture of what we might become and then lures us toward that goal of a different self and a new life. One of the most precious gifts others give to us is when they use imagination to paint a picture of what's possible and talk us out of all those negative voices in our heads that tell us "things will never change." All this is a way of saying that when it comes to imagination, we need reminders of how deeply it is woven through the fabric of our lives, even our daily living.

Thus, this month's *Reflections* is designed to help us step back and take another look. The exercises will push us to notice how imagination has made us who we are, and in doing so hopefully inspire us to risk acts of imagination more often. Our Questions for Reflection are designed to help us think more deeply about how we might use imagination in a new or better way. And the gift will hopefully be the one that Thomas Moore lifts up: The gift of noticing that nothing is as limited and set in stone as we sometimes believe. To say that, "things are as we imagine them to be," is an incredible reminder of the power we all have, not only to see that life and we are so much more than we sometimes believe, but that life and we CAN BE so much more than we sometimes imagine.

We have the ability to remind each other that life is so much more than it seems at first blush. Imagine that!

Namaste,
Rev. Debra
edited from words by Rev. Scott Tayler

June Services: Sunday 10:30

June 7th
Imagining Blooms

June 14th
**Imagine a Universal
Language**

June 21st
**The Imagination of
Children and Youth**

June 28th
**A Good, Old-Fashioned
Hymn Sing!**



UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CALGARY • JUNE 2015

Upcoming Services **All services are Sunday mornings at 10:30am**

June 7

Imagining Blooms

Join us for the annual Flower Communion Service, a Unitarian Tradition that celebrates our individuality and beauty that we each bring to our community. We will be engaging our imagination this morning as well, what could the bouquet of our community look like? What do you imagine our community bouquet looking like in 10 years, 5 years, next year? If you can imagine it, you can achieve it, what can our community achieve?

Presenter: Danielle Webber, Student Minister

Service Leader: Mary Anna Louise Kovar

Music: Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia

June 14

Imagine a Universal Language

Can you imagine what it would be like to be able to communicate with everyone, if when you travel or met someone from another country, there was a common language you could use? Esperanto was a language created with such an intention. Learn more about it and explore the possibility that such a language might mean for connecting with others.

Presenters: Rev Debra Faulk, Meredith and Allan Simon

Music: UUphonia and Musical Guest Yoshiki

June 21

The Imagination of Children and Youth.

What a sacred privilege to walk with the children and youth of this community through their "growing up" years. In this service there will be two bridging ceremonies: The Grade 6 children will bridge into a brand new Junior Youth Group, and senior youth will bridge to become Young Adults. The youth will share with us memories and insights: what caught their imagination and their commitment. Shannon Mang, our DRE will share the UU approach to harnessing the spiritual imagination of children.

Presenters: Shannon Mang, Director of Religious Exploration and children

Rebekah Mobley-Kasner, Lead Youth Advisor with youth

Music: Jane Perry, Music Director

June 28

A Good Old-Fashioned Hymn Sing!

As a final service before the summer, Brandis Purcell and Music Director Jane Perry will lead a one-hour hymn sing. Bring friends and bring your best singing voice — we're going to raise the roof!

Getting Started: June's Spiritual Exercise

Thinking about Imagination

Make A Case For Imagination!

With this exercise we are invited to embody our lawyer-selves and bring a personal story to your group that testifies to the power of imagination in your life. Below are several options that categorize how imagination makes a difference. They are offered as inspiration to help you remember the particular way imagination has shown up in – and even saved – your life. If none of these categories/options fit your unique experience, that's fine. Under each option/category listed below are some video and web links to help you remember a story about imagination that you might have forgotten or overlooked.

In addition to bringing one story to your group meeting, consider bringing an object that somehow symbolizes or captures the impact imagination has made on you. Maybe it's a picture of your old life and another of your new one. Maybe it's a wedding certificate. Or a T-shirt with a social justice slogan. Maybe it's baby boots from the child you never imagined you'd have. Or something from your second career through which you completely reinvented yourself. Maybe it's running shoes or mountain climbing gear that symbolizes the adventurous self you could never have imagined just two years ago. The point is to find something that would never have come into your life if it hadn't been for imagination.

OPTION A: A TIME WHEN YOUR IMAGINATION HELPED YOU TURN "JUNK" INTO "MUSIC"

For Inspiration:

- Landfill Harmonic: <http://bit.ly/1LlyIUO>
- Rainy Wedding: Three Minute Fiction series on NPR: <http://n.pr/1Fb8KnX>

OPTION B: A TIME WHEN YOUR IMAGINATION HELPED SAVE THE WORLD

For Inspiration:

- Gaming can make a better world-TED talk: <http://bit.ly/1UHepA>
- Fun Theory Case Study: <http://bit.ly/1dygmeN>

OPTION C: A TIME WHEN YOUR IMAGINATION EXPANDED YOUR HEART AND PUT YOU IN OTHERS' SHOES

For Inspiration:

- Suburban-Homicide: A Rochester artist imagines what it would look like if the 54 homicides that took place in the city of Rochester occurred in a Rochester suburb instead. – <http://bit.ly/1ewzPwp>

OPTION D: HOW MY PARENTS' IMAGINATION MADE ME

For Inspiration:

- Sarah Kay: If I should have a daughter ...: <http://bit.ly/1Fb8PII>

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.

im-agi-na-tion n.

1. the faculty of imagining, or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses.
2. the action or process of forming such images or concepts.
3. the faculty of producing ideal creations consistent with reality, as in literature, as distinct from the power of creating illustrative or decorative imagery.

Synonyms: fancy, fantasy, idea, vision

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”
— Albert Einstein, On Science

“My deafness has been my greatest blessing. It has saved me from having to listen to reasons why things couldn’t be done.” — Thomas Edison

“The most interesting people are the people with the most interesting pictures in their minds.” — Earl Nightingale,

“Our imagination flies – we are its shadow on the earth.” — Vladimir Nabokov

“Imagination is a warehouse of facts, with poet and liar in joint ownership.” — Ambrose Bierce

“I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it’s a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life’s realities.” —Theodore Geisel/Dr. Seuss

“Years ago, I took a class on pastoral care. The teacher suggested a method for us ministers to use with people who come to us for counseling. She suggested that we think of our life as a story, and that we write the next chapter of our story. Use your imagination to think of the characters, the scene, and the plot. What happens in that chapter? How does it advance the story? I have suggested this method to people contemplating divorce, thinking about moving or changing jobs, and for other life events. One of the most powerful times I used this was when a woman in our church was diagnosed, for the third time in 10 years, with cancer. She had to decide to pursue aggressive and uncertain treatment or not. I asked her to write the next chapter for herself. That process led to a clear answer: to enjoy the time left, for so long as it was. The process helped her, and her husband, to be intentional and deliberate about how they lived for what turned out to be her last 45 days. Maybe—probably—the next chapter of your life won’t turn out exactly how you write it. But the engagement of imagination to think about what we want to happen can clarify, provoke, and comfort us.” — UU Minister



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"The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it." — J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan

"If you will imagine yourself as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, you see that we are the earth, we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth." — Joseph Campbell

"Though I personally will defend the value of bedtime stories to my last gasp, I have learned to value imagination in a much broader sense. Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared." — J.K. Rowling, 2008 Harvard Commencement

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundation under them." — Henry David Thoreau, Walden

"...if something is there, you can only see it with your eyes open, but if it isn't there, you can see it just as well with your eyes closed. That's why imaginary things are often easier to see than real ones." — Norton Juster, The Phantom Tollbooth

"We tend to consider imagination too lightly, forgetting that the life we make, for ourselves individually and for the world as a whole, is shaped and limited only by the perimeters of our imagination. Things are as we imagine them to be, as we imagine them into existence." — Thomas Moore, The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life

"So you see, imagination needs noodling — long, inefficient, happy idling, dawdling, and puttering." — Brenda Veland

"Our problems with unhappiness are rooted in the imagination.... For instance, we can interpret someone's accidental sharp tone of voice as an unfriendly reaction to ourselves, begin to give that person life in our imagination as someone who doesn't like us, therefore be on the lookout for subsequent evidence of hostility, be ready to interpret everything that happens in that light, and of course ourselves show distrust and unfriendliness in turn, which naturally have their effect on the other person; and so by building this thing up in our imagination we can develop a whole atmosphere and relationship of hostility that may be completely false and unnecessary because it all began from something quite accidental. Similarly, by persistently thinking well of persons, looking for good traits in them, imagining them as pleasant and agreeable, well-disposed toward ourselves, we will enable ourselves to behave in a naturally friendly way to them and elicit friendly responses." — Beatrice Bruteau, from Radical Optimism: Rooting Ourselves in Reality

"One day Gandhi stepped aboard a train as it started to move, and one of his shoes slipped off and dropped on the tracks. Unable to retrieve it, he calmly took off his other shoe and threw it back along the track to land close to the first. When an amazed passenger asked why he had done that, Gandhi smiled and said, 'The poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track will now have a pair he can use.' With the eyes of his imagination, Gandhi saw a man with bare feet, saw him coming across a lone shoe and desperately searching for the other, and saw the disappointment on his face when he didn't find it; seeing these things, Gandhi did what he could to help." — Donald McCullough, from Say Please, Say Thank You



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Imagination is the beginning of creation. You
imagine what you desire, you will what you
imagine and at last you create what you will.
George Bernard Shaw

You can't do it unless you can imagine it.
George Lucas

The man who has no imagination has no wings.
Muhammad Ali

I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I
set him free. Michelangelo

Imagination will often carry us to worlds that
never were. But without it we go nowhere. Carl
Sagan

What we wish, we readily believe, and what we
ourselves think, we imagine others think also.
Julius Caesar

"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my
imagination. Imagination is more important than
knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination
encircles the world." — Albert Einstein

I believe that imagination is stronger than
knowledge. That myth is more potent than
history. That dreams are more powerful than
facts. That hopes always triumphs over
experience. That laughter is the only cure for
grief. And I believe that love is stronger than
death. Robert Fulghum,

"Stories of imagination tend to upset those
without one." — Terry Pratchett

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination. John
Lennon

Everything you can imagine is real. Pablo Picasso

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try No hell below us
Above us only sky Imagine all the people
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too Imagine all the people
Living life in peace...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one
John Lennon

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. **Have you become more or less imaginative with age?**
2. **Are you more imaginative than you think?** Some of us would never dream of describing ourselves as creative or imaginative. And yet, all of us have faced and found our way out of dead ends. We've taken a deep breath and done the hard work of turning our gaze from the half-empty part of the glass to the part that's half-full. If that's not imaginative, I don't know what is. **Are you giving yourself enough credit?**
3. **Has imagination ever lead you astray? Into danger?** Imagination can sometimes have a dark side. **Is your imagination helping you out of or into trouble?**
4. **Do you mourn the loss of imagination?** Especially the imaginative play you relished as a child? **How might you bring some of that back into your life? What is your "adult version" of "imaginative play"?**
5. **Does the imagination need to come to your rescue? Are you listening to all the reasons why "it" can't be done?** The famous inventor Thomas Edison used to say his deafness was his greatest blessing. A blessing because it saved him from having to listen to reasons why things couldn't be done. **Do you need to do a little less listening to the "cannots" in your life?**
6. **Do you consider yourself to be an "artist with your life?" Do you want to? What might that mean?** When you look out at life, do you see unyielding circumstances or imagine a playground of possibilities?
7. **Do you imagine where you are going in life or react to what is?**
8. **Do you like imagining the future? If not, do you know why? And are you finally ready to do the work to change that?**

The Benefits of Nurturing Your Child's Imagination

Creativity and imagination are still valuable traits in this goal-oriented world. Here's how to encourage your little daydreamer. By Canadian Family

Promote Play

One of the best things about childhood is the freedom imaginative play provides—unscripted entertainment with no expectations. “Kids are really lucky because they don’t understand the way the world is set up. They are not programmed the way we are programmed to work within an established set of parameters,” says Carol Shirley, a registered psychologist in Halifax.

Whether it is pretending to be astronauts or fairies, kids nurture a number of abilities when they engage in make-believe, says Dr. Sandra Russ, a psychology professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, whose research focuses on how pretend play is involved in child development.

“Imagination in play relates to coping ability, emotional regulation and understanding emotions,” she says. “But the strongest relationship is between pretend play and creativity and the ability to come up with different and original ideas to solve a problem.”

This ability to improvise is crucial as we age, believes Allen MacInnis, artistic director of Toronto’s Young People’s Theatre. “The truth is we need our imagination throughout our lives,” he says. MacInnis notes that as adults we are often called upon to predict or imagine the consequences of an action or to come up with solutions to problems. “I don’t think we’re going to be very good at that if we haven’t actively nurtured imagination as kids.” In addition to play being a creative outlet, many children use it to process their emotions. Research shows that play can help reduce anxiety in children, notes Dr. Russ. “Where adults talk through their problems, children play them out.”

How To Spark Imagination

Passive pursuits have their place, but when children have some role in an activity, they become engaged in the creative process. “If we merely put them in front of things, such as a movie or television, it might take them to a fantastical world, but the kids have no responsibility for making any part of that real,” explains MacInnis. “That’s why live performance and theatre is a good tool for that. Kids have to use some of their own imagination to fill it in. We are leaving some work for them to do.” Here are some other ways to get the creative juices flowing:

- **Carve out free time.** Extra-curricular activities are the norm for children this age, but set aside time in your child’s day for play. Let your child determine what she does in that unstructured time, suggests Dr. Russ.
- **Encourage creative outlets.** Drama or art classes certainly stimulate imagination; however, MacInnis makes a case for programs that are not focused on a performance or a show at the completion of the course. “If it is all about being directed by adults to copy what those adults tell the kids to do, then I don’t think there is a huge stimulation of their imagination.” **Read to your child.** Take time to share a story with your child even if she can read. “The act of listening and the kind of lovely intimacy that can happen between parent and child when the parent is reading the words have a powerful way of stimulating the imagination,” says MacInnis. “You’re experiencing the story together.”

Fantasy vs. Reality

It is not uncommon for parents to worry about their little daydreamer or wonder if their child’s fantasy-play is normal. It’s because we want to make sure our kids are socially acceptable and that they fit in, explains Shirley. It is when their fantasy-play interferes with daily functioning that it becomes an issue. If you are concerned about your child’s social skills or that she is having trouble telling the difference between fantasy and reality, consult a mental health professional.

Here are some of my favorite movies and books to explore Imagination with children:

Movies:

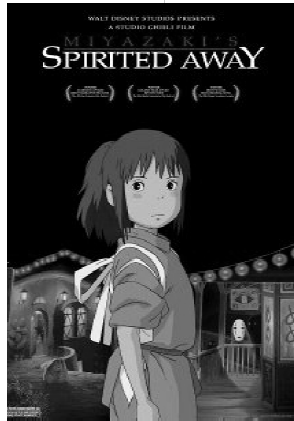
Bridge to Terebithia

2007



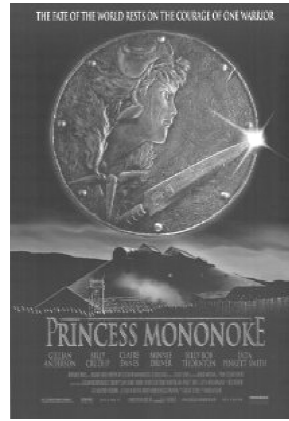
Spirited Away

2001



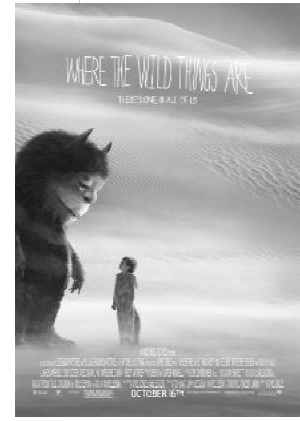
Princess Mononoke

1997

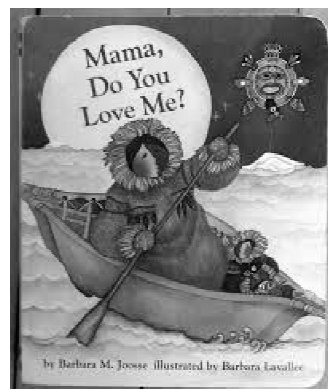
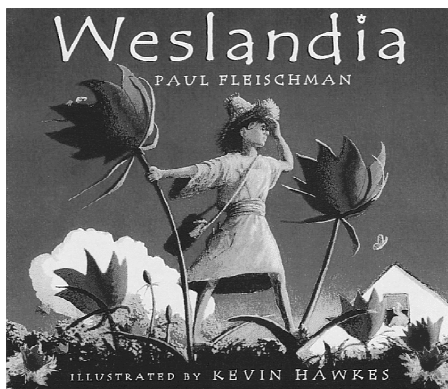


Where the Wild

Things Are 2009



Books:



What movies or stories that inspire imagination would you recommend? Shannon Mang DRE

Come with me
And you'll be
In a world of
Pure imagination
Take a look
And you'll see
Into your imagination

We'll begin
With a spin
Traveling in
The world of my creation
What we'll see
Will defy
Explanation

If you want to view paradise
Simply look around and view it
Anything you want to, do it
Want to change the world?
There's nothing to it

There is no
Life I know
To compare with
Pure imagination
Living there
You'll be free
If you truly wish to be

From Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971)

ARTICLES ON IMAGINATION

“Reviving Your Imagination”: <http://bit.ly/1HLUxoD>

“Fear and Loss of Imagination”: <http://bit.ly/1GEaM5F>

“Never Underestimate the Value of Imagination — It’s Behind Every Great Idea”: <http://bit.ly/1GEaM5F>

J.K Rowling, 2008 Harvard Commencement: “Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination”: <http://bit.ly/1hkOFCp>

RADIO SHOWS ON IMAGINATION

“How Creativity Works: It’s All in Your Imagination”: <http://n.pr/WQmEwQ>

“Imagination, Part 1 & 2”, Ideas with Paul Kennedy (CBC): <http://bit.ly/1LJWtwl>

“Rainy Wedding”, Three Minute Fiction series on NPR: <http://n.pr/1Fb8KnX>

BOOKS ON IMAGINATION

The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

Sector 7 by David Weisner (A wordless picture book)

Hint Fiction: An Anthology of Stories in 25 Words or Fewer, edited by Robert Swartwood

Imagine: How Creativity Works by Jonah Lehrer

The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life by Twyla Tharp

The Artist’s Way by Julia Cameron

MOVIES ON IMAGINATION

Life of Pi

Shakespeare in Love

Finding Neverland

Ghostbusters

The Fall

Big Fish

The NeverEnding Story

Brazil

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

Harvey

SONGS ON IMAGINATION

“Pure Imagination” from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*

“If You Could Read My Mind” Gordon Lightfoot

“Just My Imagination” The Temptations

“Rainbow Connection” Kermit the Frog

“Building a Mystery” Sarah McLaughlin

“Lucy and the Sky with Diamonds” The Beatles

Looking Ahead

Theme-based Listening Circles (TLCs) for 2015 -16

Theme-based Listening Circles will be meeting all over the city and at various times! This is an opportunity to connect with others to delve more deeply with the theme of the month. If you are interested in a group send an inquiry tlc@unitarianscalgary.org

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 September's topic by the third Sunday, August 23rd, to:

debra@unitarianscalgary.org

September 2015-June 2016

September – Promise

February – Reconciliation

October – Grace

March – Renewal

November – Integrity

April – Revelation

December – Wonder

May – Tradition

January – Resilience

June - Revelry

If you would be interested in Theme Based Listening Circle and would like to be a facilitator or participant next year send a message to tlc@unitarianscalgary.org. The hope is that there will be TLC in various locations and times.

REFLECTIONS



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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.