

REFLECTIONS

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 1, Issue 6 • February 2015

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

February Services:

Sunday 10:30

February 1st

Passion for Our Faith

February 8th

Passion Dimensions

February 15th

Acting Out Our Passion

February 22nd

**Body and Soul: Benny
Goodman**

Soulful Sundowns (7:30pm)

February 4th

Passion and Balance

February 18th

**Platonic Passion &
Relationship Building**

“The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep that most of us end up hardly living out of it at all.” - *Frederick Buechner*

Getting it unburied. That’s what this month’s theme of passion is about. There is something refreshing about the bluntness of Frederick Buechner’s quote. It’s so matter-of-fact. He’s trying to shake us up, telling us something we already know, but sadly often allow ourselves to forget. It’s as though he’s saying to us: “Come on, folks! How ridiculous is this?! We know how remarkable we feel when we are in touch with our passions. So why do we spend so much of our lives living otherwise?! Stop it! Let’s stop it!”

First step, we’ve got to get in touch with that “original, shimmering self,” with the passion that fuels our life.

The word passion has many disparate meanings. It’s how we describe someone with intense drive and motivation to serve some great cause. It’s the word used to convey a particularly torrid romance. It’s the single word that explains away the anger and rage of someone who commits a “crime of passion.” And it’s a word, in a mostly historical sense, that speaks of suffering, giving rise to the word compassion.

These many meanings will be explored through sermons on the four Sundays of February. The question for us all to wrestle with this month, though, is how are they connected? To examine what’s behind our own life’s passion, be it

anger, desire, suffering, or some other emotional force. Passion isn’t always born from happy feelings; sometimes our anger at injustice or our frustration in the face of suffering can serve just as effectively as passion’s other motivations to stir us to meaningful action. I’ve heard it said that it’s wise to pay attention to the spelling of passion to best understand it’s meaning. It’s been pointed out that, broken down, passion = “pass - i - on”. Taken apart in this way, the “i”—our “shimmering self”—is what we pass on to others. I know it’s a little corny, but there’s something true there, too. Passion doesn’t work or can’t be fully understood unless we pass it on! Unless we “pass ‘I’ on.” Unless we pass “the real I”—the “shimmering ‘I’”—on.

May that be our work this month: to uncover our passion and find a way to pass it on. Namaste Debra

Upcoming Services

Feb 1 st	<i>Passion for Our Faith</i>	Feb 8 th	<i>Passion Dimensions</i>
Description: This month's theme is Passion, and we will be discussing what it means to live a life from our passions. We will be exploring our passions for our Canadian Unitarian Faith, and how we can support the UU movement throughout Canada.		Description: Many things may come to mind with the idea of passion. It is our theme for this month and this morning will explore some of the dimensions of passion. How does passion feed us, inspire us, energize us, touch our lives and the life of our community?	
Presenter	Danielle Webber, Student Minister	Presenter	Rev Debra Faulk
Service Associates	Mich Michell Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister	Service Associates	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister Danielle Webber, Student Minister
Music	Michael McKiel	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia
Feb 15 th	<i>Acting Out Our Passion</i>	Feb 22 nd	<i>Body and Soul: Benny Goodman</i>
Description: The French Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said that, "We must act out passion before we can feel it." This is similar to the saying to "fake it until you make it." But what does it mean to act out our passion, even when we don't feel it? How can acting out our passion help change our mindset?		Description: One of the challenges raised to Unitarian Universalist by more traditional religionists is how can we be good without the idea of an external motivator. Our claim is that we are people of deeds not creeds, what then is the motivation to good deeds?	
Presenters	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister	Presenters	Rev Debra Faulk
Service Associate	Rev Debra Faulk	Service Associates	Chris Rothbauer, Intern Minister Danielle Webber, Student Minister
Music	Jane Perry, Music Director and UUphonia	Music	Jane Perry, Music Director, Sapphire Jazz Trio

All above services are Sunday mornings at 10:30am

Soulful Sundowns (Wednesdays at 7:30pm)

Feb 4 th	<i>Passion and Balance</i>	Feb 18 th	<i>Platonic Passion & Relationship Building</i>
Description: Join us for this young adult-led service as we reflect on the importance of balance in experiencing the agony and ecstasy of pursuing one's passions. Whether in pursuit of a professional passion or a hobby, passionate interests can stretch the limits of self care.		Description: We choose to live in community, within hives of like interests. How do we create relationships built on shared values, goals, and common interests?	

Getting Started: February's Spiritual Exercise

Thinking About Passion

Reconnect with an old passion by passing it on!

As mentioned in the introduction, it's one thing to listen and open to your passion—to know and understand where it comes from. It's quite another thing to then move on to share those passions with others. This month's spiritual exercise asks us to take seriously the idea that passion isn't passion unless it is shared. It also invites us to renew our relationship with one of our passions.

Here are the instructions, your challenge:

- **Pick a personal passion** that you've not engaged in a while—something you love doing or feel strongly about experiencing but have not done or experienced in a while.
- **Find a way** to engage it or use it to enrich the life of others or to enrich life itself.
- **Bring to your theme group** an object connected to your effort. It can be something symbolic or something that was literally part of your effort. You might even consider sharing your passion with the group as a way of showing what you did!

Seems simple, but I'm sure we'll all stumble into unexpected complexities and insights along the way. Pay particular attention to how you feel about not having lived out this particular passion for a while. Maybe you will wonder what's taken you so long to get back to it. Or maybe you'll be disappointed, wondering why you ever felt so strongly about it in the first place. Also pay attention to how you feel about trying to share it. Maybe sharing it somehow ruins it for you. Or maybe it adds a completely new dimension to it than before.

An alternative approach: If it works better for you, feel free to pick a passion you commonly engage, but then find a way to share it in a way you never have. For instance, you may regularly share your passion for singing in the choir. But this month, come up with a new group to share it with. For example, with strangers or with people in pain. I know of a cellist who normally plays in a symphony orchestra who was invited to play at the bedside of a friend with cancer. She says it was “transcendent” in a way that playing before a huge audience of music lovers never could be. What might be your new way of sharing your “old” passion?!

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.

“A Self-Portrait”

As the tide rises, the closed mollusc
Opens a fraction to the ocean’s food,
Bathed in its riches. Do not ask
What force would do or if force could.
A knife is of no use against a fortress.
You might break it to pieces as gulls do.
No, only the rising tide and its slow progress
Opens the shell. Lovers, I tell you true.
You who have held yourselves closed hard
Against warm sun and wind, shelled up in fears
And hostile to a touch or tender word—
The ocean rises, salt as unshed tears.
Now you are floated on this gentle flood
That cannot force or be forced, welcome food
Salt as your tears, the rich ocean’s blood
Eat, rest, be nourished on the tide of love.
- May Sarton

As anger is a passion, it is to be ruled; as it is a
weak passion, he is weak who rules it not.
- James Vila Blake, *Essays*

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the
most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips
over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue
the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come,
to savour the last toothsome morsel of both the
pain you are given and the pain you are giving
back—in so many ways it is a feast fit for a king.
The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing
down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.
- Frederick Buechner

Passion, though a bad regulator, is a powerful
spring. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Passion is embodied prayer. . . Passion is holy—a
profound mystery that transforms through
awakening and rapture. Passion is paradise
found. Passion is driven by desire, the desire that
your soul’s longing for something more is spirit-
directed. Passion and betrayal are the yin and
yang of yearning—inseparable, undeniable. The
divine paradox of their unseen presence hovers
over every aspect of our daily round, colours
every choice, embraces every challenge. Usually
we only think of passion as the explosive energy
behind the sexual obsession of two people—
white-hot, combustible, a flash fire, a compulsion
that cannot be controlled within the confines of
convention. . . We think of passion as a synonym
for the sinful, the clandestine, the forbidden. But
passion is not a sin. It is our saving grace.
Dorothy Sayers . . . tells us, ‘The only sin passion
can commit is to be joyless.’”

- Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Something More:
Excavating your Authentic Self*

What everyone forgets is that passion is not
merely a heightened sensual fusion, but a way of
life which produces, as in the mystics, an ecstatic
awareness of the whole of life.” - Anaïs Nin

Hatred is a passion requiring one hundred times
the energy of love. Keep it for a cause, not an
individual. Keep it for intolerance, injustice,
stupidity. For hatred is the strength of the
sensitive. Its power and its greatness depend on
the selflessness of its use. ~ Olive Moore

“Learning Italian Slowly”

I learn three words each day. It's been seven months now and perhaps I could carry on a conversation with a Sicilian child. If she spoke slowly. In present tense. And only about pencils and dogs and cheese. Sometimes I feel my new Italian self growing inside me. He's a little man who gesticulates as he speaks. He rides his bicycle to the market to buy eggplant, anise, and porcini. Then delivers them to his elderly mother. In the afternoon he plays bocce with the older men. The children mimic the way he whispers to himself. The grimaces he makes with his face. When the moon comes out he slicks back his hair and sings beneath the window of the woman he loves. What a sight he is. Down on one knee. His arms outstretched. So willing to make a fool of himself. Over and over again. ~ *David Shumate*

I like not only to be loved, but also to be told that I am loved. I am not sure that you are of the same mind. But the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave. This is the world of light and speech, and I shall take leave to tell you that you are very dear.

- *George Eliot/Mary Ann Evans Cross*

I can be angry. I can hate. I can rage. But 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... 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 is then diminished. My imagination grows small. My self seems meager. My enemy has stolen all of these.

- *Susan Griffin*

“The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep that most of us end up hardly living out of it at all. Instead we live out all the other selves, which we are constantly putting on and taking off like coats and hats against the world's weather.”

- *Frederick Buechner*

You decide. You can hold back, aim not to make an error and play it perfectly “on two-buttocks,” or you can say “Screw it!—I'll take a risk” and dare to lean into the music with intensity, colour, humanity, and passion and quite possibly, in your own small way (and on only one buttock), change the world. Play it with total sincerity and with your entire body—heart and soul—and you will make a connection and change things. Play it “one-buttock” style. And if you play that way, they won't be able to resist you. You will be a compelling force behind which everyone will be inspired to play their best.

- *Ben Zander, Orchestral conductor*

(This quote is best understood if you watch the Zander TED video listed below!)

Passion's nature is most often cloaked in the deep, subtle, quiet and committed: nursing a baby, planting a rose garden, preparing a special meal, caring for a loved one who is ill, remembering a friend's birthday, persevering in a dream. Passion is the muse of authenticity. She's the primordial, pulsating energy that infuses all of life, the numinous presence made known with every beat of our hearts. Every day offers us another opportunity to live passionate lives, if we will bear witness to passion's immutable presence in the prosaic.

- *Sarah Ban Breathnach, Simple Abundance*

It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth—and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up, we will then begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.

- *Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

As the Tao says, "Truth waits for eyes unclouded by longing." But we often don't hear the truth fully because of the clinging or attachments of our minds; we only hear the projections of our own desires. So again and again, we make decisions that end up not being in the deepest harmony with the way of things. Working through an attachment means you have to work with that desire until you are no longer attached. The desire may go on, but you are no longer attached to it.

- Ram Dass

I lay for days on end, trying in vain to postpone the moment when I would have to swallow. Every time I did swallow, a hellish tide of pain would flow up my throat, culminating in what felt like a mule kick in the small of my back. I wondered if things looked as red and inflamed within as they did without. And then I had an unprompted rogue thought: If I had been told about all this in advance, would I have opted for the treatment? There were several moments as I bucked and writhed and gasped and cur and cursed when I seriously doubted it.... But mercifully, too, I now can't summon the memory of how I felt during those lacerating days and nights. And I've since had some intervals of relative robustness. So as a rational actor, taking the radiation together with the reaction and the recovery, I have to agree that if I had declined the first stage, thus avoiding the second and the third, I would already be dead. And this has no appeal.

- Christopher Hitchens, from his final article in *Vanity Fair*, before his death in 2012

Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. ~ Howard Thurman

The wrong that rouses our angry passions finds only a medium in us; it passes through us like a vibration, and we inflict what we have suffered.

- George Eliot/Mary Ann Evans Cross, *Janet's Repentance*

Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas. For reason, ruling alone, is a force confining; and passion unattended, is a flame that burns to its own destruction. Therefore let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion, that it may sing; and let it direct your passion with reason that your passion may live through its own daily resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own ashes. ~ Kahlil Gibran

Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion. ~ G.W.F. Hegel
There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. ~ Martha Graham

"West Wind"

You are young. So you know everything. You leap into the boat and begin rowing. But listen to me. Without fanfare, without embarrassment, without any doubt, I talk directly to your soul. Listen to me. Lift the oars from the water, let your arms rest, and your heart, and heart's little intelligence, and listen to me. There is life without love. It is not worth a bent penny, or a scuffed shoe. It is not worth the body of a dead dog nine days unburied. When you hear, a mile away and still out of sight, the churn of the water as it begins to swirl and roil, fretting around the sharp rocks—when you hear that unmistakable pounding—when you feel the mist on your mouth and sense ahead the embattlement, the long falls plunging and steaming—then row, row for your life toward it. ~ Mary Oliver

Creating space for children to grow their passions

Passion gives us clues as to what will make us happy as we grow. Children, engaged in activities they are passionate about, are more likely to stay clear of negative behaviours and activities that will deter them from their goal.

- ✱ **Goal Setting:** Help your child set goals for the near future. Set short term goals that can be accomplished in a week, two weeks or in a month. Small goals could then lead to big goals. (Appreciate the process, little steps, and accomplishments along the way).
- ✱ **Adaptability:** Adjust and embrace unexpected opportunities; deviations to your child's plan or goals will likely occur.
- ✱ **Discipline:** Help your children develop persistency when faced with challenges and help them develop a sense of internal motivation.
- ✱ **Moving Forward:** Discover ways to enhance your child's skills and passions. View setbacks as a natural learning progression and opportunities to build upon skills.
- ✱ **Using Support:** Fuel the passion even further for children by finding groups who share their passion.
- ✱ **Genuineness:** Show genuine interest in your child's passions. Your approval is likely to fuel your child's interest even further.

Sometimes passions are sparked through experiences or encounters. When we notice our children are naturally good at something, or eager for opportunities, it is our role as parents to create opportunities and experiences for them to nurture the strengths and skills they possess.

Opportunities to participate turns interests into passions .

Talking about strengths will enhance self-confidence.

Security in relationships will help guide future choices.

Nurturing Passions = Opportunities for Success.

All children are born with the seeds of their own brilliance and will thrive in an environment that helps them find, nurture and sustain the passion that leads to that brilliance (Steindel Brown, 2012).



Passion propels us forward, summoning our innate drive to explore, discover hidden interests, talents, gifts, and create. A passionate environment is supportive, contagious and engaging, sweeping up adults and children alike (Steindel Brown, 2012).

Family Strengths Unlimited:

Families provide strengths and security; a secure parent-child relationship will guide a child's choices and strategies. Talents are competencies and skills which are unique to each individual; talents are usually the natural abilities, personality, behaviours and thoughts which can be used to develop strengths. Strengths are continually being developed to motivate and empower each person to reach their potential and pursue passions.

This chart is taken from a Mount Royal University's Start Smart Stay Safe Program and its content is taken from the book *The Call to Brilliance* by Resa Steindel Brown

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 were your childhood or "youthful" passions? And which ones have endured?

Come at this from whatever stage of life engages you the most. Some of us will be led to think about when we were really young, when we loved horses, or dreamed of being a princess, a fireman, a mountain climber, a famous singer, or Indiana Jones. Others may think of the passions that captured our hearts as young adults. These were "serious passions." We weren't just playing. We weren't just dreaming. We were really going to do it, be it. We were going to travel the world, start a company, write a book, have five kids, skip kids and cure cancer, be a part of changing the world...or at least our little corner of it. Or maybe it wasn't what we were going to be or do, but instead what we loved being in contact with: music and dance, the mountains and the ocean.

After you spend some time remembering these youthful passions, spend some time thinking about which ones survived—in some form. And which ones didn't. And if they didn't "live to tell the tale," why was that? How were they stamped out? Did you abandon them? Did you mean to abandon them? What would it take to reclaim them? Would you want to reclaim them? Have you come to terms with letting them go? If so, great. But if not, what would it mean to encourage the passion of the younger person you once were?

2. How do you know you feel passionate about something? How do you know that this is "what I really love" or feel strongly about?

Most folks say that we "just know"—that passion is mostly a feeling, that "time stops" or that "you lose yourself in what you're doing." But is it really that simple? And is it the same for us all? What's your unique signal? When do you really know you've encountered and are living out of your passion? Do you feel it in your body? If so, where? Does it bring you to tears? Or cause you to smile uncontrollably and non-stop? Do you suddenly feel determined? Or suddenly have a strange "fierce-energy" well up within you? Or are you suddenly at peace? Does living out of your passion feel "spiritual"? Grounded? Elevated? Connected?

3. Has your passion ever gotten you into trouble?

Passion, by definition, can be a bit unruly. It fills us, but can also overwhelm us. In short, our passions can turn into obsessions. Has this ever happened to you? And where did it lead you? Do you regret letting your passion “get away from you?” Some say that passion alone focuses one on the realm of the ego and can be an excuse for sheer impulsiveness and recommend a more “tempered passion”—a kind of Buddhist “middle way” approach to passion. Others, encourage us to “jump in” or “give ourselves over fully.” Which has proven good advice based on your experience?

4. What has passion cost you?

Pursuing our passions can also come with a cost. Passions give us life, but they can also require that we give up things to pursue them. For instance, great musicians typically have to forgo “regular childhoods.” The practice it takes to become great leaves little room for much else. Career passions often delay or exclude parenting or family commitments. Odd passions can lead one to become a bit of a loner. You get the picture. Passions usually come with a cost; what have your passions cost you? And was it worth it? More importantly, how have you come to terms with it?

5. How has your passion changed?

Some say our passions leave us as we age; they “diminish” or “soften.” Others say they alter in focus, from being about “what we want” to “what others need.” What effect has age and experience had on your passions?

Extra Resources for Reflection on Passion

Videos on Passion

All of the following are TED Talks:

On Music And Passion by Benjamin Zander on channeling passion
http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html

Evelyn Glennie and Her “Only Aim” of Teaching The World to Listen
http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html

Patsy Rodenburg and Her Passion for Acting and Being Present
http://www.ted.com/talks/patsy_rodensburg_why_i_do_theater.html

Ueli Gegenschatz and his passion for flying
http://www.ted.com/talks/ueli_gegenschatz_extreme_wingsuit_jumping.html

Ben Saunders and His Obsessive Passion to Ski the North Pole!
http://www.ted.com/talks/ben_saunders_skis_to_the_north_pole.html

Books on Passion

Joseph Campbell, *Pathways to Bliss*

Roger Housden, editor, *Dancing with Joy and Risk Everything*

Two great poetry collections full of poems that celebrate specific passions and call us to live out of our passion!
Barbara Sher, *Refuse to Choose!: Use All of Your Interests, Passions, and Hobbies to Create the Life and Career of Your Dream*

Rosamund Stone Zander & Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life* (especially Chapter 8)

The entire book is great and related to passion, but Chapter 8 is devoted to passion and particularly helpful to us this month. Here's a summary of Chapter 8 to entice you:

In talking about passion, Zander says that it is not enough to know a piece of music intellectually or to play it without any mistakes, you have to convey the true language of the music emotionally, says Zander. When musicians truly get into the music and play it with such heart and emotion that audiences are moved beyond words, Zander noticed that the music was flowing through the musicians, taking control of their bodies as they swayed from side to side. Zander, then, urges musicians to become “one-buttock players,” that is to let the music flow through their bodies, causing them to lean and to move from one buttock to the other. If you're a musician, or making a performance of virtually any kind, and you are totally in the moment and connecting with the language of the music and the audience, there is no way you can be a “two-buttock player.” You've got to move, you've got to connect, and you must not hold back your passion but instead let the audience have a taste of the commitment, energy, and passion you have for the music (or the topic, the ideas, etc.). I think you can apply these words to the art of performance or presentation, and frankly to life in general including leadership, entrepreneurship, etc. - *from the Blog, Presentation Zen*

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 March's topic of "Freedom" by the third Sunday, February 15th, to debra@unitarianscalgary.org

Themes for Winter and Spring 2015

March – Freedom
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 forming especially for families that will meet at various locations and times throughout the year. A virtual TLC is also available.

To sign-up for any of these TLCs, e-mail Chris Rothbauer at chris@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.