



REFLECTIONS RENEWAL

Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 3 Issue 3 • March 2016

What Does It Mean to Be a People of Renewal?

Our March theme is renewal, and we will be exploring and renewing our relationship with money, with time and energy, and with trust. These are everyday areas of life for us all, and yet they can also cause a lot of stress and frustration, especially when our supplies of one or more are low. I hope that our theme of renewal will help us all to find a little more calm, a little more space, a little more ease, and a little (or a lot) more joy in our lives.

Renewing our Relationship with Trust

There are many synonyms for trust: faith, confidence, reliance, responsibility, duty, obligation, protection, commitment, and safekeeping among them. As part of our renewal this month, we will explore what it is to trust that we have and are enough: as individuals, as a congregation, as a planet. To have faith in one another, and in our shared resources. To trust in our ability to steward our resources. Are we people of trust or fear? Or both? What is the hardest part of trust for you? We'll explore these ideas together.

Renewing our Relationship with Time & Energy

Experiences of burnout, exhaustion, and busyness abound in our society, and church is no exception. Rather than an oasis from the franticness of the rest of life, church can often become another source of busyness. As part of our renewal in March, I invite you to explore the state of your time and energy. Are you burned out, or feeling energized and healthy? What would it take for you to find and maintain balance? What would it look like to become a community of sustainable and balanced time and energy among and between us?

Renewing our Relationship with Money

I think our choices about how we make, spend, save, and share money are one of our deepest expressions of our values. "Put your money where your mouth is" the saying goes. At the same time, sometimes our choices are limited by circumstance or because the options we hope for don't (yet) exist. Some of us have times in life where money is so limited it's hard to put food on the table and meet basic needs. Some of us have experienced a sudden windfall of money at some point in our lives – inheritance or a new much more highly paying job, for example – and need to make decisions on how to spend it. And maybe your preferred investment is in a Mars colony and the fund hasn't yet been created (or has it?)! Regardless of where we fall on the economic spectrum, we all find ourselves in relationship with money every day of our lives.

March is the beginning of our 2016-2017 canvass, which will be one part of our renewal of our relationship with money. While you reflect on all three areas of renewal in your life, I invite you to consider the role of money, time/energy, and trust in your relationship with the Unitarian Church of Calgary. This year we will be having a special multigenerational celebration and ritual of our commitment to the congregation on April 3rd during Sunday Service. I hope to see you there.

In these ways and in all the ways that may yet emerge, I look forward to renewing with you this month.

Warmly, Carly

Upcoming Services

All services are Sunday mornings at 10:30am

March Services

Come, come whoever you are, whenever you can

We often sing: "Come, come whoever you are: wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving. Ours is no caravan of despair; come, yet again, come."

This month, you will notice that we are forgoing Sunday Service blurbs in the newsletter. This is an experiment in trying something new, and also in trust: trust that Sundays will still happen, and that there will be something meaningful for everyone. It may be the music that touches you, or a single line from a reading or the sermon, or even a coffee hour conversation. And it may be that your presence will be someone else's source of joy and/or comfort that day.

I know that service blurbs are a long-held tradition in many congregations, including this one, and much appreciated by many. They are equally often a challenge for Sunday Service committees and service leaders – sometimes the spirit just hasn't moved by the newsletter deadline! In this case, we thought we would try it to see how it feels. So for March, I invite you to embrace the spirit of experimentation and trust, and to come to church whoever you are, and whenever you can.

Danielle or I will be service leading the first three Sundays, and our multigenerational choir and UUPhonia will be singing. The final Sunday, Easter, we will have another "Spirit Jam." If blurbs are particularly important to you, know that you can look on the website and in the eNews each week for the upcoming Sunday's info.



March's Spiritual Exercises

Renewal:

1) Turn Away

“In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion.”

- Albert Camus

This assignment asks us to take Camus' words seriously. Every religious tradition reminds us that renewal sometimes requires removing ourselves from the normal ways of the world. Often we have to remove something from our life to make room for renewal to return. Remove speed and the rat race from your life by trying out the practice of Sabbath. Remove distraction and disconnection from your family by making a rule that everyone needs to put the cell phones on the shelf from dinner until the end of the night. Remove your evening practice of a couple glasses of wine and find another way to relax. Practice saying “no,” even if it means, like a toddler, you say it abruptly and excessively for a while. What “turning away” would be meaningful for you this month? Take this month to renew yourself and find your way back home by finding a way to turn away.

2) Name What Needs to Return

Renewal often comes through return. We get 25 steps down the road not realizing we had left precious pieces behind. What's missing when you look around? What have you let fall from your life? And how can you help it return? Fun? Forgiveness? Quiet? Time for yourself? That weekly night at the movies? A Saturday walk in the woods? Ambition? Art?

Name something precious that you want to return to your life. Spend the month making it happen.

Renewing Relationship with Money:

1) Find out where your income and wealth level situates you compared to others in Canada (<http://www.macleans.ca/economy/economicanalysis/rank-your-income-where-do-you-stand-compared-to-the-rest-of-canada/>) as well as globally (<http://www.globalrichlist.com/>). Approach this in an attitude of openness and curiosity, and see what you might learn. Observe your reaction on an intellectual, emotional and spiritual level.

2) The chart on the following page is provided by the Unitarian Universalist Association as a guide to think about your financial commitments. With a spirit of curiosity, consider your past and future pledges and where you find yourself:

- Do you self-identify as a supporter, sustainer, visionary, or tither (or other) in terms of your relationship to the congregation?
- Does your financial pledge align with your relationship? Do the suggested percentages make sense to you?
- What would inspire you to move between the identified categories?
- What would inspire you to raise – or lower – your pledge?
- How do you feel about money and your pledge? Anxious, generous, confident, unsure, inspired or uninspired?
- What would it be like to talk about your level of commitment with fellow congregants, exploring your inspiration, questions, and/or doubts? Would you consider sharing what you give and why?
 - If you have kids (of any age!), would you consider sharing your thoughts about your pledge decision with them?

REFLECTIONS

RENEWAL

Suggested Giving Levels

	Supporting			Sustaining			Visionary			Tithing		
Annual Income	The congregation is a significant part of your life and it promotes your spiritual growth			The congregation is central to your identity, and you are committed to sustaining the programs and ministries of the church			You are committed to both the present and future growth of the congregation			You designate ten percent of your income as a way of living out your spiritual principles		
	%	Per Month	Per Year	%	Per Month	Per Year	%	Per Month	Per Year	%	Per Month	Per Year
Under \$25,000	Contributions of any amount from people with low income will be considered generous. <i>Note: Calgary's Low Income Cut-Off is approximately \$24,000 for a single person, \$30,000 for two people, and increases with each additional household member.</i>											
\$25,000	2%	\$42	\$504	3%	\$63	\$756	5%	\$104	\$1248	10%	\$208	\$2496
\$50,000	3%	\$125	\$1500	4%	\$167	\$2004	5%	\$208	\$2496	10%	\$417	\$5004
\$75,000	3%	\$188	\$2256	4.5%	\$281	\$3372	6%	\$375	\$4500	10%	\$625	\$7500
\$100,000	3%	\$250	\$3000	4.5%	\$375	\$4500	6%	\$500	\$6000	10%	\$833	\$9996

Renewing Relationship with Time & Energy:

- 1) Take this self-care inventory: http://www.headington-institute.org/files/test_self-care-and-lifestyle-inventory_best_76305.pdf. Are the results expected or surprising to you? Do you have your own measures of the quality of your self-care that you would add to the list? What one self-care goal would you like to try this month?
- 2) Reflect on how you spend your time. Create a graph or list of an average day, week, or month. Which of your activities do you find life-giving? Which do you find life-draining? Create a poem, picture (stick-figures welcome!), song, or journal entry that represents your ideal schedule.



Renewing Relationship with Trust:

“All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.” Reflect on this wisdom from Julian of Norwich. What does it say to you at this moment in your life? What is it to trust that all will be well? For additional reflection, listen to UU minister Meg Barnhouse’s song *All will be well*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kadbd3tCqC>

For Inspiration

First Thoughts:

renewal n.

1. the act of extending the period of time when something is effective or valid, the act of renewing something
2. the state of being made new, fresh, or strong again, the state of being renewed

synonyms: Rebirth, regeneration, rejuvenation, restoration, resumption, revitalization, revival, awakening, recommencement, refilling, reformation, replenishment, resurrection, recharging, reopening.

Thoughts to Ponder:

“In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion.”

— Albert Camus

“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

— Thomas Merton

“If you want a new tomorrow, then make new choices today.”

— Tim Fargo

We need quiet time to examine our lives openly and honestly - spending quiet time alone gives your mind an opportunity to renew itself and create order.

— Susan L. Taylor

“It is always quietly thrilling to find yourself looking at a world you know well but have never seen from such an angle before.” — Bill Bryson

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

— Nelson Mandela

“We must be willing to get rid of the life we planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come.”

— Joseph Campbell

I have no template for these days, which I call 'sabbath days.' I stay home. If the weather is good, I open doors and windows, let the fresh air and sunshine in or the moist air of rain. I nap, eat whatever is in the refrigerator, read, listen to music, watch the birds, journal. I light candles in the dark and pray. I fold laundry and move things around on the walls. I have a mantra that says "what you practice is what you have" and so all day long, I practice being present in the moment. When the past rises up I welcome it, embrace then bid it adieu. When future possibilities tempt me into a reverie, I pull myself back from the equivalent of mental cotton candy. I luxuriate in the freedom of being untethered.

---Soul Matters Member

“Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you.”

- Langston Hughes

If you've lost focus, just sit down and be still. Take the idea and rock it to and fro. Keep some of it and throw some away, and it will renew itself. You need do no more.

— Clarissa Pinkola Estes

“Every single cell in the human body replaces itself over a period of seven years. That means there's not even the smallest part of you now that was part of you seven years ago.”

—Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*

“The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.”

— Wendell Berry

“To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds, and watch the renewal of life - this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing one can do.”

— Charles Dudley Warner

“The thing is to love life, to love it even when you have no stomach for it, and everything you've held dear crumbles like burnt paper in your hands, your throat filled with the silt of it...

Then you hold life like a face between your palms, a plain face, no charming smile, no violet eyes, and you say, yes, I will take you, I will love you again.”

— Ellen Bass

By recollecting the pleasures I have had formerly, I renew them, I enjoy them a second time, while I laugh at the remembrance of troubles now past, and which I no longer feel.

— Giacomo Casanova

Rest when you're weary. Refresh and renew yourself, your body, your mind, your spirit. Then get back to work.

— Ralph Marston

Take a course in good water and air; and in the eternal youth of Nature you may renew your own. Go quietly, alone; no harm will befall you.

— John Muir

Genius is the ability to renew one's emotions in daily experience.

— Paul Cezanne

Inside myself is a place where I live all alone and that is where I renew my springs that never dry up.

— Pearl S. Buck

Camas Lilies

Consider the lilies of the field, the blue banks of camas opening into acres of sky along the road.

Would the longing to lie down and be washed by that beauty abate if you knew their usefulness, how the natives ground their bulbs for flour, how the settlers' hogs uprooted them, grunting in gleeful oblivion as the flowers fell?

And you—what of your rushed and useful life? Imagine setting it all down—papers, plans, appointments, everything—leaving only a note: “Gone to the fields to be lovely. Be back when I'm through with blooming.”

Even now, unneeded and uneaten, the camas lilies gaze out above the grass from their tender blue eyes.

Even in sleep your life will shine.

Make no mistake. Of course your work will always matter.

Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

— Lynn Ungar

There is an opportunity for us to renew ourselves.

There's an opportunity for us to leave the past behind and present something different for the future.

— Jay Weatherill

Social media demands a lot of us on top of our already demanding lives. So let's disconnect as we need to and renew our interest and ourselves.

— Simon Mainwaring

You can be as devoted and loving a spouse or a caregiver for a child, but you also have to remember that you have to program time for yourself in there, because it will renew you.

— Jeanne Phillips

You renew yourself every day. Sometimes you're successful, sometimes your not, but it's the average that counts.

— Satya Nadella

Resources on Renewal

Videos & Online:

[How I Brought a River, and My City, Back to Life](#), Aziza Chaouni

[http://www.ted.com/talks/](http://www.ted.com/talks/aziza_chaouni_how_i_brought_a_river_and_my_city_back_to_life)

[aziza chaouni how i brought a river and my city back to life](#)

[The Mosaic Man](http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4369)<http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4369>

"I am homeless for 25 years, at the mercy of my talent," says Jim Power. Jim found a creative outlet in creating hand-crafted mosaic artwork that he started posting on lampposts in Lower Manhattan's Eastside. The stories in Jim's mosaics provided identity and renewal for people in the Eastside. When the city threatened to destroy his work, the community rallied around Jim to protect the "mosaic trail."

[Renewal - A Reborn Colorado River Once Again Finds Her Path to the Sea](#) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TODV7FW746s>

[Washed Ashore Project](http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4168) <http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=4168>

Articles:

[What Indigenous Cultures Can Teach Us About Burnout](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2016-02/what-indigenous-cultures-can-teach-us-about-burnout) <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2016-02/what-indigenous-cultures-can-teach-us-about-burnout>

[Humor as Tool in Non-Violent Conflict Resolution](http://www.dailygood.org/story/769/humor-as-a-tool-in-conflict-resolution-michael-nagler-and-karen-ridd/) <http://www.dailygood.org/story/769/humor-as-a-tool-in-conflict-resolution-michael-nagler-and-karen-ridd/> How we can renew tense situations with laughter that leads to peace.

[Chris Johnstone's 5 Tips to Avoid Burnout](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2016-02/chris-johnstones-burnout-tips-all-one-place) <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2016-02/chris-johnstones-burnout-tips-all-one-place>

[A Quiet Cheer for Solitude](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/10/opinion/bruni-a-quiet-cheer-for-solitude.html?_r=0) http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/10/opinion/bruni-a-quiet-cheer-for-solitude.html?_r=0

A reflection on our leaders and how they do not set the example for renewal.

[Play, Spirit, and Character](http://www.onbeing.org/program/play-spirit-and-character/143) <http://www.onbeing.org/program/play-spirit-and-character/143>

Many interpret play as a break from learning, but it's actually where learning can take place.

A Blog from Liz James, UU from Saskatoon, on her experience with money: <http://www.freerangeseminarian.com/blog2/2016/2/6/things-i-no-longer-believe-about-money>

Books:

Renewal: A Little Book of Courage and Hope by Eknath Easwaran

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives by Wayne Muller

Quiet by Susan Cain. For those of us who renew through quiet and retreat.

A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life by Parker J. Palmer

Movies:

Renewal, 2008: This documentary captures the vitality and diversity of today's religious-environmental activists.

It's a Wonderful Life - After George Bailey (James Stewart) wishes he had never been born, an angel (Henry Travers) is sent to earth to make George's wish come true. George starts to realize how many lives he has changed and impacted, and how they would be different if he was never there.

Life of Pi - A young man who survives a disaster at sea is hurtled into an epic journey of adventure and discovery. While cast away, he forms an unexpected connection with another survivor: a fearsome Bengal tiger.

Up - Seventy-eight year old Carl Fredricksen travels to Paradise Falls in his home equipped with balloons, inadvertently taking a young stowaway. If this movie doesn't renew your faith in love, nothing will.

Eat, Pray, Love - A married woman realizes how unhappy her marriage really is, and that her life needs to go in a different direction. After a painful divorce, she takes off on a round-the-world journey to find herself through spiritual renewal and love.

Ben Hur - Charlton Heston plays a Palestinian Jew who is battling the Roman empire at the time of Christ. His actions send him and his family into slavery, but an inspirational encounter with Jesus renews his faith in life and humanity.

Questions to Live With

1. When was the last time laughter took hold of you and left you renewed?
2. There are those who say renewing the world is the best path to renewing oneself. Are your attempts to renew the world still renewing you?
3. During fall, the trees turn their energy away from reaching out to the sun. Instead, they let go of their leaves and seek renewal in the dark soil where their roots live? Does this need to be a season of disconnecting, darkness and turning in for you as well?
4. Do you feel the call of renewal coming most strongly from your body or your spirit? Or could it be that your spirit is expressing its hunger through your body? How has your body grown tired or pained? What is that tiredness or pain trying to say?
5. Where has trust been broken in your life? And is it time for that trust to finally be renewed? What would that renewal look like?
6. What scares you about renewal? What "cost" of changing or returning seems just too high?
7. Do you wake in the morning feeling renewed? Or is it just "another damn day"? If so, what might renewal look like?
8. Does renewal and self-care feel like "one more thing" on your to-do list? Is there another way to approach them?
9. Has Grace/God/Life ever just come out of the blue and dumped spiritual renewal in your lap?

You are encouraged to engage these questions in advance of your group meeting and find the one that "hooks" you most. Then let it take you on an adventure. Live with it for the entire month. Allow it to break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts. Then come to your Theme-Based Listening Circle (TLC) meeting prepared to share that experience with your group.

Spiritual Practices for Families, from Shannon

On Money:

One of my most powerful lessons about generosity was learning how to write cheques by filling out the weekly the offering cheque that my parents wrote to the church. From the age of about eleven I filled in the cheque and the envelope, and had it ready for mom or dad to sign as we got ready to leave the house. What one aspect of your relationship with money might you share with your child(ren)? What renewal might you experience as you see things through their eyes?

On time/energy:

Our children are soaking up our values by watching us every day. They will have capacity to balance their lives when they see us building our own capacity to work and play and share our lives. Build your family's capacity by developing one good habit at a time as a family. Limit screen time... everyone's screen time! Cook together and eat together as often as possible. Have fun together being active. Volunteer together. And balance all of this togetherness with a healthy dose of alone time so children learn what they love to do by themselves.

On Trust:

Is your house a place where trust has room to grow?

There was a point in our family's life when when our house was filled with grief. We reached out for some help and had a wonderful experience of family counselling. The best practice that came from that difficult time was the counselor's insistence that we learn how to have family meetings. This practice was hard to build; there was resistance, but, it became a most loved practice over time.

Family meetings provided fertile ground for the trust to grow between us and among us. We committed to meeting at the same time each week and the role of recorder moved from person to person. We always started with "check-in"- where we let the family know how we were doing- REALLY doing, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We then had "gratitudes" which were direct statements to each other expressing thanks for specific things that took place over the course of the week. We read the notes from the previous meeting to remind ourselves of our conversation and decisions. We moved to family business which were items that impacted all of us. Business was followed by announcements about our personal lives that were helpful for the family to know. We ended the meetings asking the person who was in charge of family night that week to share what their plans were for our Friday night fun.

Family meetings were the tool that tilled the ground for trust to grow in our family. What is the tool that will till the ground for trust to grow in your family?

Looking Ahead Themes for 2016 *What does it mean to be a people of...*

April - **Revelation**
May - **Tradition**
June - **Revelry**

Theme Based Listening Circles (TLCs)

You are invited to deepen your experience of the monthly theme by participating in a facilitated small group. These groups meet once a month, usually in the later part of the month to allow time to be with the theme, at various times and places in the city. If you are interested in a group, either as a facilitator or participant, please send an inquiry tlc@unitarianscalgary.org

Current times and places include:

4th Wednesday - 2:00-4:00

4th Friday - 10:00-12:00 - Unitarian Church of Calgary

4th Sunday noon - 2:00 - Unitarian Church of Calgary

Many thanks to the Soul Matters Theme-Based collaborative and Canadian Theme-Based Unitarian congregations for sharing much of the content used here. This is a group effort. Your submissions of your ideas of readings, stories, videos, visual images, questions, and spiritual exercises for each month's topic are most welcome. 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 "Revelation" by March 15th to tlc@unitariancalgary.org.



Theme Based Ministry Newsletter of the Unitarian Church of Calgary
Volume 3, Issue 3 • March 2016

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