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Sunday Services and Themes

Themes: *September to December, 2017*

Each year, the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton chooses monthly themes to guide its Sunday Services, Adult Programs such as Third Thursdays, Circle Conversations, and Youth Group, and other activities.

In 2017-2018, we have selected themes that will be used in many other congregations across Canada, including Halifax, First Unitarian in Toronto, and the Canadian UU Women's Association.

The themes for the remainder of 2017 are as follows:

September: Promises and Covenant

October: Healing

November: Identity and Stories

December: Presence

If one of these themes prompts an idea or an experience you would like to share as part of a Sunday Service, please let Heather Lunergan know at blpc@bellaliant.net.

Sunday Services

September Theme: *Promises and Covenant*

September 10: Sunday, September 10 is our congregation's annual corn boil and picnic. We will have a short service, to allow ample time for food and conversation, followed by a board meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend any or all of these events. Everyone: That means "you," the "curious or lurking" one, and "you," the "haven't been there for a while" one, are welcome. Corn, as well as butter and vegan spread, will be available, along with tea and coffee. Please bring something to share, as we appreciate and enjoy all contributions. And board meetings can't happen on empty stomachs! 10:30 AM, at 874 York Street.

September 17: Heather Lunergan will lead a service on the monthly theme. Her talk will be entitled "Promises we make, promises we keep."

September 24: Currently to be confirmed; watch for details on the Facebook page, the website, and monthly emails.



Caring Committee

Wanted: members for the caring committee and volunteers to make food, send flowers, send cards, give drives, help in any way to make ours a caring community. Please reply to Janet Crawford janetcr@nbnet.nb.ca.



Women's Pot Luck

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held Friday, September 29th. Janet Crawford will host the gathering at her home, 155 Aberdeen St. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. Topic for discussion: *What gave you the most satisfaction or pleasure over the summer and why?* For further information, contact Joan Brewer at jbrewer@rogers.com



Adult Programs

This fall's lineup of Third Thursdays is ready to be announced! Here are the topics and details for each of the

next four months.

September's "Third Thursday" will be on the third Tuesday, that is, September 19. That evening, at 7pm, our Social Action committee will present a play entitled "The Last Walk of Adolpho Ich". Several members and friends of the congregation will be taking part.

His story is powerful, as is the play, which will be presented as a reading. The "back story," about Canadian involvement in Guatemala is important. To that end, it is suggested that you read this very good article from Walrus about the situation of human rights abuses in mining in Guatemala. Warning ... the content is explicit.

thewalrus.ca/is-canada-to-blame-for-human-rights-abuses-in-guatemala

In October, our theme is Healing, and there will be a video and a talk led by Heather on this topic. Invite your friends to share refreshments and discussion on October 19 at 7pm.

On November 16, Donna Young will present a slide show and a discussion on her recent trip to the Arctic. Come and hear about part of Donna's personal story during a month dedicated to Identity and Stories.

Shortly before the holidays, we mark the longest night with a Blue Christmas service, which is an opportunity to gather, share, and heal together. The service this year will take place on Thursday, December 21 at 7pm.



Board Meeting

Dear Members, Your new 2017-2018 board of directors will kick off a brand new year with their first official meeting this coming Sunday, Sept 10. The start time will depend on how long it takes us to consume all the corn, and other goodies. If you haven't been there in a while Sunday service start time is now 10:30 am.

The board meetings normally take place in the board room, unless we have an overflow audience. All members are welcome to attend.

Glenna Hanley
Board President



GFAW Meet&Greet

During the evening of Saturday, September 23rd GFAW (Greater Fredericton Area Witches) will be hosting an open house/meet & greet. There will be an info session as well as social time. Further details will follow closer to the date and will be sent to those who email gfwgfw@gmail.com to express their interest.

This is an excellent opportunity for those who are new, those who have been away, and those who are curious to

meet folks and learn about who we are, what we do, and how we do it.



Joys and Concerns

As a caring community, we share the concerns and rejoice in the joys of each other. If you have a joy or concern that you would like to share, please email to Janet Crawford janetcra@nbn.net.nb.ca

JOYS

Some members of the Unitarian Fellowship walked in the Pride Parade with a great sign created by our president: Unitarians for Social Justice.

Miriam Taylor will start her new job teaching in a daycare on Friday, September 1. Well done, Miriam

John and Sharon van Abbema lead our group in a very successful mid summer service on August 14th. So nice to see our friends again.

CONCERNS

Bunty Albert is the newest member of our congregation. She joined us when her congregation in PEI dissolved. We are very happy to have her join us but also send our good vibes and kind thoughts to Bunty as she recovers from surgery in Halifax and faces chemotherapy in the near future.

Pat Mason is recovering rapidly from abdominal surgery in early July. She attributes her very successful recovery to daily treatments from her reiki teacher. We wish her well in her continued journey to wellness.

One member expressed concern about not being able to hear our speakers and suggested that a microphone would really help. This suggestion has been passed along to the Sunday services committee and they gladly agreed to use a microphone for speakers and to encourage "Joys and Concerns" to speak more directly to the congregation.

Sincere sympathy to Joanne and Carlos Elder-Gomes and all of their family on the passing of her brother David on August 14th. Jo-Anne wrote the following very lovely summary of her brother's interesting life.

My eldest brother died recently: David Campbell Elder, July 29, 1942 to August 14, 2017. He is the second David Elder in our family, named after my father: David Murdoch Elder, December 15, 1914 to November 23, 1995. Following the tradition, so far, are his son David Laurent (who goes by Laurent) and his grandson David Sebastien (Seb, born in 2009). David's middle name is my mother's maiden name, and he was always close to the Campbell side of the family; as a child my mother and he lived with my grandparents in Westdale (Hamilton, ON) during my father's war service, and later he studied at McMaster and stayed with them often.

Like my father and me, David studied languages at university, travelled in Europe and studied in France, and continued on to graduate studies in literature. David's area was French medieval literature and history. As a student in Paris, he met Laurent's mother, Danielle Arrivé, who is from the Charente region of France; they were married in France in 1969 and Laurent was born in 1971. David and Danielle separated after David's assignment in Dakar, Sénégal; interestingly, Laurent's work with the IDRC takes him to western Africa often. Danielle is a translator and raised Laurent in Ottawa; they came to our 25th anniversary tea at the Fellowship in 2015. A few months ago, Laurent married Hanna Button, the daughter of director and actor Marshall Button ("Lucien") of Moncton and the Director of Policy for the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie.

David began a doctorate in Paris. (There he became friends with the late Donald Bailey, a member of UU congregations in Winnipeg and Paris and a historian from the U of T; they reconnected shortly before Don's death in 2015.) David taught French at UBC, but soon opted to put his bilingual skills and his cultural knowledge to use in a career in public service rather than continue his PhD studies. His work there spanned 30 years, and just before he retired he started teaching as an adjunct professor at Queen's. His career is outlined in detail here: <http://www.queensu.ca/sps/spotlight>

While working on opening Canada's new embassy in Zimbabwe, David met his partner Patricia Solomon, another public servant in external affairs. David and Pat made their home in Ottawa, and although they travelled a great deal before and since their retirement, they have lived there for more than three decades. David shared my interest in genealogy, literature, and the arts. David could always be counted on to support us in our work and show up for any events that were important to us: an exhibition Alan curated, screenings of Bruce's films, a tribute to my work on ellipse. He took his role of big brother very seriously, giving his siblings and their children advice, guidance, and assistance. While Elisabeth was studying at the University of Ottawa, she had lots of opportunities to spend time with Dave, Pat, Laurent, Hanna, and Seb at my brother Alan's home, and we got together often when we visited Ottawa. David doted on Sebastien.

David was diagnosed with peripheral T-cell (non-Hodgkins) lymphoma, an uncommon and aggressive form of cancer, early in 2016. He was treated with chemotherapy and enjoyed about six months of good health, which included his only visit to Fredericton, for the wedding of my son Jeremy and daughter-in-law Sarah last October. He became ill again in February 2017, but this time they were unable to treat the cancer and he developed liver and kidney disease.

Please keep Patricia, Laurent, Hanna, and Sebastien, as well as my remaining brothers Bruce and Alan, in your

thoughts. A celebration of David's life will be held in Ottawa at a later date.

Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

Edith Hoisington Miller 1932-2017

Sympathy to the family of Edith Miller who passed away in August. Edith was a friend to many in the Unitarian Fellowship and a member of the Quaker community.



Edith Hoisington Miller passed away peacefully in Fredericton, NB on August 6th, 2017 at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital surrounded by members of her family. She was born on July 30th, 1932 in Ossining, New York to the late Frederick Reed Hoisington (1898-1985) and Elizabeth Abercrombie Hoisington (1897-1982).

After two years of liberal arts studies, she began working as a secretary in New York City, eventually in publishing with the McGraw-Hill Book Company, and as a freelance compositor for science books. Through her participation in choral groups she met and married the love of her life, Michael R. Miller. They recently celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

In addition to her husband, Edith is survived by her three sons, Andrew (Deanna Musgrave), Nate (Cynthia Ryder) and Joel Miller (Christine Jensen); grandchildren Lucy, Ella and Liv; sister Lucy May Hoisington; brother Reed Hoisington, and several cousins, nieces, nephews and family. She is predeceased by her beloved grandson Isaac Miller (1999-2014) and sister Libbess Hoisington (1924-2011). Family was of utmost importance to Edith.

Edith had the heart of an artist as a creative writer and poet. She was inspired by the beauty of the natural world and treasured her visits to the family island, Ram Island in Maine, USA. She also loved and was moved by music which surrounded her due to her husband and three boys' musical professions. She recently published her inspired poems about art, music and nature in "Crow Impressions & Other Poems." She also wrote her insights into her memoirs "Islands and Mainlands."

Edith was active in a wide range of community-based art organizations, including the Sackville Community Art Centre. She participated in choral singing, dancing and creating writing programs. She taught creative movement to children and adults. In addition, she has been involved in social justice work, including alliance building with First Nations communities. She wrote a biweekly column for the Sackville Tribune-Post on environmental, justice, and Indigenous Canadian issues. She has done publicity writing

for arts organizations and has contributed articles on the arts, especially on dance, to various publications.

Edith Miller is a member of the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick, from whom she has received awards for her nonfiction and poetry. She has also been a juried member of the Professional Writers Association of Canada. The Millers are members of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

The private family memorial for Edith took place on August 10th, 2017 and a public Quaker celebration of her life was on Saturday, August 19th at Holy Cross House, St. Thomas University. For those who wish, donations in Edith's memory may be made to Symphony New Brunswick and Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) www.quakerservice.ca.



Unitarian Travel Opportunity

Please let your congregation know about our Mindful Journeys for 2018. There are two mindful journeys for Unitarians and their friends 1. Rev. Wayne and Joan Walder in March to India - email saranac2@gmail.com; 2. To England with Beverly Carr. The information about England is below. thank you! — Beverly Carr beverlz@me.com.

The Gilded Age Meets Downton Abbey. Cora, of Downton Abbey fame, is the inspiration for this journey. She was based on the American heiresses who arrived in England during the late 1800s to rescue a great estate in distress. We will focus on some of these heiresses, while we explore their homes and visit Downton Abbey film sites. Highclere Castle was the home of heiress Lady Almina Carnarvon, and was also used as the fictional home of Cora. American Consuelo Vanderbilt married the 9th Duke of Marlborough and saved Blenheim Palace with her fortune. Another heiress, Jennie Jerome, married the 8th Duke of Marlborough's brother, and gave birth to Winston Churchill there. The great-grandmother of Diana the Princess of Wales, was an American Heiress and the future kings of England are her descendants.

We'll stay for 5 nights in my favourite English city, Oxford - the unique university town of amazing bookstores, unusual architecture, historic pubs, and eclectic free museums. We see where JRR Tolkien met with the Inklings, Lewis Carroll dreamed up Alice in Wonderland, CS Lewis had a magical wardrobe, Inspector Morse solved many crimes, and Bill Clinton didn't inhale. Two nights in the Midlands and one in London complete our itinerary.

The challenge of this journey is that Highclere Castle and Althorp House aren't posting their opening times for 2018 until October, and we can't ask for tickets before then. At that time we can confirm the dates and the finalized itinerary and costs. We are aiming for May or September 2018. The journey will be mindful, fun, and informative,

with some time for you to explore your interests – especially in Oxford. email: beverlz@me.com.



Thoughts on Covenants and Promises

curated by Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

A covenant is not a contract. It is not made and signed and sealed once and for all, sent to the attorneys for safekeeping or guarded under glass in a museum. A covenant is not a static artifact and it is not a sworn oath: Whereas, whereas, whereas... Therefore, I will do this, or I'll die, so help me God. A covenant is a living, breathing aspiration, made new every day. It can't be enforced by consequences but it may be reinforced by forgiveness and by grace, when we stumble, when we forget, when we mess up.

– Reverend Victoria Stafford

We sometimes wrongly say it is the absence of creed that is most important to who we are

asUnitarianUniversalists

. This is wrong. Any one of us could practice religious freedom at home on Sunday mornings. We could practice religious freedom all day long, every day, and never come into community. It is covenant that brings us out of isolation, covenant that brings us out of selfish concerns, out of individualism, to join ourselves to something greater, to become a part of a community that is working to practice love, to dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge and wisdom together, to find better ways to live our lives and live in the world.

– Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray,
the new president of the UUA

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

– James Vila Blake

(sometimes known as the Blake Covenant)

For Families:

Reading the Blake Covenant a good way of introducing the idea of covenants to children. You can replace the word “church” by “family” or “home” and use the covenant as a starting point to talk about the promises you make to each other.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... what covenant means. How is a covenant the same as or different than a promise? Who makes covenants? Do you have any family covenants? Has your family done a baby or child dedication ceremony which involved a covenant on

the part of the parents or the congregational community?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Create a covenant statement for your family. What are your highest goals as a family? What commitments do you make to one another? How are the commitments which parents make to a family different from those the children make? How are they the same?

A Family Ritual. At bedtime, offer your child a special promise, such as "I promise I will listen to you," or "I promise to honour your creativity." Or, agree on a ritual way to seal agreements you make in daily life ("I'll try not to yell if you'll try not to yell.") A hug makes a good ritual of commitment, but you may wish to choose an action that is unique to your family and serves as a reminder of the special nature of a covenant.

- Adapted from [Love Connects Us](#), an online curriculum produced by the UUA as part of its "Tapestry of Faith" program.

Spiritual Growth Exercise:

It's the promise we most often forget, or maybe it's better to say it's the promise we most often sacrifice. We are often so good at keeping our commitments to others and yet fall flat on our face when it comes to the commitments we make to ourselves. And if we can't keep our promises to ourselves, how will we ever keep our promises to each other? The commitments we make to ourselves serve as the foundation for the pledges we make to those around us. If we break our commitments to personal physical health, we sacrifice the strength to support others. If we cheat on our promises to personal spiritual health, we lose our ability to serve and see needs greater than our own. Those who can't promise kindness and forgiveness to themselves are rarely able to extend kindness and forgiveness to others.

Our spiritual exercise this month honours this sacred interdependence between staying true to oneself and staying true to those around us.

Here is your challenge:

1. Read this article:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/30/promises-to-yourself_n_5628259.html

2. Identify one of the promises in the article that resonates with you, or write down one of your own. What promise is your heart most hungry for? What promise have you wanted to keep to yourself, but regularly break?

3. Find a way to keep that promise front and centre. Print it out and tape it to your office desk. Put it in your wallet or your purse. Write it in lipstick on your bathroom mirror. Spend the month keeping it! Give yourself the gift of finally following through.

- Adapted from the UU Congregation of Asheville, 2014



Our Covenant of Right Relationships With One Another

The Covenant of Right Relationships With One Another was approved at the AGM on June 25th, 2017, and may be found in the compendium of reports for that meeting.

Preamble

To covenant with one another is to engage in the spiritual and everyday practice of loving better. Although this document expresses our written promise to each other, our true covenant lives and breathes in our actions. We will use it to deepen our bonds with one another; during times when we are loving well, it will inspire us to love better; and in times of conflict, we will use it to guide us. We expect this covenant to be challenging, but we also expect it to inspire us, to strengthen our relationships and deepen our sense of community.

1. We will communicate with and about each other in an open, kindly and respectful manner by
 - Listening mindfully with open minds and hearts
 - Not making assumptions. Checking out what we think we heard
 - Speaking from our own experience using "I" statements rather than "you" statements
 - Talking with and to people rather than about each other
 - Challenging and debating ideas respectfully and constructively
 - Allowing time for each person to speak
 - Communicating with others as clearly as we can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama
2. We will seek peaceful and constructive resolutions when conflicts arise by
 - Avoiding taking things personally or making assumptions
 - Remembering that what others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream
 - Forgiving ourselves and others and inviting people back into covenant with each other after a disagreement

- Saying "I'm sorry"
 - Staying connected through difficult moments, trusting that we are each doing our best
3. We will work together for the common good of our beloved community by
- Watching for opportunities to offer praise and thanks
 - Providing opportunities for us to have fun together
 - Pledging not only to tolerate but also to respect, honour and celebrate our diversity
 - Sharing the work of our community with our time and resources as we are able to
 - Regularly reminding each other of the covenant we have made with each other

Grateful for the broad diversity among us, we willingly accept responsibility for our own behaviours and our obligations to honour the other. We freely enter into this covenant and agree to honour its spirit. We promise each other our help in upholding the covenant and promoting mutual respect.

This Covenant is intended to be a living document and was posted on June 25th following the AGM. As the Congregation attempts to live our covenant, we expect to discover new truths and better ways of working together. We will periodically incorporate our new insights into newer versions of the covenant that better meet our needs.



Gretta Vosper Fredericton Visit

Editor's note: While much of this is probably of interest only to the United Church Community, Unitarians may be more interested in the evening session at UNB.

Commitment to Community, With or Without God:

Promoting Respectful Dialogue As We Look to the Future of The United Church of Canada with Gretta Vosper and members of West Hill United Church

Wednesday, September 27, '17

Forest Hill United Church
45 Kimble Court
Fredericton, New Brunswick

The United Church of Canada is in a time of radical transition. Membership is in steep decline and its future is uncertain.



Gretta Vosper

The congregation of West Hill United Church and their minister, Gretta Vosper, with a vision of what the church might become for another generation, have radically re-defined what it means to them to be a United Church Community. They have done so, even as Vosper's life-time involvement with this denomination has taken her to a place where she now self-identifies as an atheist.

That has led many to conclude that she has disqualified herself from ministry. Her congregation continues to affirm her ministry.

We have invited them to tell their story and share their experience.

This is another of those challenging moments in the life of our denomination. We face it at a time when civil discourse is hard to come by; when the tactics of the politics of polarization have affected us all.

In this environment it is easier to find echo chambers for our own opinions than it is to engage those with whom we disagree. The need to find common ground and common cause has never been greater.

When people will not speak with one another, there is slim hope for finding that common ground. So we invite you, whether traditionalist or atheist or somewhere in between, to join us with your questions and concerns.

The aim of this time together is to hear and to understand one another. In an atmosphere of trust we hope to consider whether and how the United Church might provide space for all of us.

Agenda

9:30 ^{am} -10:00	Arrival and Registration at Forest Hill United Church Coffee, Tea, & Muffins to Welcome you
10:00 - 10:20	Welcome and Introductions. Plans and process for the day.
10:20 - 10:40	Morning presentation by Gretta: My journey within the United Church and the West Hill congregation. Development of my beliefs and why I identify as an atheist.
10:40 - 11:20	Small Groups: Facilitated reaction, discussion and choice of questions.
11:20 - 12:00	Plenary Time - Gretta's response to some of the questions from small groups.
Noon Hour	Lunch will be provided.
1:00 - 1:30	Plenary Time - more response to the rest of our questions .
1:30 - 1:50	Afternoon Presentation by Gretta, Debbie and Babette of West Hill United: The West Hill community, our place in The United Church of Canada - barriers and the disciplinary process.
1:50 - 2:35	Small Groups: Facilitated reaction, discussion and choice of questions.
2:35 - 2:50	Refreshment Break
2:50 - 3:40 ^{ish}	Plenary Time - Gretta, Debbie and Babette respond to questions from small groups.
3:40 ^{ish} -4:00	Open question and answer time. An opportunity for individuals in plenary to raise additional questions.
4:00 ^{pm}	Adjournment and Refreshments You are on your own for supper. We reconvene in the Dineen Auditorium in Head Hall on the UNB campus at 7:00 pm for the evening session.

Evening Session on the UNB Campus. Dineen Auditorium, Head Hall	
\$10.00 admission at the door	
6:30 ^{pm}	Doors open
7:00-8:10	Theist -Atheist Dialogue: Gretta Vosper in conversation with Dr. John Valk.
8:10-8:50	A moderated Question and Answer time.
8:50 - 9:00	Thank-yous and Closing

Gretta Vosper is minister at West Hill United Church in Toronto and the the author of "With or Without God: Why The Way We Live is More Important Than What We Believe " (Harper Collins, 2008) and "Amen: What Prayer Can Mean in a World Beyond Belief" (Harper Collins, 2012.) Both books are available at Westminster Books on King Street in Fredericton and at Chapters in the Regent Street Mall. Gretta's website and blog is at www.grettavosper.ca

John Valk, PhD, formerly chaplain on campus, is now Professor of Worldview Studies at Renaissance College, UNB. He has presented papers on worldviews at national and international conferences and published in various academic journals and books. He has co-written "An Islamic Worldview in Turkey" with members of the Faculties of Religious Education and Theology at Ankara University in Turkey and is currently writing a book on "Worldviews as Inward Journey and Outward Expression". He is also a Visiting Professor at the Protestant University in Darmstadt, Germany.

Other Guests:

Debbie Ellis and **Babette Oliveira**, members of the West Hill United Church congregation.

The Rev Chris Levan, minister at College Street United Church in Toronto

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Toronto Conference of the United Church, acting on a complaint from an individual with no connection to the West Hill Congregation, has recommended that Gretta be placed on the discontinued service list – that is, barred from ministry in the United Church – in spite of her desire to continue her ministry and in spite of West Hill's desire that she continue to serve them. This is an absolutely unprecedented action and, should the General Council follow through, it will establish a new precedent.

The General Council of our Church has convened a Judicial Committee to rule on Toronto Conference's recommendation. That process does not include opportunity for members of the church at large to express their views.

We nevertheless would like to 'take a reading' of your feelings about whether or not The United Church can be a place where both clergy and congregants can pursue their spiritual journey even if that does not lead to affirming belief in God as a supernatural being who intervenes in the world.

The Rev Chris Levan, formerly of Wilmot United here in Fredericton, and now minister at College Street United in Toronto, in the same presbytery as Gretta, will also be here to register your feelings, reactions and opinions. Please take the opportunity to speak to Chris or a member of the Planning Committee while you are here.

Registration

To register, contact Owen Washburn at:

owenw@nbnet.nb.ca

or at 1 (506) 472-3842

Please include your name, street address, email address and telephone number.

The registration fee will be yours to determine - a free-will offering - either in advance of our time together or upon your arrival. While we have not asked for a fixed registration it is not because we do not have expenses. Our costs

include honoraria, travel, technical support, the venues we are using, and your lunch and refreshment breaks.

Based on anticipated numbers of participants, we estimate that an average donation of \$30 for the day-time sessions plus the suggested \$10.00 admission fee at the door for the evening session will cover our costs. (A cheque or cash only please. We are unable to accept credit cards.) Since your participation in the event is more important than what you are able to pay, please contribute as you are best able to. No one will be turned away.

Invite the committed and the curious
to come with you!

Members of the Planning Committee for this event are:
Rev Ali Anningson, Rev Brett Anningson, Rev Mac Campbell, Rev Murray McFarlane, Dr Jula Hughes, Mr Norman Laverty, Rev Ann Morwood. Mr Owen Washburn, Ms Gail Wylie.



Muhammad: A Prophet for our Time

author: Karen Armstrong

This biography aims to show a man trying to create a just and decent society in which all members would be treated with respect and equality. Armstrong claims his career revealed the inscrutable God's activity in the world and illustrated the perfect surrender, meaning that every human should make to the divine. The word Islam means this surrender. Her information comes from the Koran and four biographies written in the eighth and ninth century C.E. Muhammad (as she spells it) died in 632 CE.. What she shows is a human choosing political leadership and forced to make compromises.

A prophet, according to my divinity degreed son-in-law, means one in touch with the divine, endeavouring to teach divine will to other humans. The book was published in 2006, five years after 911, so our time was and is certainly one where Muhammad's ideals are needed..

Equality and respect were not to depend on riches, as they did in Mecca. Slaves were to be freed and riches were to be used to achieve equality in society. One thing I'll never forget is the enthusiastic reception of a passer-by when she saw me giving money to a beggar outside a mosque in Mali.

One of the problems is respect and equality for women. Armstrong points out that the Merciful and Compassionate attributes of his god used in every prayer meeting were portrayed in feminine words and that Mecca was unusual in allowing women to own property. That's why he was hired by a woman to work as a trader and she later became his first wife and a valuable partner. After her death, he

took other wives to establish political alliances for peace and trade. They were treated with respect, each given their own living space and apparently forming a community of lively and interesting women. It's not clear how the slave wife, a present from the ruler of Alexandria, fitted into this. Her son was declared free, but there was no mention of her free status of equality. Armstrong does not comment on this. She shows that compromise enters when he tells Muslim men not to have more than four wives and proceeds to take so many himself I lost count. Armstrong interprets this as a desire to care for women placed in difficult situations by the constant wars. The controversial order to talk only to his wives with a screen between them and any male visitors was to protect them from harassment when feelings against Muhammad and his wives was getting very strong. The wives were still allowed to walk where they wished, though special headgear was required so they could be easily recognised and respected. No veils were required till three generations later.

She shows a man who sought peace, even when the terms were disadvantageous to his followers. War, he said, should only be a reaction to attack or offensive behaviour and there should be no taking revenge. He and his followers were turned out of Mecca and went to live in Medina. He did count this as offensive behaviour that justified response. To even survive they had to constantly attack the caravans trading in and out of Mecca. The Quraysh, who ruled in Mecca and several local tribes objected to this and there was intermittent warfare. He suggested many compromises, without succeeding in obtaining lasting peace. Some of these went against his own principles. You've probably heard of the Satanic Verses where he is said to have told Muslims to bring the Quraysh to slaughter and expressed his love for goddesses who mediated with Allah..

However Muhammad's pilgrimage to the shrine at Mecca with 1000 unarmed followers bears an obvious resemblance to Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. Muhammad succeeded in getting to the sacred zone where no fighting was allowed and in teaching his views to some of the Meccan leaders and obtaining peace. In spite of compromises, this did not last and he attacked and took Mecca. The statues to other gods were destroyed and his own tribes got substantial booty. However only ten were on his black list and some of them were spared. He left Mecca much as it was. No Muslim government was set up there and he returned to Medina. Battles continued with two tribes.

By this time he knew death was coming and his last sermon near Mount Ararat called for no fights between Muslims, no vendettas, no vengeance and kindness to women. So here, as Armstrong points out, was a message only too relevant to current Sunni, Shia, ISIS conflicts and the parallel between the disputed holy sites in Mecca and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is only too evident. The message of peace and equality certainly applies.

Sheila Andrew

Soul of Aging

What is *The Soul of Aging*? An opportunity for people in the second half of life who want to explore their relationship with Eternity, expand their capacity to love, serve, and forgive themselves and others, seek peace, and embrace their own deaths.



“When physical eyesight declines, spiritual eyesight increases.” - Plato

How Does It Work? In a small group setting of 8 to 10 people, participants are invited to explore the movement toward interiority, reflection, and making peace with the past, that is a natural part of aging and grasping what life has been about. The process is based on the Courage and Renewal® work of Parker J. Palmer (www.couragerenewal.org) and gives individuals a safe container in which to expand their capacity to listen inward, and take a deep spiritual dive into the paradoxes of loss, transition, and renewal inherent in aging.

The Soul of Aging is framed on the knowledge that this phase of life, possibly more than any other, demands cultivation of inner resources. It will give you an opportunity to explore questions such as,

- “How can I come to peace with the regrets in my life?”
- “How can I let go of old ways and seize the moment and live my uniqueness now?”

www.meaning-life-purpose.com

WHEN: 10 Week Program
Wednesday 1:30-4:00 p.m.
September 27-November 29

WHERE: Unitarian Fellowship House
874 York Street
Fredericton, NB

FEE: \$35/session (for integrity of the process, participants will be asked to commit to all 10 sessions)

MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER

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Creation Myths

Editor’s note: While cleaning up some directories on my computer, I came across the following. I had, apparently, saved it back in 2012 and a couple of quick Google searches identified it as having come from “*In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*” by Margaret Atwood. I offer it as something to provoke a thought or two.

Science, too, has generated new myth systems. (By “myth” I mean a story central to our self-understanding: nothing about truth or falsehood is implied.) Here, for instance, is a new creation myth: the universe began with a Big Bang. Then the Earth was formed of cosmic dust. What came before the Big Bang? A singularity. What is a singularity? We don’t know.

Here is a new origin-of-people myth: people emerged via something called evolutionary forces from pre-human life forms that also so emerged. What created the rules for evolution? Life did. Where did life come from? We’re not sure, but we’re working on it. Why are we on Earth? No particular reason. Any idea why we should behave well? Most likely because food-gathering goes better in small groups, such as were common in the Pleistocene, if the males aren’t murdering each other all the time and copulating with the other males’ mates. What about relationships between men and women? We’re studying that now, through brain measurements and pheromones and anthropological evidence and, oh, all sorts of things, and we hope to have a mathematical formula for falling in love any time soon. How about a belief in God, or gods? Well, granted, most cultures have had such a thing. Maybe such a belief is an evolved adaptation. Maybe your survival chances are better if you think there is a powerful being on your side who has a master plan. But there probably isn’t much more to it than that.

As a story, the scientific *mythos* is not very comforting. Probably that’s why it hasn’t become wildly popular: we human beings prefer stories that have a central role in them for us, that preserve some of our mystery and thus some of our dignity, and that imply there might be help at hand if we really need some. The scientific version of our existence on this planet may very well be physically true, but we don’t like it much. It isn’t cuddly. There aren’t many tunes you can hum in the shower.

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