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## Upcoming services

Each month, the Sunday Services committee uses a theme to guide our services and adult program. Once in a while, through chance more than planning, a series of services all contain the theme. In January, the theme is Beginnings. Beginnings often come in the form of Questions. So please join us as we explore (or question) some of our personal, religious and historical beginnings.

**January 7** *Who do Men Say That I am?* Heather Lunergan.

In a follow-up to an earlier talk, Heather Lunergan will address the issue of the “historical” Jesus, and what we can learn about him from scholars of archaeology, theology and history, as well as from religious traditions.

**January 14** *Where Are We Going Now?* Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

At the beginning of a new calendar year, many of us feel the need to make changes to our lives. What are you leaving behind? What are you beginning and in what direction are you moving in 2018? We will watch a homily by Reverend Meg Riley, Senior Minister at the Church of the Larger Fellowship, in which she reflects on the tension between loving ourselves as we are and being challenged to change for the better, and have an opportunity to think about change and new beginnings

**January 21** *Where did Unitarianism Come From?* Heather Lunergan

On January 13, 1568, in the city of Torda (Transylvania/Roumania), a gathering of religious leaders and politicians presided over by Unitarian King John Sigismund proclaimed religious freedom in the Edict of Torda. Through this act, Unitarianism was officially recognized for the first time in the history of the world. It also signals the beginning of the UU legacy to be a spiritual tradition that resists hatred, oppression, and the narrow view that there is only one way to be faithful, to be religious, to be free.

**January 28** *What would you do?* Using compassionate utilitarianism and cross cultural moral foundations theory to find your way in a complex world.

This Sunday, Myron Hedderson will take you along from the beginning of his personal, life-long journey to answer the question: What really is the right thing to do, and the best way to live one’s life?

In a post-modern world where we question tradition and multiple sources of moral authority compete for our attention and allegiance, and some say there is no answer or everyone can live in their own subjective version of reality with their own ideas of right and wrong, finding an answer to these questions can be very difficult. But Myron’s been a weirdo thinking weirdly hard about these things since he was 5, and while he doesn’t subscribe to any one person or group’s idea of moral goodness, he’s come across some principles from various sources both ancient and recent that seem widely applicable and come together to provide him a sensible path forward - most of the time.

Bonus: Email your tough or interesting moral dilemmas to [m\\_hedderson@hotmail.com](mailto:m_hedderson@hotmail.com) until the Friday before the service, and he will pick a few for analysis and discussion during the service, and stick around for a discussion afterwards.



## Reflection on the Theme: Beginnings

Curated by Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes

“New Year’s Day. A fresh start. A new chapter in life waiting to be written. New questions to be asked, embraced,

and loved. Answers to be discovered and then lived in this transformative year of delight and self-discovery. Today carve out a quiet interlude for yourself in which to dream, pen in hand. Only dreams give birth to change.”

– Sarah Ban Breathnach

“Be willing to be a beginner every single morning.”

– Meister Eckhart

“You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing that we call ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but the staying down.”

– Mary Pickford

“And now let us welcome the new year, full of things that never were.”

Rainer Maria Rilke

“Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end.”

– Seneca

“We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve 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

“Forgiveness says you are given another chance to make a new beginning.”

– Desmond Tutu

“A new beginning! We must learn to live each day, each hour, yes, each minute as a new beginning, as a unique opportunity to make everything new... Imagine that we could live each day as a day full of promises. Imagine that we could walk through the year always listening to a voice saying to us: ‘I have a gift for you and can’t wait for you to see it!’ Imagine!”

– Henri Nouwen

“To communicate is the beginning of understanding.

To feel is the beginning of self-growth.

To touch is the beginning of involvement.

To love is the beginning of all that will ever be.”

– Nancy Ceranowicz

### Spiritual Exploration Exercise

Poet John O’Donohue ( - 2008) was a mystic influenced by Irish Celtic traditions. This poem seems to be the perfect way to open up a new calendar year and to invite us all to embrace the changes in our lives.

“For a New Beginning,” by John O’Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.  
For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety  
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,

Wondered would you always live like this.  
Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life’s desire.  
Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

– from

*To Bless the Space Between Us:  
A Book of Blessings,*  
by John O’Donohue

### Questions for Spiritual Exploration:

1. January is an appropriate time to take inventory of your experiences in the year just past, and to reflect on the changes you encountered. What were your peak experiences of joy, sorrow, fear, and excitement in 2017? What are you beginning, bringing forward, or ending?
2. How would you say you have changed since January 1, 2017? What has changed you or what have you changed in your life? How do you feel about this change? Does it feel transitory or permanent or something in between?
3. Have there been times in your life when you have fully embraced a change, when you have felt transformed? Reflect on the nature of this experience and on your feelings about it. What would it take to feel that sense of rightness or adventure or of joy about the place in your life where you now find yourself.



## Third Thursday

Third Thursdays continue at the Fellowship. We meet on the third Thursday of each month at 7 pm for a short presentation followed by discussion and fellowship. On Thursday, January 18, Donna Young will show slides and discuss her Arctic Adventure in 2017. Adventure Canada’s Arctic trips are educational experiences. Donna Young describes one of them. Everyone is welcome.

In February, our Third Thursday event will honour Black History Month. Stay tuned for details.



## Joys and Concerns

It brought joy to the caring and hospitality committee to deliver Holiday cookies to members of the congregation. Thanks to Alyssa who suggested the cookie exchange and deliveries.

**Always needed:** Caring Volunteers

Are you available to.

Visit members of the congregation at home or in hospital. Offer drives to the fellowship or for various appointments. Cook food for others when needed.

Reply to Janet Crawford [janetcr@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:janetcr@nbnet.nb.ca)

Sympathy is extended to Myron Hedderson on the passing of his grandmother, Mae Hedderson in Newfoundland. Her obituary is in December's Touchstone. Myron was inspired by the many kindnesses and food deliveries to help us on the caring committee cookie exchange. Thank you Myron.



## Women's Pot Luck Dinner

The next Unitarian Fellowship women's pot luck will be held January 26<sup>th</sup>. Linda will host the gathering at her home, 29 Fleet Court. We gather at 6 PM and eat at 6:30 PM. Topic for discussion is still being decided. For further information, contact Joan Brewer at [jebrewer@rogers.com](mailto:jebrewer@rogers.com).



## Growth Strategy Working Group Report

Members of this Committee are Sarah Bartlett, Gail Moore, Glenna Hanley, Ken Moore, Nick Fitzgerald, Myron Hedderson and Sheila Moore. Our purpose is to stimulate growth in membership for our Fellowship. The framework we have devised to accomplish this is asking each of the Standing Committees of the Fellowship to develop an Action Plan. Our Standing Committees are: Sunday Services, Adult Programs, Children's Program, Building & Grounds, Caring, Hospitality, Membership, Public Awareness, Social Responsibility, Lay Chaplaincy and Finance. We have met with most of the Committee Chairs to discuss how their committee can use a variety of ideas to develop their Action Plan for congregational growth.

Some examples are:

Suggestions from Building and Grounds chair involve: better lighting, better entrance signage, encouraging more use of the building by outside groups. etc.

Suggestions from Membership Chair involve: Visitor Information packets, immediately place visitor names on our mailing list, have "invite a friend" Sundays, etc.

Another suggestion is hosting a Unitarian Meditation Group.

We have suggested to each of the Committee Chairs that they increase their 2018 budget requests to fund their Growth Action Plan. This is a two year concentrated initiative for our Fellowship and the Growth Strategy Working Group members are willing, able and committed to assisting our Standing Committees in any way we can. Our congregation's commitment to growth will bring about an increase in the number of people attending our Sunday Services, Adult Programs, community events and, importantly, a renewed Children's Program.

Unitarians have a good message and we need to re-vitalize our community by sharing it.

Sheila Moore, Co-chair



## Urban Teaching Farm Project in Fredericton

By Najat Abdou-McFarland

Some of you may have attended the summer service when Edee Klee spoke about how to start a community garden. At the time we had a discussion on whether it was feasible for our small congregation to manage such a project. We concluded that it was too big of a project at the current time. Well, Edee is now in the thick of another project involving gardening called Hayes Urban Teaching Farm. The site is in Devon and will serve as a teaching/demonstration site for small scale agriculture (excluding livestock). The project will support keen aspiring farmers to get their start in the city as well as provide opportunities to market their produce.

The coordinators of the project are now getting ready for a fundraising campaign through crowd-sourcing. The campaign goes live January 8. Please spread the word to contacts who you think may be interested in supporting the project either financially or socially through passing along the message.

The Facebook group is:

<https://www.facebook.com/HayesUrbanTeachingFarm/>

The website is:

<http://www.nbchg.org/urban-teaching-farm-project/>



## Persepolis 2: The Return

by **Marijane Satrapi**

Given the current disturbances in Iran, this is an interesting book to read on the social and political demands made by the Supreme Leader and President's regime that followed the end of the Shah's rule. The first volume of this graphic novel showed Marijane growing up under these tightening laws and the Iran- Iraq war. Her brave family, kept its belief in free thought even as friends and relatives died in prison or in the war. Finally they sent teenage Marijane to Vienna for education in a French school and arranged for her to stay with a friend's family there..

Volume 2 shows Marijane keeping up her outspoken resistance to anyone insisting on rules or ideas she disagreed with and speaking out with such vigour that she has to leave her friend's house and several other residences, She can not keep up with any group of friends or individual friends, Books become her only comfort, so she passes the French baccalaureate and graduates from the school but ends up homeless on the street. Fortunately she gets back to Iran when her parents tell her a friend in Vienna owes enough money to her family to pay for her return ticket.

Back in Iran she never talks about the disasters in Vienna and does not want to see former friends..However, her mother, father and grandmother stand by her, even when she gets to the point of attempted suicide over the

frustrations of the extremist Muslim regime's demands. This is when she pulls her life together. A psychiatrist tells her she survived the attempt because God wanted her to live. It is interesting that her faith in God has survived all the problems.

So she works on her health and becomes a fitness teacher. For education and self- expression she. concentrates on design not words and is accepted into a university course in this field, even though an interview demonstrating her faith is required. Throughout the book I am astounded by her frank and dangerous comments to the authority figures. In the interview she finds a man as honest as herself who accepts her faith. She also finds a male friend who differs from her in ways they think will create a lasting friendship, However state authority demands this become a marriage if they are to be seen together.

This is when she is forced to seek a new world again as the marriage fails and she leaves for Vienna planning to take an art course in Strasbourg and then work in Paris. Marijane Satrapi was working in Paris when she wrote and drew the book.

So what do we learn from this? That honesty can survive the demands of extremism? That Satrapi wrote what she wished she had said sometimes? That Persepolis is a symbol of terrifying power not of the beauty of Iran's past? That there is hope for more freedom in Iran?

Let's hope for the positive in 2018.

Sheila Andrew

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Please send articles to [touchstone@uff.ca](mailto:touchstone@uff.ca)