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May Sunday Services

Our theme for May is Thresholds. Elsewhere you'll find some quotations on the word, and I invite you to think about your understanding of the word. Meanwhile, the Sunday Services Committee, along with our newly formed ZOOM technical committee, has been moving toward hosting "as close as possible to regular" Sunday morning services, followed by a virtual coffee hour. Details for each Sunday, including an order of service, will be sent by congregational email.

This is a difficult time, but we are a congregation, a community, a Fellowship. Hopefully we will soon step over our own thresholds, and get used to a "new normal." One thing that will remain constant is our important life as a congregation. Stay home, but ZOOM in to our various gatherings. Heather Lunergan

May 3 "A Gateway into the New" Service coordinator: Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes On May 3, Jo-Anne will invite us to look at this outbreak and recent tragedies as a gateway into a new way of living with ourselves and each other. We will listen to some reflections and poetry and share our ideas about re-imagining what comes next, how we will mourn our losses, and what changes we will embrace in our own lives.

The regular monthly meeting of the UFF Board of Directors will follow the service on the same link, after a half-hour break for lunch. As always, all UFF members are invited to attend the meeting.

May 10 "Definitive Thresholds." Guest Minister: the Reverend Mary Tingley We cross thresholds each and every day. Thresholds challenge us because in so many

ways they are decision or choice makers. There is a massive rich history about these portals and on May 10th I thought we could explore them together. That of course, requires you to enter into another threshold of possibility! I hope you will ZOOM in. Until then, be safe and be well.

May 17 "A World without Integrity?" Guest Speaker: Dr. Stephen Ward. As with "being ethical," or "being responsible," most people would agree that it is a good thing if individuals, officials, and corporations have integrity. But what does "integrity" mean, why is it important, and to what extent can society encourage integrity? The talk will look at the concept in ethics and psychology, and then pose the question: Have we created a polarized, social media world where integrity is ignored or is no longer important?

May 24 "The Lay Chaplaincy" The CUC recommends that each congregation dedicate a service each year to the Lay Chaplaincy, explaining its functions and limitations. This will be that service. Tony Fitzgerald will lead the service and Jenn Carpenter-Gleim will speak about her activities this past year and some of the challenges presented by the pandemic.

May 31 "To Be Announced"



Thresholds

Our theme for March is Thresholds. It seems a fitting theme, given that most of us have not crossed too many physical thresholds in the past month. Until we can once again enter stores, art galleries and concert halls, the homes of friends, and our meeting space at 874 York, here are some quotations to ponder and discuss, by phone or text or social media.

Collected by Heather Lunergan

We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind, that is the approval by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Eleanor Roosevelt, in Paris on December 10, 1948

A surprising number of scientific advances have been made

and masterpieces of art created by individuals just on the threshold of adulthood.

Benjamin Spock

A little cooling down of animal excitability and instinct, a little loss of animal toughness, a little irritable weakness and descent of the pain-threshold, will bring the worm at the core of all our usual springs of delight into full view, and turn us into melancholy metaphysicians.

William James

Before I had crossed the threshold of my church I was made to realize that I was shepherd of a divided flock.

Anna Howard Shaw

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high, we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsmen of a stiller town.

A. E. Housman "To an Athlete Dying Young."

This is the solstice, the still point of the sun, its cusp and midnight, the year's threshold and unlocking, where the past lets go of and becomes the future; the place of caught breath.

Margaret Atwood

The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.

Khalil Gibran

My definition of success is not based on achieving the impossible, but rather surviving the probable. And with a threshold that horribly low, simple survival cannot help but become my highest aspiration.

Craig D. Lounsbrough

You can have an epidemic in a state. You can have it in a region. You can have it in a country where the critical level of disease passes a certain threshold, and we call that an 'epidemic threshold.'

Dr. Anthony Fauci

Much of modern art is devoted to lowering the threshold of what is terrible. By getting us used to what, formerly, we could not bear to see or hear, because it was too shocking, painful, or embarrassing, art changes morals.

Susan Sontag

Art is long, life short, judgment difficult, opportunity transient. To act is easy, to think is hard; to act according to our thought is troublesome. Every beginning is cheerful: the threshold is the place of expectation.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The blizzard of the world has crossed the threshold and it's overturned the order of the soul ...

Leonard Cohen (The Future)

THREE BASIC TRUTHS

Three things have a limited threshold:

Time, pain, and death.

While truth, love, and knowledge –

Are boundless.

Three things are needed

For humanity to co-exist:

Truth, peace and basic needs.

Everything else -

Is irrelevant.

Suzy Kassem, Rise Up and Salute the Sun:
The Writings of Suzy Kassem



Your Caring Circle

First of all, I'm sure everyone will join us in expressing sympathy to all Nova Scotians on their very many tragic losses on the weekend. It is so hard to see a such a devastating event so close to home and at a very stressful time in our lives.

We started a private facebook page for the TUFF Caring Circle. If you would like to join us, add me as a friend and I can add you to the page. My FB is

<https://www.facebook.com/janet.crawford.9216>

We are also hosting a tea and conversation by zoom on Mondays at 2.

TUFF Caring Circle called or emailed almost everyone that we had contact information for. If we missed you, we are available for you. If you want to check in with someone else, hear another voice and just chat, we are available.

Janet Crawford janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca 454-0441

Sheila Moore smoore@nbnet.nb.ca 450-9021

Glenna Hanley ghanley@nb.sympatico.ca 472-8431

We have volunteers who may be able to help pick up grocery orders or prescriptions for you and drop them off. You can contact:

Mark Thom (403) 458-6340 or

markjordanthom@gmail.com

Nick Fitzgerald (506) 449-5741 or

johnnickfitz@gmail.com

(for downtown or N'sis walking deliveries)

Alyssa Sankey 506 259-7597 alyssa@sankey.ca

Jenn Carpenter-Gleim and Tracy Gleim 897-0008 or

Tag.1967@hotmail.com

Amber Lynn Eliot and Kurtis Lanteigne 343-2788

Joys and Concerns

Sympathy to Sheila Andrew on the death of a good friend who was 97 and Also thinking of her cousin in palliative care.

A Joy is that Deby Nash is finally home and recovering well.

Send your Joys and Concerns to your caring circle janetcra@nbnet.nb.ca



Board update

The UFF Board of Directors will be meeting a half hour after the Sunday Service ends on May 3 (on the Sunday Service Zoom link). We welcome all members at our meetings as we plan together for the continuing vitality of our community.

At our last meeting, attended by many of our congregational leaders, I read this piece:

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/ninth-obstacle>

Each of the participants checked in with a reflection on what our "ninth obstacle" (and tenth, eleventh, twelfth, etc.) was.

For me, as president of the UFF, chair of the CUUWA, La Leche League Leader, chair of an arts group, and especially as mother, grandmother, partner, and friend, I feel that my main focus right now is my care work. Keeping Carlos and my family safe and healthy requires my non-anxious presence as well as practical efforts. As many of you know, I am a fairly early adopter of technology and I appreciate the opportunities to get together on Zoom and messenger video calls, and I continue to do the paid and unpaid work from home as I have done for 25 years. However, now I am finding that I am often exhausted and afraid and have less energy. I started to write this update shortly after the events in Nova Scotia took place, affecting our neighbours and friends in small towns and rural areas similar to where many of us spend time. As the investigation continues, these episodes of family and random violence occurring so close to home make me feel even more vulnerable. My heart breaks for the families and friends that are unable to come together to grieve their loved ones.

I'm not sure how I would define my ninth obstacle; my care work is a blessing rather than an obstacle. It could be the increase of demands on my spirit or my fatigue or past trauma.

One of the ways my life during this outbreak has changed is that I am overly reactive to minor events. I have to keep myself from shouting out to strangers or friends: "Don't you know how many people are dying, or will die? Aren't you mourning for all of them?"

Right now, as a board, our priority is on caring for our members, friends, and larger community during the pandemic. Everyone we serve is learning to live without in-person Sunday Services and meetings of the board or committees, without visits to members and friends in hospital or at home, without other activities that gather us in our cherished, "embodied" community. We have developed ways to replicate or replace some of those activities. For many people, these odd connections leave them feeling lonely and anxious. For others, the focused attention of online, performative presence is exhausting and discon-

nected. For still others, online connections can be both a welcome distraction and one more item on their schedule as they are trying to juggle working at home or in essential jobs with volunteering, socializing, and precious time alone to disengage or to reflect on our collective post-pandemic future. And finally, there are people who are so eager to be of use that they find themselves nervous when they are no longer busy, or depleted or disappointed by people who seem unwilling (but are more likely unable) to engage.

In a course I teach, I explain to participants that isolation, boredom, and disengagement are not primary emotions; they involve reactions and cognitive processes rooted in loneliness, sadness, fear... Can you identify what you are feeling underneath your thoughts and worries? You may be feeling alone in your experience of fear and sorrow; I suspect that this experience is connecting us all. I define what I am experiencing as spiritual growth through crisis. How can a disease spreading like a legendary or ancient plague or Canada's largest mass murder be anything but a call to be more deeply, more fully human?

I invite you to remember that you are a vital part of our Fellowship community. I see you. I know we are all on different paths and in different places. Let's remember that, right now (and probably always), each of us is facing eight obstacles in the muddy, physically and emotionally challenging course of life. I have a feeling that most of you face many more than nine or ten. Let's look for ways that we can develop our skills and opportunities for self-empathy, resilience, and spiritual growth. Let's offer assistance to someone who needs (and has consented to) our help making it over an obstacle. Let's extend grace and compassion to all around us, even when we can't be of practical use.

Be safe, be well, be at ease, be loving to yourself and those around you.

In faith and hope,
Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes



It's All About Improvising

From Glenna Hanley,
CUC board member and liaison for UFF

Like so many things the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) national conference, which was to take place on the May long weekend in Halifax, has fallen victim to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However CUC staff and the conference planning team have been working hard to try and salvage a few components of the conference.

With the aid of the internet the annual general meeting will be an entirely virtual event, taking place on Saturday, May 16, from 1 pm to 4:30 pm Atlantic time. The AGM

has been held on the Zoom platform in recent years so that delegates not able to attend in person could participate. So this is not new to the CUC.

Prior to the AGM there will be a plenary session on Thursday night, May 14, from 7:30 to 9 pm. This is an opportunity for the board and staff to discuss with congregation leaders issues of importance to us all. That will include the CUC vision, goals and priorities. It will be co-chaired by board president Margaret Wanlin and CUC executive director Vyda Ng.

On Sunday there are plans to hold a national church service. Time has yet to be determined.

During this time of social isolation CUC staff has been a good resource for congregations and their leaders, providing guidelines and suggestions for ways to stay connected as a community. Questions like how you can hold an annual general meeting during a pandemic.

For more information on the AGM or other on line sources visit the website at cuc.ca Check out the “Events” tab for more info on the AGM.

You can also sign up for the cuc enews. Find the link on cuc.ca



Mary Louise Luck

1942-2020

Mary Louise Luck was a member of the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton for many years and is a good friend of some of our members. Sympathy to her family at this difficult time.

September 28, 1942
to March 27, 2020



Mary Louise died peacefully in her sleep at home in Ste. Anne's Court, Fredericton. She will be sadly missed by her daughter Christine Trimble, brother John (Maureen) of Eganville Ontario, sister Christina (Hans-Hartwig) of Cookstown Ontario, nephew Bryan (Beverly) of Ottawa, niece Janna (James) of Squamish BC, great nephews Graham and Charlie, great nieces Julia and Isla and her many cousins and good friends. Pre-deceased by her parents Harry Gordon Luck and Mary Grace Pond. She managed bookstores in Ottawa, Montreal and Fredericton before finding her dream job at UNB Counselling Services. She was the family historian and poet, lover of all things Parisian, first to jump off the deep end and was very fond of cats. Mary Louise devoted herself to supporting and enjoying life with her daughter Christine; she was a passionate and tireless advocate for the improvement and expansion of mental health services in New Brunswick and beyond. Her thoughtfulness, caring and tenacious

intelligence will missed by everyone who's life she touched.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date, with an interment at St. James Cemetery, Crown Hill, Ontario. Donations made to Jobs Unlimited or the Canadian Mental Health Association would be appreciated by the family.

<http://www.mcadamsfh.com/obituaries/145529>

The following was distributed to the UNB community.

Please join me in offering condolences to family and friends of retired staff member Mary Louise Luck, who passed away on March 27 in Fredericton. She was 77.

A master of education graduate from UNB (1990), Mary Louise managed bookstores in Ottawa, Montreal and Fredericton. She began working as a counsellor at UNB's Counselling Services in September 1995. Throughout her career, Mary Louise was an advocate who was dedicated to improving and expanding mental health services in New Brunswick and beyond. She retired from UNB in September 2002 after seven years of service.

According to archives, Mary Louise helped organize a meditation series, titled “Meditation in a Sacred World” at Wilmot United Church, as well as workshops at the Women's Health Centre for women who experienced abuse. She was also a guest speaker for a session on women entering traditionally male-dominated fields, and organized information sessions for people wanting to return to school as mature students. In addition, she was a coordinator of a six-member team from St. Margaret's Anglican Church that ran a grief recovery support group called GriefShare.

Mary Louise's friends remember her as an adventurous, intelligent, thoughtful and caring individual who touched the lives of many. She was known as the family historian and poet. She also loved cats and enjoyed spending time with her daughter.

Online condolences may be made at:

[https://obituaries.telegraphjournal.com/
book-of-memories/4180204/mary-louise-luck/](https://obituaries.telegraphjournal.com/book-of-memories/4180204/mary-louise-luck/)



The Lemon Tree

An Arab, A Jew and
the Heart of the Middle East

by Sandy Tolan

The lemon tree was planted by a Palestinian Arab family in the garden of their home in Al Ramla and continues to grow there after a Jewish family from Bulgaria live there and the Arabs are driven out by the Israelis. The Arab son, Bashir is able to return briefly in 1967 and

invited in by Dalia, daughter of the Jewish family. The two find friendship, common suffering and frustration over the seemingly endless warfare between their leaders and extremists.

The experienced journalist author did detailed research on the attempted solutions and subsequent terrorism and warfare from 1917 to 2013 and met both Bashir, Dalia and members of their families, as well as reading their letters. This is non-fiction that flows like a novel.

The beginning map of the British Peel Commission's 1917 borders between the two countries suggests problems of communication, water and control of traditional and religious sites. The continuing story shows interference, sometimes well-meaning, from many countries. Bashir's brother suggests Israel has taken control of the United States! Deep sympathy with Jews over the Holocaust influences this. Egypt, Jordan, Syria and other Arab countries get involved, sometimes for their own interests, sometimes for fellow Arabs. Interestingly Tolan does not seem to find Jewish- Islamic conflict significant, nor did Muhammad. Dalia goes to a demonstration using Jewish, Muslim and Christian prayers. Dahlia does not stress the Jewish right to return to "The Promised Land" of Israel as a religious issue. Gradually Talon sees the Jews gaining confidence in themselves as strong nationalist defenders, not poor victims. He gives many examples of cruelty and over reaction by Jews as well as the Palestinian terrorism given more frequent publicity by Western press. Palestinians are also shown becoming more sure that they

alone will fight for their rights. However there are many different views within both peoples. Not all want war.

There are solutions discussed by leaders and minorities on both sides: one state with religious freedom and democracy, Jordanian control over Palestinian territory, various borders of two states. The biggest division is freedom of Palestinian refugees to return to their own homes. This would make them a majority and take away land and homes from Jews who have come from so many countries, like Dalia's family. She and Bashir can never agree on this.

Bashir is accused of terrorism and imprisoned for 17years, later for other shorter periods and has to change his country of refuge several times. He was even brutally tortured. We never know if he was guilty. Dalia starts a successful kindergarten in her home for Arab children and encourages Arab/Jewish dialogue. We do not know in what way. Her first letter to Bashir calling for agreement and emphasising their friendship was published and many liked it.

The Afterword shows that by 2013 Bashir was no longer answering Dalia's letters, but she says the relationship between them remained: it was "deeper than friendship", "It was family" . The lemon tree remains symbolic.

This memorable and moving book was lent to me by Joan Brewer, so contact her if you would like to borrow it.

Sheila Andrew

This space wants your material!
Please send articles to touchstone@uff.ca