



# Ploughshare

## ***A Piece of Mike's Mind***

***by Rev. Mike Morran***

Sunday, September 29th was Rosh Hashanah, one of two High Holy Days in the Jewish tradition. The other High Holy Day is Yom Kippur, which will happen on October 8th. The ten days in between are a yearly ritual of reflection and relationship, a specific time set aside for making things right between you and your community, and between you and your God.

The legend is that on Rosh Hashanah (the Day of Atonement), all souls pass silently before God and are judged on their behavior over the past year, like a highly detailed character assessment. Were you kind? Were you generous? Were you righteous? Were you honest? The judgments of God get written into the Book of Life, which remains open only until Yom Kippur, the first day of the new year, when the Book of Life is closed again until the next Rosh Hashanah.

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## ***Talkin' 'bout my Generation***

***by Erin Kenworthy, DRE***

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*People try to put us down (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*Just because we get around (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*Things they do look awful cold (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*I hope I die before I get old (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*This is my generation*

*This is my generation, baby*

*Why don't you all fade away (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*And don't try to dig what we all say (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*I'm not trying to cause a big sensation (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*I'm just talkin' 'bout my generation (Talkin' 'bout my generation)*

*This is my generation*

*This is my generation, baby*

- The Who

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## *Mind from page 1*

By tradition and often belief, the last ten days of the year are set aside for mending fences, making peace, owning your mistakes, asking forgiveness from the people you have wronged, even if those wrongs were unintentional. And, offering forgiveness to those who have wronged you. It is a time of reflection and brutal honesty, because, as the saying goes, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool God.

One of the most beautiful Psalms is number 139:

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*

*You know when I sit down and when I rise up;*

*you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*...Even before a word is on my tongue,*

*behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

*...Where shall I go from your Spirit?*

*Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

*If I ascend to heaven, you are there!*

*If I make my bed below, you are there!*

*If I take the wings of the morning*

*and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*even there your hand shall lead me,*

*and your right hand shall hold me.*

Three times in my life I have had people of Jewish heritage come into my office, or send me a letter, or call me on the phone to apologize for something they had said, to make up a pledge they hadn't paid to the church, and once just to check that we were ok with each other after some minor tension we'd exchanged on a task-force months before.

All of these contacts were unexpected, but each time I was profoundly touched that here was someone living this outward expression of a powerful spiritual practice. Heaven knows the world could use a lot more "days of atonement." Days of reflection and brutal honesty about who we are and what we have done, followed by the good faith effort to make things right with our world and the people in it.

In Unitarian Universalism, we call this our Covenant. It's not tied to a calendar, a holiday, or to any particular understanding of God. Rather, it is rooted in our aspirations...: to live ourselves into the Unity that makes us ONE, to model that ALL souls are sacred and worthy, aiming for Salvation in THIS life, not just for ourselves but for everyone.

We honor the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Earth Centered traditions, and many others, knowing that we have much to learn from each of them. Simultaneously, we celebrate the diversity of belief and practice already among us, knowing that diversity makes us stronger, livelier, more challenged, and more interesting. Thinking and praying on this, I realize I have a few fences to mend with some people I care about, and I'm grateful for both the High Holy Days, and for my covenantal faith community.

## *Talkin' from page 1*

This year, the RE team is committed to offering more multigenerational connection in our congregational events. And so, we've begun to look at generational values, needs, and assumptions as we try to craft worship and social events that connect with the beautifully age-diverse community we have at First Unitarian.

Generations are a funny thing. Loosely defined, so often we stretch the limits to include, or disavow the one to which we are assigned. I am a Xennial. Heard of it? Probably only if you identify as a Xennial. I'm on that border between Generation X and Millennial. I was born into an analog world, and am experiencing a digital adulthood. I remember the advent of popular internet usage, still use my original email address, and was not an early adopter of cell phones. I like being a Xennial. It's a nice 10 year span roughly, depending on your source, spanning the birth years of 1975-1985. I'm smack in the middle there, 1979. Hanging onto the very last possible spot in Gen X,, and representing the last breath before millennials came onto the scene. Millennials catch a lot of flack for being coddled, overly individualistic, flaky, and entitled. So often the word Millennial falls off the tongue with a sour face. Try it. Say the word Millennial. Then look at your face. Told you so.

And yet, Millennials have stepped onto the scene as visionary social justice leaders, innovators in mass communication, and willing challengers of the status quo. They have pushed us toward a more inclusive paradigm for community participation, and have supported the voice and leadership of youth in the generation that follows.

Last year, Rowan Hagemann put out a call to action and collaboration between generations in a social media post that went viral. Perhaps you've seen it.

“GenX, circa 1990: \$#!%, organizing is hard work. My parents just want me to study and 'get a good job' like they did, and I can't get my message out beyond these zines I keep leaving at the coffee shop. 300 people at a protest is a big deal. \*studies developing tech, starts building communication and information exchange platforms, settles down to a day job but doesn't stop trying to change the world, takes up blogging. Eventually figures out self-care\*

Millennials, circa 2001: OK, there's got to be a better way to communicate and network to organise. Emailing everyone is just so damned tedious, and I can't really share blogs . I try to talk to my family about what's important, and they're busy with their own \$#!%. \*works on developing social media, builds more collaborative communities, gets into encrypted apps and communication platforms. Can't get day jobs in field, so ends up in high-turnover employment like teaching\*

GenZ: This \$#!% can't stand. OK, everyone, put the word out on social media that we're walking out of class to protest. Start making videos and putting them out there. We have \$#!% to say.

## *Proclaiming a Black UU Theology*

*by Jen Simon, Ministerial Intern*

I'd like to start off by saying thank you. The past month has been a wonderful, welcoming whirlwind of meetings and services, coffee and potlucks. I am enjoying getting to know you as people, and First Unitarian as a community.

One of many aspects of ministry and worship I've been particularly impressed with at First Unitarian is its recent work on racial justice. At the end of this month, I will be travelling to St. Paul, Minnesota, to attend the Harper-Jordan Memorial Symposium. Put on by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU), the theme is, "Proclaiming a Black UU Theology."

And our faith has been blessed with numerous Black and POC clergy and lay ministers. For instance, did you know...

- Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a member of both the African Methodist Episcopal and Unitarian churches. An accomplished author and orator, she was involved in the abolition, suffrage, temperance, Black literary, and children's movements
- Rev. Joseph Jordan was the first ordained Black Universalist minister, in 1889. His ministry produced two African American Universalist churches in Virginia, as well as a school for Black children.
- Rev. Ethelred Brown, Jamaican by birth, was the first Black ordained Unitarian minister – way back in 1912. He started a Unitarian church in Harlem in the middle of the Harlem Renaissance. He spoke out against Jim Crow and helped secure Jamaican independence from Great Britain.

These and many other Black Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists contributed a great deal to our faith in terms of theology, and the truth is, in the white supremacist culture of our country and our denomination, they often suffered a great deal in order to do it. Many of their contributions went unremarked, overlooked or forgotten for decades or centuries in white-dominant UU spaces.

Starting this month, I will be offering a class on some of the history of our Black UUs – their contributions, their theologies, their struggles, and what they might have to say to our current UU context. Come discover the contributions that these Black UUs have made, and how those contributions can inform our faith as we continue the liberative and prophetic work of racial justice in our denomination and our world!

The class will be offered on four Wednesday evenings – October 16th and 23rd, November 6th, and 13th from 6:30p to 8:30p. (There will be no class on October 30th because I'll be attending the Harper-Jordan! There might be homework, though.) Buying the book is not absolutely necessary, but if you want information about more Black UUs than can possibly be covered in the class, I highly recommend getting a copy of *Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism*.

I look forward to seeing you there.

## *President's Corner*

*by Mary Sullivan, President, First Unitarian Board of Trustees*

In latter September, I attended a gathering hosted by the Leadership Development Committee. It was entitled the "FUSD Elected Committee Chair/Co-Chair Get Together" and was held at the home of Sandy Parker and Jim Shively (LDC members.)

It was a truly wonderful evening and it incorporated so many of the aspects of relational interaction that I hope we exhibit within our congregation on a regular basis.

First and foremost, there was great food!

Actually, probably even more important than the great food, there was an atmosphere of gratitude and appreciation for the folks who give generously of their time and talents to FUSD. There are currently eight "elected committees" at FUSD, committees which are populated by members who are voted on at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

In attendance at this gathering were the following chairs/co-chairs of those committees, along with Mike Morran, Jen Simon (our new Ministerial Intern) and several spouses.

Board of Trustees: Mary Sullivan

Finance Council: David Keller

Personnel: Steve Caminer

Stewardship: Nancy Crow

Endowment: Chris Hahn

LDC: Tammy Carpenter & Stu Ferguson, along with other members, Betsy Brainerd, Sandy Parker, and Jim Shively (Noelle Botti could not attend)

Not present at this lovely gathering due to previous commitments were the chairs from the following committees.

Committee on Ministry: Coral Cosway

Faith in Action Council: Ellen Cahill

In addition to the appreciation exhibited throughout the evening, there was an informational period, where everyone shared what was happening with their individual committee's work.

Take a look at some of what these hard-working committees have been up to!

LDC has already started their very important work of identifying prospective candidates to fill upcoming vacancies on the elected committees. They are also planning a workshop on FUSD's new data management system, Breeze.

BOT is progressing with their three top priorities identified at their summer retreat. A full description of those can be found in the August edition of the Ploughshare.

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## *Racial Justice Project at First Unitarian*

*by Julie Meyers, RJP Co-Chair*

The Racial Justice Project at FUSD is starting its fourth year. We want to share with you what we're planning for the upcoming year:

- Several RJP Pot Lucks, after second service on Sundays with guest speakers (dates and speakers will be announced shortly).
- Two FUSD Community Reads (where the congregation reads a book then comes together to discuss it). We're planning one non-fiction book and one fiction book. The first title will be announced in the next few weeks.
- Educating the congregation about the upcoming Denver School Board Election at a table at coffee hour.
- Working with the library at Denver Discovery School, a primarily students of color middle school that had no access to a school library last year.
- A Reparations Justice Circle has started to have an ongoing conversation about what reparations means and how it can be implemented.

We meet the first Tuesday every other month. Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 3rd, from 7:00p to 9:00p. We welcome newcomers. If meetings don't interest you, consider other ways to get involved by coming to our planned activities or contacting me to discuss your interests.

### *Corner from page 5*

Finance Council has been gleefully using the reliable accounting numbers captured by ShelbyNext to prepare and evaluate budgets. They are also keeping a sharp eye on monitoring the expenses to keep the budget on track. How come they get to have all the fun?

Stewardship related how the move to annual pledging is making income projections so much easier to calculate. This also allows for a more seamless tracking of income to expenses. They are also busy re-imagining the ambassadors' role with the congregation along with strategizing longer term fund raising ideas for the Endowment.

Personnel is in the process of reworking their committee description and framework as described in the bylaws and crafting a new personnel manual along UUA guidelines.

COM is launching a new subcommittee focused on Healthy Congregations and what that means for FUSD . . . more to come on that later.

Whew, I'm getting exhausted just thinking about all this! We sure have a great group of folks working on wonderful stuff for our beloved congregation.

Thank you to LDC for providing such an enjoyable gathering for all these hard working folks to eat, drink, share, socialize and just be in easy fellowship with one another.

## *Talkin' from page 3*

Millennials respond: We have spent the last decade becoming strong and active voices for justice and activism. Now we have millions of followers and we'll amplify you and support you.

GenX responds: A lot of us are your parents. We raised you on a steady diet of hero and heroine stories about faith and perseverance, and many of us never gave up our quiet rage. We'll pack you a lunch, make sure you're wearing good shoes for the protest, and remind you to wear sunscreen and not to use swears in news interviews."

What Rowan leaves out of this exchange is participation from the Boomers, and the Silent Generation. These are the folks who participated in the protests against the Vietnam war, marched for civil rights during the 60's, and were groundbreaking in painful ways, the path that would lead toward rights and inclusion for Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Pansexual, Polyamorous, non-binary, asexual identities as part of the human range of experience. They began work decades ago that is still unfolding, being taken up by new generations, shaped and shifted for relevancy in our current world iteration.

Yes, there are some significant generational differences to navigate. And at times, that navigation is uncomfortable. And, there are some similar threads, shared experience, and shared hope among our generations. There is wisdom held within every generational cohort. When we are together for worship, social gatherings, classes, or justice work, if we can soften our comfort levels to include the vast range of lived experience, there is depth and richness and vibrancy just waiting below the surface to expand each of our own understandings about how this world and this community is and might become in the future. It is our collaboration that is so deeply needed in these times. Let us share learning, rather than judgements. Let us share laughter and food, instead of cold dismissals and isolation. Come, bring all the pieces of yourself and add to our understanding of where we have come from, where we are, and where we hope to go together.

## ***Lunch Bunch Reunion***

*by Marty Dawley*

Come one and come all, old and young, returners or first timers, we will be eating a potluck lunch together at 12:30p on Wednesday, October 30th in the Community Room. Don't want to cook? Just come. There is always plenty. Who are we? We're just a bunch of FUSDers, some of whom have been getting together once or twice a month for lunch for many, many years. Others are new to the scene, maybe new to the church. We're back again because we know we will enjoy the camaraderie. All are welcome. Helpers will be putting things out at 12:00p, and lunch will begin around 12:30p. This is our last lunch together for 2019, but we hope to get together again in 2020. Bring a friend. Make a friend. Hope to see you on the 30th. Contact Marty Dawley if you have questions.

## *Whole Souul Living*

**Transcendence** is the Whole Souul Living Theme for October, appropriate for this time of seasonal change. Undeniably, all of Life is a series of transformations, transcending what we were, later became, and into whatever we are currently becoming. Sometimes transcendence happens slowly over years; one day you realize that you barely remember the person you used to be. Other changes happen suddenly and uninvited as when tragedy, loss, illness, or other event pushes us outside normal boundaries. Many of us actually and actively seek transcendence and transformation with varying degrees of intensity. One thing is for sure; if you are reading this, your journey is not over!

Some questions for our individual and communal reflection:

- Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: *“We must be careful what we worship, for what we worship we are surely becoming.”* What are you worshipping in your life right now? That is, what are you becoming?
- What in your life, your spirit, your being, would you like to transcend? Grow out of?
- What in your life, your spirit, your being, would you like to grow into?
- Relate a moment in your life when you realized that things would never be the same. Was there sorrow attached to that moment? Joy? Wonder? Something else?
- What do you hope for after you transcend this life? Is this different from what you actually believe will happen?



1400 Lafayette St.

Denver, CO 80218

**Phone:** 303-831-7113

**Fax:** 303-831-8458

**E-mail:** [office@fusden.org](mailto:office@fusden.org)

**Rev. Mike Morran:**  
[revmorran@gmail.com](mailto:revmorran@gmail.com)

**Erin Kenworthy, DRE:**  
[erin@fusden.org](mailto:erin@fusden.org)

**Karen Derrick-Davis**  
[stewardship@fusden.org](mailto:stewardship@fusden.org)

**Website:**  
[www.fusden.org](http://www.fusden.org)