



HOPE  
ALWAYS

May  
Volume 2020 Issue 5

# Ploughshare

## ***A Piece of Mike's (re)Open Mind***

***by Rev. Mike Morran***

Several people have asked recently about when the church will reopen. While I haven't consulted with the Board about this specifically, and no one is in a position to predict the future, I think the answer is sometime safely after the self-quarantine rule has been lifted.

Although, I suspect it won't be that cut or clear. Probably, gatherings of up to twenty or fifty will be allowed first, then if there's no spike in Covid 19 infections, a gradual increase. Or not. No one knows, but no large, in-person gatherings will happen at First Unitarian Denver until it is thoroughly safe to do so.

Please see *Mind* on page 2

## ***Building Memories...***

***by Erin Kenworthy, DRE***

*"There are places I'll remember  
All my life, though some have changed  
Some forever, not for better  
Some have gone, and some remain  
All these places had their moments  
With lovers and friends, I still can recall  
Some are dead, and some are living  
In my life, I've loved them all"*

-John Lennon 1965

Please see *Building* on page 3

### Inside This Issue

- 1 A Piece of Mike's (re)Open Mind
- 1 Building Memories...
- 4 White Supremacy Culture
- 6 President's Corner
- 7 Nancy's Tax Tips
- 8 Whole Souul Living

## *Mind* from page 1

Several people have also asked me about the possibility of having Jen Simon stay on as an Assistant Minister or some other staff position when her internship concludes at the end of May. Sadly, for many who appreciate Jen and others who have grown attached to her, I have to let you know that is not going to happen. First, because the Ministerial Fellowship Committee with the larger Association has a long-standing rule of forbidding interns from moving directly into paid ministry at their internship congregation. Second, because we don't have it in the church budget to fund an additional position at this time.

This issue has been discussed at the Board and Finance Council. Much as we love Jen, unless a large pot of money falls out of the sky, right now we have other pressing obligations for available funds. I am happy to talk about this with anyone who has concerns or questions.

On a related matter, if you haven't returned a pledge form or otherwise let the Stewardship Team know your intentions for the fiscal year beginning July 1st, please do this as soon as possible. Having pledges ahead of time allows the church to plan and accurately anticipate what we can and can't afford as a community in terms of the building, many of our programs, and the church staff.

Lastly, a word about surviving and even thriving in this time of social and economic upheaval. Most of us at this point have reached some kind of stability or at least adapted to current reality. Many of us have seen incomes drop or stop altogether. Many of us know people who have gotten sick or even died from Covid 19. Most of us are dreading the approaching election season with all the toxicity that entails. It is safe to say that all of us are profoundly affected in one way or another, and not on the positive side of the scale.

What to do? How to cope?

Here is my best advice...

Trust that in your heart, in your body, in your conscience, you know what is noble and good. Hold fast to that knowing. It is your sacred thread for hard times.

Speak up and speak out about what is important to you. You need this outlet and the people you love also need you to do this.

Surround yourself with people of strength, sanity, and compassion, of any and all political parties. Strength, sanity, and compassion transcend politics and they always will.

Pray as if everything depended on God. Pray that we collectively learn what is truly important, that we learn to let go of tired prejudices about class, race and nationality that serve no one. Pray as if everything depended on God, but work, speak, and vote as if everything depends on you. In fact, it does.

Please see *Mind* on the next page

## *Mind from previous page*

To the extent that you are able, support organizations that model the saving work of collaboration and inclusive community among diverse people. Such organizations exist and make a difference.

Allow yourself to laugh. However and whenever humanly possible. Laugh out loud. Laugh at the craziness. Laugh at the absurdity. Don't laugh at injustice. But remember that to laugh at yourself may be the purest form of prayer.

You will not be able to do any of this this alone, so stay connected to your community.

Hold your hands open and your palms upward to receive strength, guidance, and love, from within and beyond.

Know that you are not alone.

## *Building from page 1*

The Beatles released this song in 1965, since then, the world has experienced many more events that have altered the way people have lived. Our memories of these events are complex and often tied to our emotions. I remember the launch of the Challenger, counting down with my first grade classmates, excited that a teacher from our school district was on the shuttle headed into space! And, the launch was a televised disaster. My classmates and I could not fully comprehend what had happened, but our teacher was visibly shaken, and the mood in the school was somber. So often, kids pick up on the multitude of non-verbal messages that accompany world changing events. Our words are important, but the way they are delivered is paramount. The emotions, the tone of voice, the non-verbal cues are the music that plays long after the lyrics are forgotten.

Each of us are making memories during this uncertain adjustment to life alongside a global pandemic. Adults and children alike will recount what it was like to navigate a coronavirus world. Historians in the future will look back at response to inform their own understanding of life during 2020. We'll remember the feelings that accompanied the things that we do or can't do, the people we miss, the moments where we discovered joy and connection amidst social distancing, and the love we gave and received.

My own children will have their childhoods altered by this virus, even if we never exhibit any physical symptoms. My oldest will remember the frustration of online school, the shorter school days that allowed for more playtime outside. My youngest will remember, not much honestly, but maybe that time mom cut his hair in the bathtub, and the hours of parent playtime and snuggles, and missing his buddies at daycare. As they grow, they will gain context for what they experienced, and perhaps a different understanding of why dad worked in the basement, why we went outside to howl with our neighbors at 8 o'clock each night. Their memories will be revisited with new information and emotions, their recollections changing as they age.

Please see *Building* on the next page

## *Building from previous page*

My memory of my own lived experiences become my companion during these unprecedented times. I remember the fear I felt when I sat with friends at a pizza parlor on the evening of September 11, 2001 as military jets soared overhead. The sound of the planes overhead, once easy to ignore, caused me then to tense up, tear up, and lean into the grief of the day. It's similar to the unfamiliar feeling of a cotton mask on my face as I grocery shop, and the care with which I navigate around my neighbors in the aisles, though not exactly the same. Our memories are with us, telling us stories as we compose our memories of current events.

Our emotions during times of change can be complex. Do not shy away from feeling gratitude and misery, hope and despair, passion and indifference, both at the same time, for each of these are carrying honest response to your own lived experience. They are a part of your honest memory of this time, as well as inspiration for the work ahead of each of us in the coming months and years. Avoidance of those feelings does not mean you are rid of them, only that they'll stick around and surprise you at other times. If you give them the recognition and space they require, perhaps you will find healing, resolution, and growth added into your memories of this difficult time. Take care of yourself so that you can extend care to others. Remember to make space, rest, listen, and be well.

## ***White Supremacy Culture***

### ***Short tem thinking at the expby Jen Simon, Ministerial Intern***

When I was about 13, I went to lunch with my dad. I don't remember where it was, exactly; I don't think it was anywhere we'd been before – just one of many small restaurants near where he was living in Bardonia, NY, about half an hour north and east of New York City. Through the course of our meal, we chatted a bit as usual, but I noticed my dad seemed increasingly uncomfortable. I was puzzled, but didn't say anything. Finally, after he'd paid the bill and we were preparing to leave, he said, barely audibly, "People are giving me really dirty looks."

"Huh? Why?" I asked, as I looked around and confirmed his observation.

"Because I'm with you. They don't think I'm your father." It took me a few seconds to register what he was saying. If they didn't think he was my father, what did they think he was... Oh. Ew. The good people of Bardonia had seen a middle-aged Black man out with a very young, light-skinned, white-passing teenager, and they'd drawn their own conclusions about what they were seeing.

Whether my dad had noticed this behavior when we'd been out before and never said, or whether it was new as a result of my latest adolescence-induced growth spurt, I don't know. But that was the last day I'd ever be able to ignore it.

Please see *Culture* on the next page

## *Culture* from previous page

Dad was quiet in the car on the way home – somewhat unusual for him – and I was left to mull over the incident on my own. That was the day I realized: racism wasn't just about treating Black people as if they were inferior. It wasn't just about the violence toward non-white people that had formed part of my consciousness since I could remember. At its core, racism was part of a far bigger project of dictating who belonged with whom. It was about who was permitted to be in relationship, and who wasn't. It was a (by the early 1990's) mostly unwritten rule that my parents had violated, and I as a result of this violation was not permitted simply to be my father's daughter.

So... why am I telling you this story, my friends? Because lately, we've been having some discussion about the phrase "white supremacy culture" as it showed up in the first draft of our congregational covenant. While "white supremacy" may bring to mind skinheads and Nazis with torches, that is not what we're talking about here. Used in the way we are using it – and as many activists and scholars who talk about inequality use it - white supremacy culture is a very specific term. While it encompasses racism, white supremacy culture actually includes all behaviors and assumptions that are used to perpetuate a wealth of inequalities, whether of race, gender, sexual orientation, income, ability... And the thing about it is, we are all part of it. We're born into it and enculturated into these ideas of who should be in charge, whose opinion and whose existence should matter most (or at all), which ways of being in the world are more valid. And we're not told, "You're learning these ideas and norms because that's how we ensure that powerful people retain power," because of course none of us as good and loving humans would sign on to that, right? Instead we're told, "This is the best way. This is the most efficient way. This is the proper way." Sometimes we're even told, "This is the fairest way." (For a more detailed explanation and examples of what white supremacy culture looks like, visit <https://alliesforracialequity.wildapricot.org/cwsc> .)

White supremacy culture – particularly, "binary thinking" – says that a 13-year-old white-passing girl should not be allowed to have lunch with her father, an obviously Black man. That there shouldn't be a relationship there because people who look like me are not supposed to be in loving relationship with people who look like him. People who look like me, in fact, are supposed to carefully guard our wealth, our possessions, and our ideas from people who look like him - even if we owe our very existence to him. And if you'd asked anyone in that room if that's what they were thinking, they probably would have vociferously denied it, and meant it. But sitting where I was, at a table with my father, somewhere in the liminal space between white and black, I felt it.

Now as Unitarian Universalists, we represent a diversity of theological expressions, but there are a few basic theological truths that we can pretty much all agree on. A few of them are displayed prominently at the front of our sanctuary, but since it's been a while since we've been able to see them, I'll remind you of two: All souls are sacred and worthy, and there is a unity that makes us one. These come out of the theologies of our Christian forebears: Unitarian minister Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that there existed something called an Over-Soul, and that we as individuals were simply expressions of that overarching soul.

Please see *Culture* on the next page

## *Culture from previous page*

And if we take these theological ideas seriously – if we hold as sacred the idea that we are spiritually and materially one – then any law, policy, idea, cultural norm, or action that favors one as more worthy (of love, of a voice, of material resources) is a violent spiritual attack on our wholeness.

White supremacy culture is such an attack, and I'm willing to speak in superlatives here: it is the most prevalent and insidious one of our times. The entire project of it is to dictate who should be in relationship with whom – premised, of course, on the assumption that there exists a subset of people with whom “we” should not be in relationship – and who should have power over whom. And so the inclusion of the term in our covenant, the document that guides us in how we want to be with one another, is not an attempt to simply root out racism in our community (though that can show up in subtle ways, too); it is meant as a loving expression of our intention to continually examine our own assumptions, no matter who we are, in order to form more loving, equitable, and just relationships.

## ***President's Corner***

*by Mary Sullivan, First Unitarian Board of Trustees*

As of the writing of this article, COVID is still with us, we are continuing in our homes, staying in place until further directives are issued.

So while we are waiting for these future instructions, where do we look for inspiration, what form does our hope take in these times, how do we find encouragement? Not by turning on the news; not for me, anyway.

Personally, I've discovered, I don't have to look very far. My greatest source of inspiration, hope and encouragement is coming from my beloved church community. Everywhere I look, folks are rolling up their sleeves, both figuratively and literally, to tend to the needs of our congregation and sanctuary home.

It is helpful in times like these to spend some time remembering and contemplating how truly fortunate we are to be part of such a vibrant, loving and involved church community.

I hesitate to even begin to try to enumerate a listing of all the wonderful things going on with our congregation these days because I know for sure I will unintentionally exclude some. Please accept my apologies in advance for all those not mentioned by name below, knowing that by remembering some, I will be leaving out others.

Within days of learning the critical nature of this viral outbreak in early March, our minister and staff made the very difficult, but wise decision to suspend live Sunday services in our sanctuary, beginning March 15. They then sprang into action to research, trial, test and provide our congregation with a virtual rendition of our beloved Worship Service, not missing one Sunday in this process. Huge applause is due to their efforts along with all our more tech savvy congregants who volunteered their invaluable time and expertise. All of our staff also deserve congratulations for retro-fitting their worship planning to virtually provide beautiful, creative and timely contributions in the areas of Music, RE, Readings, Sermons, Stewardship and more.

Please see *Corner* on the next page

## *Corner from previous page*

In addition to our worship service, our minister, intern and staff have provided us with a wide variety of other virtual offerings: Sunday coffee hour, classes, Stewardship giving options, musical Evening Improvisation, meditation, social hour, coffee with Rev. Mike and mid-week check-in. All these can be found in First Announce.

Our staff also worked very closely with Caring Committee, Carol Poole in particular, to quickly develop a phone outreach project to rally volunteers and set up individual and personal phone calls to every single member and friend of our congregation, starting with our elders and those struggling with health issues.

Finance Council has been very busy looking for all the ways to shave all extraneous expenses from our operations. Since most of our budgeted expenses are fixed, this has taken some true ingenuity.

Our esteemed Treasurer, Karl has worked true overtime hours with our Congregational Administrator, Glenn and Assistant Treasurer, Laurie jumping through all the governmental and bureaucratic hoops to complete an extremely lengthy and involved application for benefits offered under the CARES Act. They got the application in and approved just under the wire before the funds dried up. This has enabled us to keep our valuable and beloved staff in place during these uncertain times.

Our Property Management team has kept right on working to keep our beautiful building running safely and efficiently, ensuring it will be ready for us once we return. They have rolled up their sleeves, literally, with the help of volunteers, to complete critically needed repairs that can be accomplished using mostly supplies we already have in stock. Kathy Cranmer completed and submitted the grant application for a new roof and gutters to the State Historical Society. This has been a very long and painstaking process. Kathy deserves all our gratitude.

In keeping with our congregation's commitment to Family Promise, we handled our March rotation by supporting the families' shelter and meals at a motel that the Family Promise staff selected during this time of

## ***Nancy's Tax Tips***

***By Nancy Crow, Stewardship Council Chair***

These are hard and unnerving times. We understand the financial insecurity many members of our church community are facing and recognize that extending family budgets to your church family may seem beyond reach. The tax laws, including a couple of new provisions, offer some benefits for your contributions to first Unitarian and other charities.

### **-~~\$~~300 Charitable Deduction for Non-itemizers**

The new CoronavirusAid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allows an above-the-line deduction up to \$300 for cash contributions to public charities for individuals who take the standard deduction and do not itemize deductions in 2020.

Please see *Tips* on the next page

*Tips* from previous page

## **-100% of Income Charitable Deduction for Itemizers**

For taxpayers who do itemize, the CARES Act allows a deduction for cash contributions to public charities up to 100% of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). The 100% limit is reduced dollar-for-dollar by other itemized charitable deductions, such as gifts of appreciated stock. For taxpayers who do itemize, the CARES Act allows a deduction for cash contributions to public charities up to 100% of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). The 100% limit is reduced dollar-for-dollar by other itemized charitable deductions, such as gifts of appreciated stock.

While most people do take the standard deduction, it makes sense to itemize if your itemized deductions (charitable deductions, up to \$10,000 in state and local taxes, medical expenses that exceed 10% of AGI, plus certain home mortgage interest) exceed the standard deduction. The 2020 standard deduction is \$12,400 for single filers and married filers filing separately, \$24,800 for married filers filing jointly and \$18,650 for heads of household. For taxpayers over 65 or legally blind, the standard deduction increases by \$1,300. For single or head of household taxpayers that fall into these categories, it increases by \$1,650.

## **-25% of Income Charitable Deduction for Corporations**

Corporations can deduct up to 25% of their taxable income, increased from 10% under prior law.

## **-Charitable Distributions from IRAs**

Even though the CARES Act waives Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from IRAs, 401(k)s, and 403(b) plans for 2020 to allow investments time to recover, both itemizers and non-itemizers over age 70½ may continue to make tax-efficient qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from their IRAs, up to \$100,000 annually.

## Whole Souul Living

### Change is our Whole Souul Living Theme for May

“Whatever IS will be WAS.” Thich Nhat Hanh wrote: *“If you suffer, it is not because things are impermanent. It is because you believe things are permanent. When a flower dies, you don't suffer much, because you understand that flowers are impermanent. But you cannot accept the impermanence of your beloved one, and you suffer deeply when she passes away.”*

If you look deeply into impermanence, you will do your best to make her happy right now. Aware of impermanence, you become positive, loving and wise. Impermanence is good news. Without impermanence, nothing would be possible. With impermanence, every door is open for change. Impermanence is an instrument for our liberation.”

Questions for individual and communal reflection:

- How have you typically reacted to change?
- Recall a moment in your life when you realized things would never be the same. Was there sorrow attached to that moment? Joy? Wonder? Something else?
- What are you working to change in your life right now? How?
- What are you clinging to that will someday be gone?



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)

Cover Photo Debbie Hudson on Unsplash.com