

## A Reminiscent Piece of Mike's Mind... by Rev. Mike Morran

Last month, February 22nd to be exact, was the 23rd anniversary of my ordination into the Unitarian Universalist ministry, a day for which I had spent the previous four years preparing. From deciding I wanted to be a minister, to applying to seminary, to graduating, psychiatric evaluations, chaplaincy training, an internship, passing the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and accepting my first job at High Plains Church, Unitarian Universalist in Colorado Springs.

The previous August, Tammy, three-week-old Zack, and I had arrived in Colorado with a small moving van, our two dogs, and a small mountain of student-loan debt. The congregation I would serve there was tiny. About 40 adults, about 15 children, meeting in rented space in a strip mall, next to a dog-grooming place. My office looked out over single-row parking lot to Spike's Place biker bar across the street.

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## The Warmth of Ritual by Erin Kenworthy, DRE

Last night after dinner, as I sat at the table talking over the day with Jason, my four-year-old slid quietly away from the table and headed into a room of our house that we've repurposed during the pandemic. Our two boys decided to share a room, feeling comforted by someone else being there at night during this weird, isolated year of pandemic existence. What to do with that extra bedroom? We now call it's the calm down room. It's mostly open, with foam padding on the ground. We dance in there, or turn the lights off and light a candle in the evenings. It's a place to go when you are grumpy, when you need some alone time, or want to wrestle with questions or your brother.

Last night, Bryce went into that room and brought a candle back to the dining room. Jason and I looked at him and he told us it was time to light the chalice.

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I came to love those people. We worked hard together for five years before my family and I moved north to First Unitarian Denver.

As I almost always do on that anniversary, I pulled out the words that were spoken on my ordination, and by which I was ordained:

*We, the members of High Plains Church, recognize your calling to the ministry of our faith. By these words, and by the authority of our common spirit, we ordain you, Michael DeWitt Morran, to a life of professional service in the Unitarian Universalist ministry.*

*We would have you touch deeply into the fires of the mind and the passions of the heart. We call you to work and to love, ministering to our joys as well as our sorrows, and to carry the gift of our liberal faith to the larger religious community. We would have you speak the truth in love, heed the counsels of integrity and wisdom, and bring a ministry of healing, compassion, and justice to a world in need of transforming power. Wherever you are called to serve, we charge you to celebrate the mystery and the wonder of life, to be steadfast in sustaining what you believe to be right, and to preach and live by the principles of our shared faith.*

Those words never cease to move me, and remind me, of the privilege I've been given of trying to live up to them.

## First Unitarian Racial Justice Project Update *by Patrick Whorton and Steve Brainerd, RJP co-chairs*

Our next zoom meeting is March 2nd at 6:30p. If you'd like to be placed on the mailing list to receive updates, agendas, etc. just email Patrick Whorton at [pwhorton@gmail.com](mailto:pwhorton@gmail.com)

This month, thanks to the leadership of Patricia and Karl Jonietz, and a site provided by Catherine Tenedios's family, we will be installing our 3rd Little Free Library, the focus being to place these in under-served neighborhoods, and target them to children. The first two are proving quite successful!

Greg Martin, RJP member, is requesting \$2000 from the endowment fund for a BiPoc textbook scholarship for qualifying college students. The Expungement: Sealing Records group may also be seeking funds, depending on timing and qualifications.

We are moving ahead on the Expungement: Sealing Records project; a full report will be provided March 2. The steering committee consists of Trudy Glidden, Peggy Ulrich-Nimms, Theresa Tomich and Bonnie-Jean Jenkins.

We are also moving through the motions on the big reparations project. As always, if it involves money, it's complicated. Update March 2nd.

As co-chairs, we receive a lot of "racial/social justice" email and resource material from a number of sources. At some point, we may build a virtual library. Since education is a primary focus of this group, we include these resources here, to read and/or archive at your leisure, and forward as you see fit.

## Warmth from page 1

He went and found the lighter by the stove in the kitchen and brought it to us. He knows not to try to operate it, and he lacks the dexterity to use it. I lit the candle and he said “ok, you say what I say” and he led us in the chalice lighting that we’ve done in RE since before he could talk. The one we use on Friday nights during virtual story time.

“We light this chalice for the warmth of love, the light of truth, and the energy of action!”

Bryce is four. But he knew the whole thing by heart. He led us through the words and the hand motions. And when the chalice was lit, so, it would seem, was his heart. His smile, his pride, his joy at initiating and leading this ritual was apparent. I was surprised by how pleased he was. Then, he wanted us to all read a book together. He made sure to pause and give space for Jason and I to participate, and when it was over, he listened carefully as we extinguished the chalice, noting how it was different, preparing to set it to memory for the next time.

We all crave ritual, in good times and definitely in bad times. Bryce needed our Friday Storytime on Wednesday. He looks forward to seeing familiar faces on Friday evenings now. He likes to help light the chalice.

We’ve been doing Storytime for just over two months now. Our volunteer readers and organizers wonder if we are having an impact or reaching our families. While the quantity of participation might not be what we initially envisioned, Bryce wants you to know that it’s been a quality experience. So, do the other families, specifically children who have asked “when is it our turn to read a story?”

This is faith formation in action. Even while we are apart, out of our building, and wondering what happens when we get together again. The children want to read you a story. Are you ready to listen? They want to lead you in a chalice lighting, are you ready to follow?

Our children are resilient, and so is this community. As we move toward togetherness, still far on the horizon, know that our families and youth are craving your presence and moments of shared ritual. Even as the birds begin to sing songs that wake the spring, may all of us wake our inner children to the calls of spiritual practice, reminded by the youth around us that life abides in the moments and spaces between our time together and that we will be together once again.

## The Board Beat *by Tim Robertson, Trustee, First Unitarian Board of Trustees*

A yellow crocus had shouldered its way through the dark, wet soil. Earlier than expected, this winter bloom gave me a lift on an otherwise dreary day. I'd grown weary of masks that fogged my glasses, confinement related to social distancing, and endless political squabbling. This brilliant drop of color however was a timely reminder that new life was stirring in the midst of it all.

**A Light at The End of The Tunnel (and it's not a train).** About that same time, I received an equally vital sign of new beginnings, a draft of a document that Mike had circulated to FUSD board members. It laid out some rough guidelines for reopening the church and getting back together with the people we love, all in keeping within the guidelines of Colorado's health department.

The reopening will certainly be a hybrid of virtual and in-person gatherings. Beyond that though, there are lots of questions to consider, knowing that the answers will change as conditions on the ground with the virus change. The important thing is the assurance of a future “Where we can see each other's faces, hear each other's voices, and be in each other's presence – and where robust online options, safety measures, and other steps keep everyone connected and safe.”

That is music to my ears, and although the details aren't all in place yet, it's comforting to know that the ongoing discussions between Mike, FUSD staff, and the Board of Trustees point toward better times. Look for the guidelines for reopening to be published soon for the whole congregation. If you have questions or comments about the reopening, please email Mary Sullivan at [mmaarryy@comcast.net](mailto:mmaarryy@comcast.net) or Mike Morran at [revmorran@gmail.com](mailto:revmorran@gmail.com)

**Jen's Ministry.** Another new beginning that's important to note has to do with Jen Simon, who recently completed her internship with FUSD. Jen has been selected as the Community Racial Justice Minister of the Front Range. She will be working to support our local BI&PoC UU community. FUSD has agreed to be a contributing member to the Colorado Unitarian Universalist Racial Justice (CoUURJ) work which initiated the proposal for this new ministerial position.

And there's even more exciting news about Jen, too. On May 15, she will be ordained as a UU minister with joint participation of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Church and FUSD. Yay Jen!

**Update on Jeanette.** With a new administration in Washington, there's reason to believe that we will finally fix our immigration system and create a workable pathway to citizenship. There are an estimated 11 million people who will be eligible under the new program, one of whom is our dear friend Jeanette Vizguerra who is still living in Sanctuary at the church.

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The church's closure due to COVID-19 has complicated our relationship with Jeanette. To continue to offer her the support she needs, a new covenant/agreement has been entered into with Jeanette and FUSD. The Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition and Boulder County Sanctuary Coalition are working together in support of sanctuary efforts. Jeanette, Mike, and the Boulder team are in regular conversation, and Jeanette is feeling heard and supported. The new covenant will guide our relationship until May 1, 2021. At that time, Jeanette and FUSD will both revisit the terms and mutual expectations expressed in the covenant. Mike has mentioned the need of someone at FUSD to monitor and engage our relationships with Jeanette and the various coalitions. If that's something you're interested in, please get in touch with Mike.

**By the Numbers.** I'm not much of a numbers guy, but several have gotten my attention recently that are of particular interest:

**150:** The number of years (as of August 16) that the First Unitarian Society of Denver has been transforming the world with love!

**9:** The number of new FUSD members this past month. Amazing for being an entirely online church!

**56,254:** The number of dollars in the check written to Historic Denver to cover the matching expenses of the grant for our new roof. Construction will most likely begin in early April!

**8:** The number of the newest UU Principle committing to a journey that builds a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community that dismantles racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

**3:** The number of new Free Children's Libraries that FUSD (thanks Pat and Karl Jonietz) has established in our community. As Margaret Fuller said, "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."

## Experience Sunday Service Online Without a Computer

People can attend our Sunday service virtually even without a computer. From a telephone dial 312-626-6799, 646-558-8656, or 301-715-8592. When prompted enter the meeting ID 466 677 668 and the password 454623.

# Whole Souul Living

**Imagination** is our Whole Souul Living Theme for March. Consider this quote from J. K. Rowling;

*Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and, therefore, the foundation of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.*

As the quote implies, imagination has a very big job to do in human life! Some have argued that what is being metaphorically referred to in the Book of Genesis, when it says that humankind was created in the image of God, is exactly this capacity to imagine and create. As we explore Imagination this month, consider and share your reflections on the following questions:



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- Recall a time when your imagination created new possibilities.
- What do you consider the source of your imagination?
- Is it only imagination that allows compassion?
- Consider the persistent problems of the world. Is our inability to solve them a failure of will, or a failure of imagination, our ability to imagine something better?

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