

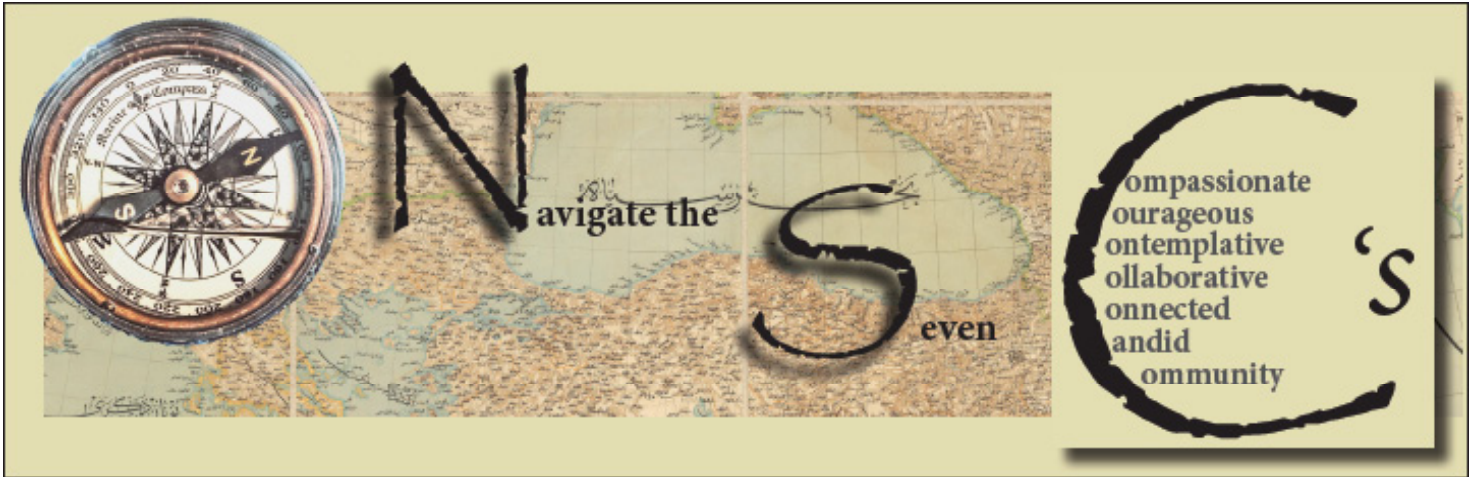
First Unity Church of St. Louis

2020 Volume II

Issue 4

FIRST UNITY THEME FOR 2020

Compassionate, Courageous, Community



Betwixt and Between: A Time for Contemplation

Except for the St. Louis humidity, it's hard to believe that it is already July! When we first closed our doors in March and started pre-recording Sunday services, I never dreamed we would be dealing with COVID-19 this long. In the past few months, in the U.S. alone, we've had more than 125,000 deaths, long-lasting, economic slowdown, and rampant stress and anxiety. We were patient at first, but now I hear more and more people say, "I'm done with this virus" and "I just want to get back to normal." It's natural that in our human skins we are losing patience and just want this ordeal to be over. We miss our handshakes, hugs, and social interactions. Patience has been defined as a willingness to wait, and we are tired of waiting.

Maybe there is a lesson for us in this story adapted from author **Nikos Kazantzakis** that I used to share with middle school students who were in such a hurry to grow up.

I remembered one morning when I discovered a cocoon in the bark of a tree, just as a butterfly was making a hole and preparing to come out. I waited awhile, but it was too slow in coming, and I was impatient. So, I bent over and breathed on it to hurry the process. As I did so, the miracle began to happen before my eyes; the case opened, and the butterfly started slowly crawling out. I will never forget my horror when I saw how its wings were folded back and crumpled; the poor butterfly tried with its whole trembling body to unfold them. I tried to help with my breath, but in vain. It needed time to hatch out naturally as a gradual process in the sun. After struggling with all it had, it died in my hand. That little body, I believe, is the greatest weight I have on my conscience. Today I realize we should not hurry the great laws of nature but must learn to confidently obey the eternal rhythm of our lives.

It's a sad little story but one that reminds us that there are things in this outer world we cannot control or hurry along. In a daily blog entitled, "Between Two Worlds," Franciscan priest Father Richard Rohr of the Center for Action & Contemplation writes about liminal space, saying, "*Liminal space is where we are betwixt and between, having left one stage of life but not yet entered the next. It is an inner and sometimes an outer situation where we can think and begin to act in new ways.*" He calls the global pandemic (and I would add all the social injustice and unrest in our country) a time of collective liminal space. It's a time when we may feel vulnerable and humble, and our vulnerability and humility open our hearts and minds for something entirely new.

This time of physical isolation has been a time to "go apart for awhile" as Jesus did for 40 days before assuming his earthly ministry. Jesus did not rush the process but remained in the wilderness as long as it took for him to awaken to his powers and discern his Divine purpose. In our current liminal space, we can take time for contemplation and focus more on being than doing. As Father Rohr writes, "We can become silent instead of speaking, experience emptiness instead of fullness, anonymity instead of persona." Through times of quiet, prayer, and meditation, this time betwixt and between allows us to rediscover who we are as individuals and as a spiritual community. We are developing deeper self-understanding, strength, and resiliency. Our lives will never be the same because our consciousness will never be the same. We have been shaped by this experience, and we will emerge with a greater sense of self and the importance of community, an appreciation for our oneness and connections, and a determined spirit to heal the inequities in our country and in the world.

Have a blessed summer.
Love,
Rev. Jan

Social Media Ministry & Our Spiritual Community

By Kathy Boyd

First Unity Church of St. Louis Newsletter

July/Aug 2020

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For those who regularly attended and served at the weekly services in our sanctuary before COVID-19, we know the sudden and sustained absence of our physical togetherness has presented some challenges. The great news is that First Unity Church of St. Louis has a social presence on the internet with spiritual content available to you 24/7 on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Daily posts on Facebook are intended as inspiration and include a wide array of weblinks to uplifting articles and videos, as well as quotes and images designed to lift your consciousness. Instagram posts consist mainly of delightful images with encouraging words splashed across them. And YouTube is the home for our recorded Sunday services and other videos taken at the church over the years.

Please like us on Facebook, follow us on Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel. And don't forget to comment and share!!

Please contact Kathy at kathyboyd75@gmail.com with any questions.

Minister, Jan Mourning

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Updates For Events

Ladies Night Out



Ladies Night Out will remain suspended until all restrictions are lifted. Please contact Mary at jtpres5111@gmail.com with any questions.

Book Club

Our Book Club meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 2 – 4 pm. During this time we are meeting via the Zoom platform.

Our July discussion will be *"Flash"* by Rachael Anne Ridge.

Please contact Carol at cabullock48@yahoo.com for instructions on joining the Zoom meeting and future updates.



Looking forward to seeing you at the Book Club!

HUMOR

The Sunday School teacher was describing that when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom she turned into a pillar of salt, when Bobby interrupted. "My mommy looked back once while she was driving," he announced, "and she turned into a telephone pole."

The Sunday School teacher asks, "Now, Johnny, tell me frankly: do you say prayers before eating?" "No sir," little Johnny replies, "I don't have to. My Mom is a good cook."

An elderly couple admitted by St. Peter through the Pearly Gates found conditions there just heavenly. So the man turned to his wife and ruefully said, "We could have been here two years ago, if you hadn't fed us all that oat bran, yogurt and healthy food."

Moses had the first tablet that could connect to the cloud.

Prayer: Don't give God instructions - just report for duty!

If God is your co-pilot - swap seats.

When you get to your wit's end, you'll find God lives there.

GOING LIVE

HOW ARE THE SERVICES CURRENTLY BEING TAPED?

Since First Unity has been posting videos of our Sunday services on Facebook, our webpage, and YouTube, many have asked questions about the process and how it differs from live streaming. From March 22 – June 7, our videographer Kathy Boyd taped the various segments live during an abbreviated service at the church, added pre-recorded music from Dean and Anne, edited all the pieces together in the i-Movie application where the video would ultimately be created and subsequently uploaded to YouTube. From there, a link to the video was posted on the church website and Facebook page. We taped on Thursday afternoons to give Kathy time to complete this laborious process and have it ready on Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. During that time, the number of views averaged 111 per Sunday. On June 14, when we started holding services in the sanctuary at 10:30, Kathy began taping the segments of the service from the balcony with a video recorder and once again putting all the pieces together to post online. Because of the time involved to create and upload the video, we agreed it was reasonable to allow 24 hours to get these services online and they are being posted at 10:30 a.m. on Monday mornings. This method gives people a choice between coming physically or watching in the safety and comfort of their own homes. At this point, viewing has averaged 56 per Sunday. We are so grateful to Kathy Boyd for her time and talents in making these services possible.

HOW DOES THIS DIFFER FROM LIVE STREAMING?

Livestreaming means simultaneously recording and broadcasting the Sunday services in real time making them available while service is occurring (for us, 10:30 a.m. on Sunday) or at any later time. Podcasts can also be made available so people can listen to an audio recording of the service at their convenience. Many churches in the St. Louis area use livestreaming to reach those who are not physically able or available to attend services. Even more churches have added live streaming during the COVID-19 crisis.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF LIVE STREAMING?

- Those who are not able to attend physical services because of illness, physical impairments, inability to drive, work schedules, and family commitments can still take part in real-time Sunday services at 10:30 on Sundays or any time afterward.
- Those who live far away can become part of our spiritual community. Many towns in Missouri have no Unity Church or Spiritual Center. Our abbreviated Sunday services were viewed from several states.
- People in the military or on vacation can tune in to the broadcasts and experience being a part of our spiritual community.
- Barna Group research recently reported that 59% of practicing Christian Millennials and 30% of all Millennials watch spiritual videos online. They are likely to watch from a smartphone (56%) or tablet (44%).
- Research also shows that today, only about 20% of Americans attend church weekly, a stunning drop from the estimated 64% who attended less than 25 years ago. Live Streaming gives families an opportunity to watch and engage together in church services at their convenience.
- There are no space limitations. Our sanctuary (in pre-COVID-19 days) holds 425 people. Live streaming has no limits!
- Live streaming brings in additional income as streamers often make donations online.

WILL LIVE STREAMING DECREASE IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE?

This is what some fear. However, the exact opposite is true. ChurchLeaders.com reports that 30% of people who watch a live stream event will attend in person the following year. Also, live streamers often attend special events, community projects, and book weddings, baptisms, and memorial services when needed.

We are grateful to bring you services online now. It our dream and intention to upgrade our network, sound, and projection capabilities in order to begin Live Streaming so that our Sunday services can be simultaneously recorded and broadcast in real time and then made available as Podcasts. This will be a major leap forward into the realm of virtual ministry.

While “searching” through some boxes of archived literature, I found this article and deemed it appropriate for the time we are experiencing.

I hope you feel it too, Patricia Riess

THIS IS YOUR DAY



Mary L. Kupferle

This is your day, the day God has prepared for you to live, to love, and to enjoy. Say to yourself as you arise, as you dress, as you eat your morning meal, “This is my day!”

If you have been confronted with difficulties and dread to meet another day, do not be anxious or fearful concerning developments and outcomes, but greet the day with the thought, “This is the day of my overcoming and victory. I will be strong and courageous!” The loving Father will be with you through its every moment. His wisdom will abide within you through every hour.

If your heart keeps turning and returning to the past, longing for the good of the past, bring your heart up to date with the affirmation: “This is my day. This is my day of great expectation, my day of joy and blessing!” Through these words you cultivate an expectation of great good now, and you will find that the blessings of the past have been only a foretaste of the infinite good God sets before you today.

If you feel that you cannot see your way, if your problems seem more than you can bear, then declare: “This is the day I give all my burdens and responsibilities over to God. Today I find perfect peace and freedom.” Relax, let go, let God. Let God work in and through you.

If your body seems to need greater strength and health affirm: “Today I accept the fullness of God life. This is the day of my wholeness and strength. This is my day of renewal.” Realize that this day is a new beginning, a day to rise and walk in a new consciousness of life.

This is your day. You need not be concerned about tomorrow or next month or next year. Every moment is a new moment. As the moments come accept them as opportunities to take hold of new faith and courage, new wisdom and love, new joy and happiness.

The more fully you accept God’s gift of today, the more fully you prepare yourself for a wonderful tomorrow. The courage you take hold of this moment will build within you a tower of strength for every overcoming. The faith you lay hold of right now will widen your horizons.

This is your day! This is your day to praise and to bless, to give and to receive, to love and to be loved, to laugh, to sing, and to rejoice. Live it fully, live it lovingly, live it freely and joyously, for this is your day!

Mary L. Kupferle

In oneness
of Spirit,
we celebrate
a world
awakened
to infinite
possibilities



We are a vibrant,
inclusive Spiritual
community
enriching lives
through
positive prayer,
education, and service

One of our core values for First Unity Church is: **LOVE**

As expressions of Spirit, we reflect and nurture Divine in all. Love is the nature of who we are.

COMMUNITY BEHAVIORS

- We express God's unconditional Love as we affirm good everywhere and in everyone
- Our spiritual community comes together regularly to create an environment of Love and compassion
- We commit to heart-based collaboration and cooperation as we share our ideas, gifts, and talents

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS

- I behold the Christ in others as I practice unconditional forgiveness
- As I love myself, I radiate love - drawing myself to more love
- I take the Love I experience at First Unity out into the world

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uPray is a free mobile download

First Unity Celebrations



2020 PRAYER CHAPLAINS



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



**MINISTER
APPRECIATION DAY**



**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS**



FIRST UNITY'S 3 WISE WOMEN

















**BURNING BOWL
CEREMONY**



**"SOUPER"
SUNDAY**

