

Second Parish in Hingham
Unitarian Universalist
September 2020 Newsletter
Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

So much happens in church. We get to see and touch each other; to hear each other's laughter or distress, as well as our children's eager insights; we get to unite our voices in song and in prayer and sometimes in silence; we get to just be - held in a supportive, loving, faith community that welcomes all seekers; gathered in a beloved sanctuary that holds deep memories and important promises.

What beautiful strength we receive to help us face the struggles of what can often be a harsh, competitive, divisive world.

We're going to need to access that beautiful strength in different ways now as we anticipate gathering together online for a longer period of time. While we may now feel some disappointment that we still cannot gather physically in the sanctuary; while we might feel a little less nourished by meeting online; we still need the love and the care, the quiet and the joyful noise, the sense of shared search and commitment that we find at Second Parish.

But the fact remains, church is different in a pandemic. And that means that we have to approach church differently and that we have to approach Zoom differently from its other applications in order to nurture the beautiful strength church can offer – no matter what.

We need to draw more creatively on the beautiful strength that we know as the heart of our church experience. It would be foolish to let necessary restrictions negate all that church can offer to us, in whatever form it follows. Yes, we have rallied to develop online participation, and as that forum becomes our norm for a while, we face a key challenge. Not the consumeristic challenge we most associate with being online - getting the best, most personally gratifying deal possible - but the challenge of figuring out how to work around those restrictions that we find limiting, inhibiting, or maybe just annoying. Part of our task now is merging the reality of restrictions with our goals for our church at deeper levels.

We need to think about how to show "love and respect" without hugs and handshakes. Perhaps we can really use our eyes - really looking at each other and knowing we are seen - even on a screen. Perhaps we can be fully trusting in showing who and how we are on our own screens, knowing how much our screen presence is a gift of love and respect for others.

That's also part of the "uniting" noted in our covenant. Oh, at home we have even more distractions available than we do in the pews and there's always the possibility of muting ourselves so we can talk during a part of the service that doesn't engage us. But if we can remind ourselves to be as present as possible, at least as present as we are when we are in the same room together, we have a better chance of creating the full feeling of unity so helpful in anyone's "search for truth."

As I write the above paragraph, I think of the squirming and squealing of some of our youngest church goers. What they do differs from what adults do. Children are very much present in the moment and their sounds and gestures simply express their exploration of their moment. They express their engagement with NOW; we tend to express more our impatience with NOW, and sometimes pursue the multitasking that makes us both efficient and too often unsatisfied. Church online requires more focus than ever.

From March to June we weren't sure how long church would be online. Now it looks as if we will have a longer stretch of the same format, and rising even more fully to the challenge of embracing that format will make an enormous difference in our spiritual health. Please read on through this newsletter to see new ways you might connect with others in our community. Please consider suggesting new and different activities. Please reach out for help and to help. While I cope with preaching to an empty space, you cope with worshipping by yourself. While I long for all the signals and communication that happen every moment people are together, you are also looking for ways to connect. May we all use the tools that we are fortunate to have; may we all take initiative when needed; may we all find what works for our own spirits and the way in which we seek to support the spirits of others.

We each have an important role to play, for ourselves and for this church. Each one of us makes a vital contribution in the ways we come together with love and respect. Let us continue to seek ever deeper ways to connect

As ever,
Stephanie