

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

Dear Friends,

In February, I will be participating in a panel discussion at Linden Ponds entitled *Grave Decisions*. The published intent of the discussion is “to review the requirements at the end of life, and the view of death in general, of your particular faith tradition.” Representatives from the Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu traditions will also participate.

I look forward to learning from colleagues in other faith traditions and expect the questions from the Linden Ponds audience to be, as always, both insightful and penetrating. It will be good to be reminded and further enlightened about the beliefs and traditions that guide other faiths. But because Unitarian Universalism does not espouse any set creed, I expect I will also encounter what I often do: some will shake their heads at me and say, “So it seems Unitarian Universalists don't believe in anything.”

Even though sometimes UUs even say that about themselves, it's just not the case.

Unitarian Universalists are firmly committed to a belief in the individual's right and responsibility to seek his or her own understanding of the ultimate meaning and process of life. We draw on many sources of wisdom as well as lived experience to fashion, each in his or her own unique way, a personal faith statement. Sometimes we do this formally; sometimes not. But each one of us commits to the individual's search for truth.

Quite frankly, it seems logical to me that adherents of other faiths also need to figure out their individual understanding of their religion, but they do so within the context of the set beliefs of their religion. We all know people who adhere to some beliefs and not others in their churches, but who join in uniform rituals at key life moments.

When it comes to the key moment of leaving life, families of UUs are sometimes left in an unsatisfying position. Many UUs come to this faith from another tradition and do not always share with their families what brought them to Unitarian

Universalism. Without a good awareness of what a deceased loved one actually believed and without familiarity with what the deceased loved one valued in the many possibilities of our church, survivors can lose their way in planning a funeral.

Linden Ponds is offering a valuable opportunity to its residents in organizing a forum about such “grave decisions.” For UUs in particular such conversations - either with family or with clergy - greatly help those wanting to honor a life. Given that UUs usually have a “celebration of life” after dying, these conversations do not have to be gloomy affairs dwelling on loss (though that, too, is an important part of life and worth discussing); but rather on positive statements of how and why we choose to live and believe the way we do.

It’s a conversation I’d be happy to have with any of you, individually or in a small group.

As ever,
Stephanie