



JOURNEYS

Theme Un-Pack-it for May 2017

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

A Community of *Unfolding*

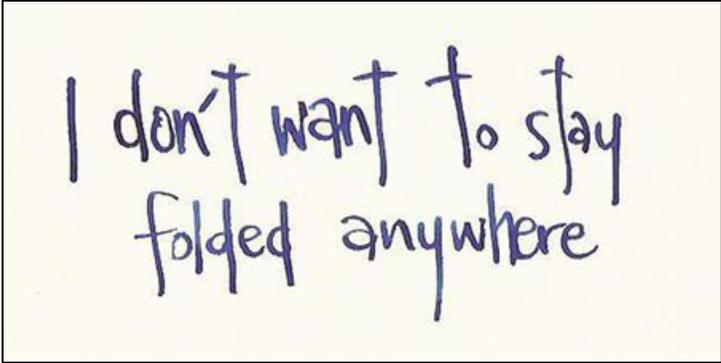
Life Is Not What You ~ Sharon Dolin

expected – cows
ruminant by the highway
even in rain or bat their
ears forward and back and how
you thought the story of your life
would get told: the children you thought
you'd already have by now partially grown
books and other accomplishments – houses
owned cities seen lakes traversed – and now
we're stuck in traffic
and it's not even rush hour
with the hurricane storm
moving slowly north from Alabama.

How come it's raining here already
somewhere south of Albany – just one
damned thing after another and those
injections you've had to give yourself and
your dad's bypass surgery. Just look:
Evening primrose all along the roadside match
the painted line and Queen Anne's lace
on the other side rows of young corn
joe-pye weed blurred to Scottish heather.
When you go for a walk blackberries have started
ripening you pluck two
from each bush notice tadpoles suck air
along the fountain's rim. Such small swishings
of joy maybe
this is it – every day puts forth a new song
deer flies
dive-bombing your head when the breeze
lets up –



WONDERINGS *on the theme of UNFOLDING*



I don't want to stay
folded anywhere

I remember a time as a teenager, riding on the tailgate of a pickup, gazing backwards as the truck drove forward up a hill. Watching the fields and trees disappear behind me, I experienced a strange sensation... it was as if the landscape I was leaving was doubling in on itself, folding itself up. And, because I was looking backwards, I could not see the world that was opening up in front of me.

I am reminded of how, in *Let Your Life Speak*,

Parker Palmer suggests that when a door closes, one might turn around and see the vastness of the horizon that expands in front.

It is common to hear that the universe is unfolding as it should. I'm not convinced that there is any 'should' about it, but rather that it is unfolding as it will... as a cumulative result of all that has happened, AND in response to all the awaiting possibilities. The universe is unfolding, and our lives are unfolding, both as a consequence of the past AND as an invitation into possibility. We have a part in determining how our lives will unfold.

Many are describing this moment in Unitarian Universalism as a time when we are poised at a precipice...in the liminal space between what has been and what could be. It is a moment when we can shape our future and move more fully into the people and communities that we say we want to be. In order to do that, we need to take stock of what has past, and be honest with ourselves about who we have been. We also need to take courage...and leap!

And so, on May 7th, we are taking another step deeper into the possibility of becoming a truly welcoming and inclusive congregation. We'll examine the systems of 'whiteness' that permeate our culture. We'll talk about things that will be uncomfortable for some, or maybe even make some angry. And, we'll imagine the new possibilities that await. I'm excited and hopeful about where this will lead.

Through it all, we'll remain committed to the search for truth and meaning in the service of more love, more justice. And, we'll remember our covenant to 'cherish each other as friends,' knowing that each one of us is on a personal journey of learning and discovery that is always unfolding. There is so much possibility!

In hope and faith, ~ Rev. Julie

un·fold·ing
ən'fōld/ing
n.

1. the opening or spreading out from a folded position
2. the revealing or disclosing of thoughts or information
3. a process in which something passes by degrees to a different stage
4. a progression from a simple form to a more complex one

synonyms: flowering, developing, advancing, ripening, progressing, maturing, evolving, expanding

antonyms: closing, holding, shrinking, stagnating

A STORY *about* UNFOLDING

The Gift ~ Jeffrey A. Lockwood

Source: Guest of the World: Meditations

Our Subaru Forester was sliding sideways down Interstate 80 at fifty miles per hour. My wife, Nan, had gingerly switched to the left-hand lane to avoid a truck that was overturned on the right shoulder, but no amount of experience, skill, or caution could overcome our car's mass and momentum on a nearly frictionless surface. In an instant, we'd lost traction on the icy highway and were headed toward the wide median between the east- and westbound traffic.

"We'll be all right. Just hang on," I said as Nan gripped the wheel. I figured that we might roll once we hit the grassy median, but with seatbelts and airbags we'd survive. I had time to analyze our chances because the whole event seemed to be unfolding in slow motion. As we slid into the median we didn't roll. We didn't even slow down. The sleet had glazed the grass so that we skated over sixty feet of frozen ground and headed across the oncoming lanes. Then I saw it coming.

A semi-truck was barreling toward us. I could see the driver, the silver bulldog hood ornament, the chrome grill. I rationalized that the impact wouldn't be so bad because the road was a sheet of ice; we would bounce off the truck like a hockey puck ricocheting off the boards. Of course, a head-on collision would have been fatal, but I was blessedly unable to grasp my own mortality in the interminable moments as the gap closed. I winced and braced – and then came the bang.



We flattened the reflector post on the far side of the highway as the truck roared by on our right. The Subaru tilted hard to the left, then rocked to stillness. My calm detachment gave way to terror and relief. We'd cheated death by a few feet. However, it took days before I understood the gift that had been given to me.

The gift was not that we lived. Nor did I see survival as some sort of message from the Almighty about a mysterious purpose we had yet to fulfill. The physics of the world on that day simply and disinterestedly unfolded in such a way that the truck missed us. Not

because we were special, or good, or called to something great, but just because when you roll the dice sometimes you get lucky. There was no greater power to thank. The meaning of the near-death experience was for me to make.

I don't believe there is a guiding hand of God shoving Subarus onto the shoulders of icy roads, but that does not mean my life has no purpose. I am part of an intractably complex world that gives me the raw material from which I am free to craft gifts and make meaning – gifts that are as authentic as life itself and meaning that is every bit as real as an oncoming truck. So, when I am trying to decide whether to take a day off to be with my family, whether my kids are now too old to kiss goodnight, whether there is time to have lunch with a colleague, whether a neighbor needs a hand clearing his yard after a windstorm, or whether to accept an awkward invitation to a dinner from a lonely acquaintance – all of which came up recently – I open my gifts.

QUESTIONS *for* REFLECTION *on the theme of* UNFOLDING

- What in your life is unfolding now?
- What can you see now that you couldn't see before because it hadn't yet unfolded?
- Was there a particular time or incidence in which you came to understand life as unfolding? How did you experience it? ...in your body? ...in your heart? ...in your relationships?
- Does the idea of life as unfolding have significance for you? Why or why not? What does it teach you? Does it comfort you?
- One definition of unfolding is the sequence of events in which something is revealed or disclosed. Another way to think about that is that things happen 'in the fullness of time.' How might that definition inform your thoughts about an unfolding life, or an unfolding universe? Are you ever anxious about too much, or too little, being revealed?
- How might "life as unfolding" relate to a current personal struggle or challenge? Does that understanding help or hinder that situation?
- Has there been a time when others or circumstances have forced/caused you to unfold in some way...to open up...to take the next step? What was that like? And what resulted?



Table Grace *on* UNFOLDING

As we come to the table, we open ourselves to the mysteries contained in our bodies...how these flavours satisfy us, how plants and animals nourish us, how the presence of others fills us.

With gratitude, we pay respect to each fellow creature, bow humbly before the beauty of the earth, and greet each day with praise.

For all of life is a gift of incomprehensible magnitude, containing secrets that are ever unfolding.

~ *Inspired by words of John Gibb Millspaugh*

Children's Books *on* UNFOLDING

Fold Me a Poem by Kristine O'Connell George

Jasper John Dooley, Star of the Week by Caroline Adderson

Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me by Eric Carle

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr

Spread Your Wings and Fly: an Origami Fold-and-Tell Story by Mary Chloe Saunders

The Big History Timeline Wallbook: Unfold the History of the Universe—from the Big Bang to the Present Day! by Christopher Lloyd

The Greatest Table by Michael J. Rosen

INSPIRATIONS *on the theme of UNFOLDING*

"You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it
should."
~ Max Ehrmann

You must be a lotus, unfolding its petals when
the sun rises in the sky, unaffected by the slush
where it is born or even the water which
sustains it!
~ Sai Baba

There is in every child at every stage a new
miracle of vigorous unfolding, which
constitutes a new hope and a new
responsibility for all.
~ Erik Erikson

I do not think there is any thrill that can go
through the human heart like that felt by the
inventor as he sees some creation of the brain
unfolding to success... such emotions make a
man forget food, sleep, friends, love,
everything.
~ Nikola Tesla

Too many spend too much time trying to live
in a fixed point, when our lives are an
unfolding journey. Taking on new challenges is
how we fix the world.
~ Arturo O'Farrill

But life inevitably throws us curve balls,
unexpected circumstances that remind us to
expect the unexpected. I've come to
understand these curve balls are the beautiful
unfolding of both karma and current.
~ Carre Otis

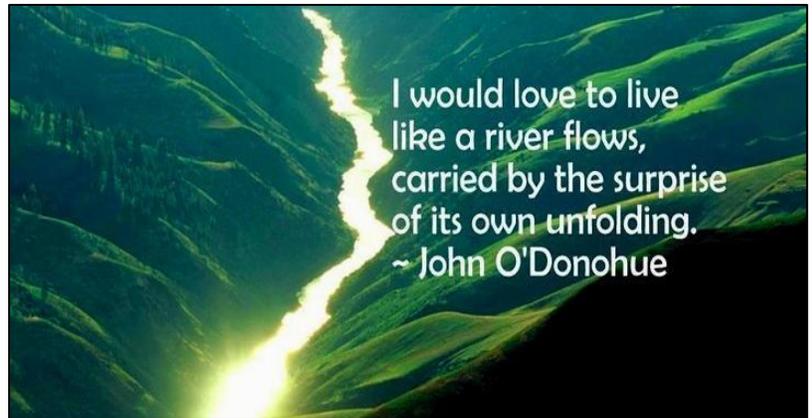
There are certain ways in which I cultivate
awareness, both through mindful yoga and
taking care of my body and taking time to
actually drop as deeply as possible into
stillness, into whatever is unfolding in the
present moment.
~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

Religious belief, like history itself, is a story
that is always unfolding, always subject to
inquiry and ripe for questioning. For without
doubt there is no faith. ~ Jon Meacham

Jump, and you will find out how to unfold
your wings as you fall.
~ Ray Bradbury

I think that's what I love about my life. There's
no maniacal master plan. It's just unfolding
before me.
~ Cate Blanchett

As a cell contains a natural intelligence by
which it fosters the healthy functioning of the
body, I, too, have natural intelligence that
fosters the perfect unfolding of my life.
~ Marianne Williamson



Science is the greatest of all adventure stories,
one that's been unfolding for thousands of
years as we have sought to understand
ourselves and our surroundings. ~ Brian Greene

Everything for me starts very small and
snowballs. So I rarely start with the grand idea
and find a place for it and narrow down. It's,
really, just start small, and as I'm writing it, I
begin to see - sometimes to my own surprise -
what's unfolding and what's blooming.
~ Khaled Hosseini

How does the Meadow flower its bloom
unfold? Because the lovely little flower is free
down to its root, and in that freedom bold.
~ William Wordsworth

Two persons love in one another the future
good which they aid one another to unfold.
~ Margaret Fuller

Each of us has an inner dream that we can
unfold if we will just have the courage to admit
what it is. And the faith to trust our own
admission. The admitting is often very
difficult.
~ Julia Cameron

PRACTICING UNFOLDING

Spiritual Exercise #1: You are the Author of Your Own Story

Novelist Sara Zarr says, "When my characters are questioning things, it's not me leading up to an answer; it's me asking those same questions and letting the characters' lives unfold and seeing where it takes them." Might that be true of your story as well?



Make an accordion fold book. Here's one example of how: <http://tinyurl.com/krnpf5c>

Decorate the front and back as you choose, or simply begin on the first page, by writing a short description of something that is actually happening* in your life. Before turning to the next page, re-read what you've written a few times. Ask yourself some questions about what you imagine might happen next. Take a break to let things germinate; come back to it later.

When you're ready, turn the page. Use the next page to write an imagined future. What do you desire? What happens next in your story? After you've filled the page, re-read it. Sit with that possibility. Be curious about what could happen next. Again, maybe take a break before moving on to the next page.

Continue for as long as you'd like, adding pages if necessary.

* You could also use this process to review a past experience. Begin with the catalyst event, then use each page to write what happened next. When complete, it will give you a chance to reflect on how and why things unfolded as they did.

Spiritual Exercise #2: The Map of Your Life

Oprah.com suggests making map of your life on a large board, but instead, do it on a large piece of paper that can be folded.

<http://tinyurl.com/mg2gs65>

Your map can contain past events, future dreams, current realities, feelings, images that speak to you, etc. You might name some destinations or some paths. Make it your own.

After you've finished, fold it up like a road map. On the outside, write a question or a teaser reminding you to open this map... "a Guide to Inner Peace" ... "Where I Want to Go" ... something like that... and then leave it in a place where you will see it regularly. And when it calls to you, open it. Fully or partially. From different corners. Turn it around and upside down. What do you see?

Spiritual Exercise #3: Unfold Some Inspiration

Do you have a collection of sayings or affirmations or maxims that inspire you... that give you a boost of energy? If so, write each on a slip of paper and place it in jar or box (you might choose to decorate the outside... or not.) Then, whenever you get the urge, pull one out and read it carefully, reminding yourself of why those words are important to you. Tuck the paper back into the container so it'll be there for another time. Add additional 'good words' whenever you find them.

(A variation of this practice would be to make your own fortune cookies. Fill them with words that matter to you. Use them to 'nourish' your soul when necessary!

<http://tinyurl.com/l1232ew>)



Resources on UNFOLDING

ON THE WEB

Daily Spiritual Practice to Unfold Bliss by Margie Pacher <http://tinyurl.com/k2q2wpk>

For this fiddler (Gaelynn Lea,) a tiny concert lead to big things. Check out one of her songs in the music section. <http://tinyurl.com/jyb44ks>

Meet the artist who uses math to make never-ending blooming sculptures.

<http://tinyurl.com/kckksp2>

Natural Unfolding by Gil Fronsdal

<http://tinyurl.com/mya9pcg>

The Long Reach of Reason with Steven Pinker and Rebecca Newberger Goldstein – This animated Socratic dialog persuades that reason is actually the key driver of human moral progress, even if its effect sometimes takes generations to unfold.

<http://tinyurl.com/q5a9jpu>

The Unfolding of Time As a Spiritual Practice by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

<http://tinyurl.com/n6ega6k>

This Fantastic, Unfolding Experiment by Jack Kornfield – Describes the challenges and tensions that have accompanied the movement to bring Buddhism west. <http://tinyurl.com/m56giut>

Unfolding Indigenous History

<http://tinyurl.com/zrqxyey>

Zoom <http://tinyurl.com/lqq99kg>

MOVIES

Arrival (2016/12A) When twelve mysterious spacecraft appear around the world, linguistics professor Louise Banks is tasked with interpreting the language of the apparent alien visitors.

Between the Folds (2008/Doc) Fine artists and eccentric scientists have devoted their lives to the unlikely medium of modern origami...a fascinating mix of sensibilities towards form and meaning.

Captain Fantastic (2016/15) A father devoted to raising his six kids with a rigorous physical and intellectual education is forced to leave his paradise and enter the world, challenging his idea of what it means to be a parent.

Next month's theme:

MINDFULNESS

Do you have ideas for resources? A favourite novel, blog, poem, or movie? Maybe you've taken a photo or done some artwork for the front page? Email your suggestions to office@peterboroughunitarian.ca.

We subscribe to "Soul Matters" a curriculum from the UUA. Service Leaders and Covenant Group Facilitators work with Rev. Julie Stoneberg to incorporate the theme into our programming & Sunday Services. Would you like to be part of that creative process?

Charly (1968/A) An intellectually disabled man undergoes an experiment that gives him the intelligence of a genius.

Collateral Beauty (2016/12A) After a tragedy, a man questions the universe by writing to Love, Time and Death. Receiving unexpected answers, he begins to see how things interlock and how loss can reveal moments of beauty.

Kubo and the Two Strings (2016/PG) A young boy must locate a magical suit of armour worn by his late father in order to defeat a vengeful spirit from the past.

Memento (2000/15) A man juggles searching for his wife's murderer and keeping his short-term memory loss from being an obstacle.

Sliding Doors (1998/15) A woman's love life and career both hinge, unknown to her, on whether or not she catches a train. We see it both ways, in parallel.

The Origami Revolution (Nova) The rules of folding are at the heart of many natural phenomena. Now, engineers and designers are applying its principles to reshape the world around and within. <http://tinyurl.com/klla797>

Unfolding Florence: The Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst (2006/Doc) Drama based on the colourful life of a flamboyant design pioneer.

**I WANT TO UNFOLD.
LET NO PLACE IN ME
HOLD ITSELF CLOSED,
FOR WHERE I AM
CLOSED, I AM FALSE.**

Rainer Maria Rilke
PICTUREQUOTES.COM

Vertigo (1958/A) A detective suffering from acrophobia investigates the strange activities of an old friend's wife, all the while becoming dangerously obsessed with her.

Whale Rider (2002/PG) A contemporary story of love, rejection and triumph as a young Maori girl fights to fulfill a destiny her grandfather refuses to recognize.

BOOKS

The Feminine Face of God: The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women by Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins – a pioneering look at women's spirituality. 100 women – including Maya Angelou and Marion Woodman – share stories of their spiritual awakenings.

Going Beyond Words: 12 Practices for Spiritual Unfolding by Lois Huey-Heck – offers spiritual practices that have their roots in ancient tradition and utilize word, image, sound, and silence engage one in spiritual unfolding.

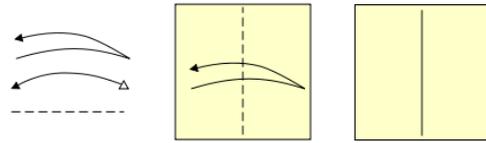
Griffin & Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence by Nick Bantock - This magical volume examines handmade postcards and colorful envelopes, eavesdropping on a lonely card-designer and mysterious South Pacific islander Sabine.

Kabbalah: A Love Story by Lawrence Kushner - When an ancient text falls into the hands of Rabbi Kalman Stern, he has no idea that his lonely life of intellectual pursuits is about to change once he opens the book.

Origami Design Secrets: Mathematical Methods for an Ancient Art by Robert J. Lang – the magnum opus of one of the world's leading origami artists revealing the underlying concepts of origami and how to create original origami designs.

Unfolding: The Perpetual Science of Your Soul's Work by Julia Mossbridge – favors constant experimentation over formulas and fluff, resulting in an inspiring and practical blueprint for building a life worth living.

What We Ache For: Creativity and the Unfolding of Your Soul by Oriah – a moving call to delve deeply into our creative selves, to do our creative work, and offer it to the world. The creative process is essential to human nature.



MUSIC

Galaxy Song, Monty Python
<http://tinyurl.com/94c4xf9>

Leporello's aria from Don Giovanni, sung by Luciano Batinić – The term *leprello* refers to paper folded in an accordion-pleat style. The name likely comes from the manservant who unfurls a long list of Don Giovanni's conquests, accordion-style.
<http://tinyurl.com/lqto6wl>

Unfolding, River's Voice
<http://www.riversvoice.com/unfolding.php>

Unfolding, Etherwood
<http://tinyurl.com/huyba6q>

Watch the World Unfold, Gaelynn Lea
<http://tinyurl.com/kau9ved>

Chalice Lighting on UNFOLDING

What's going to happen?

Will everything be ok?

... We grasp at signs and markers, as if life had ever made any promises of making sense

... As if we are not actors in this unfolding story

We light this chalice to surrender to the mystery

To release ourselves from the need to know...

Here in our song and our silence

Our stories and our sharing

We make space for a new breath, a new healing, a new possibility to take root...

Forged in the fire of our coming together and felt in the spirit that comes alive in this act of faith.

we believe still, a new world is possible and That we are creating it, already, here, and now.

~ Gretchen Haley (adapted)

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
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