

Hope

By Rev. Heather Janules

One thing I cherish about serving at WUS is working with our incredible staff. Among many things, I appreciate that they pay such careful attention to not only what is happening in congregational life but also what is happening beyond.

After Halloween, in a staff meeting we observed that there seemed to be more people dressing up in costume this year. Our collective guess was that there is a greater need for people to imagine being someone else and being somewhere else. To say it plain, from regular news of violence and environmental degradation to the stream of embarrassing, frightening and destructive tweets narrating our national politics, it is hard to find a sense of peace and hope in these times. No wonder we as a people are looking for escape.

Hope. In hard times, hope seems like a romantic notion, indulgent even. And, yet, like oxygen for our lungs, we need hope to live.

A clergy colleague recently shared a story that reminds us what is at stake when we talk about hope. A young mother of two wasn't feeling well so she went to see her doctor. The subsequent examination revealed a massive, inoperable tumor. She was in the final stages of the disease process. The medical team named her prognosis as grim.

This woman asked her minister, my colleague, if she would spend the day

with her, visiting places that are important to her and her family. As they sat in a beautiful field on a sunny autumn day, the woman said that she had hope that – despite the doctors' prediction – she would live. Within weeks of that conversation, the woman died and the minister began meeting with the family to plan her memorial.

What is wrong for this woman to have hope? Was it foolish?

Hope is a vulnerable thing because, so often, the stakes are high. Sometimes what we cherish most – maybe



even life itself – is not possible. As another clergy friend puts it, “we talk about things being ‘the end of the world’ but sometimes worlds end.” All the hope we can muster does not ensure the outcome we want or can even accept.

continued on p. 4

Inside this issue:

- Hope | 1
- The Immigrant Experience | 2
- Why WUSYG Does What It Does | 3
- Intention | 5
- Perseverance | 6
- Me Too | 7



Thoughts on *The Immigration Experience*

By John Kramer

On Sunday, December 10th, the Winchester Unitarian Society adult choir is collaborating with the choir from the Arlington Street Church in Boston on a performance of *The Immigration Experience*, a new work on the subject of immigration that I wrote last summer. We will also be performing it at the Arlington Street Church on Sunday, December 3rd. I wrote this piece in large part because of the anti-immigrant rhetoric we have been hearing in the public square recently.

In the words of founding father George Washington, "The Bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions..." I have always believed this about the United States and furthermore believed that the diversity brought to us through immigration is what has made us great. It may even be that this diversity of ideas and freedom to practice religion is what makes a faith like Unitarian Universalism possible. *The Immigration Experience* celebrates immigration while also looking at some of the difficulties immigrants have struggled with and continue to face.

The work is about twenty-five minutes in length and "through composed," meaning that the seven movements are connected and performed without a break. It is written for chorus with tenor, baritone, and soprano solos; accompanied by violin, clarinet, cello, and piano. The texts come from a variety of sources, quotes from our founding fathers and important statesmen, *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus (the poem that adorns the Statue of Liberty) and words I wrote myself. The movement *Where Do You Come From?* uses 2013 census data to describe the variety of countries that today's foreign born citizens come from.

While the overall theme is one of welcome and

openness to the immigrant, the work touches on a number of other important themes. Movement four, *The Immigrant Struggle*, speaks to the migration of the Irish during the potato famine and also the Chinese, whose immigration was restricted by the 1892 Chinese Exclusion Act.

The story of migration is another central theme to the immigrant experience. All immigrant families travel, some in comfort, and some under duress.

Reading many stories of migration from south of our border, especially Honduras and Guatemala inspired me to write the fifth movement *Journey from the South*. This movement attempts to tell of the heroic efforts many immigrants make to reach this country; it also stands, in a way, for all immigrant journeys.

Many of us in this country are immigrants, but not all; certainly we have to contend with the fact that native populations were displaced make room for the new arrivals. And, not all immigrants came here by their own free will. The sixth movement is a kind of requiem that deals with the overwhelming sadness I feel when deeply contemplating the enormity of this situation. Sometimes, all we can do is, "remember and cry."

The story of immigration is the story of this country, and a story of the freedoms, freedom of opportunity, freedom from oppression, and freedom of religion, that we enjoy. *The Immigration Experience* is the telling of that story, yours and mine, through music. Many thanks go to the choir and soloists for their support and enthusiasm for this work.



Read the *Winchester Star* column by the Winchester Unitarian Sanctuary Task Force:
<http://winchester.wickedlocal.com/news/20171128/guest-column-immigration-attorney-who-sued-trump-speaks-at-winchester-unitarian-society>

WUSYG Service Trips: Why We Do What We Do

By Sam Wilson

Winchester Unitarian Society's own book, "What We Do Matters," tells us that "in the 1990s it was rare to see teenagers in church on Sunday mornings," and "our relationship with youth... could be described as polite but distant." Longtime WUS member Sandy Fries addressed this dilemma from the pulpit with a "call to action" that led to WUS hiring its first Youth Director. "Fast forward 15 years to the Winchester Unitarian Society Youth Group," which by then had "led their elders to the notion of committed, regular service work in communities from Washington State to Baltimore, New Mexico to the Gulf Coast." This transformation led to the creation of the book itself, which was a tribute to the group and its years of incredible and transformative service trips.

WUSYG and its commitment to service trips now has a reputation within our national UU Association of Congregations, is cited in numerous UUA articles and even a book on leading service trips, and is a model for many other youth groups for its dedication to service and its large and vibrant program. Before I had even considered a position at WUS, I had heard of its former Youth Director, Jessica Rubenstein, and looked up to her as someone who was leading the field of youth ministry. It was the combination of UU youth ministry and dedication to service work and social justice that first led me to apply for this job, and I was tickled when part of the application process included answering the question "if you could do a service trip anywhere, where would you go?" Having studied non-western history in college, with a focus on African Studies, I wrote about my desire to bring a group of youth to sub-Saharan Africa. In college, I

studied child soldiers in Uganda, Sierra Leone, and other places; my hope was to connect UU youth with former child soldiers in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration following their forced conscription as children. This remains a dream of mine.

When I first became the Director of Youth Ministries at Winchester Unitarian Society, I was told quite clearly by several folks that the marker of my success would be bringing our teens on a service trip to New Orleans with Gulf Coast Volunteers for the Long Haul. That year, it became apparent that this congregation supported its youth in an incredibly refreshing and unique way: youth were not relegated to menial tasks or hidden in corners like in many churches. Instead, they were lifted up and highlighted as a core area of pride and joy. I was impressed with how many different adults would come up to me after services and talk about WUSYG and their hopes and dreams for our youth group. I learned that there

were many opinions about WUSYG service trips. Some folks shared with me their dismay that we spent money on airfare and went to somewhere like NOLA when there was plenty of poverty to witness and people to help in nearby neighborhoods. Others focused on the immersive learning aspects of the journeys and believed we should do relief work that was farther away and more culturally jarring. They

suggested somewhere like Haiti, where the UU College of Social Justice was leading programs in response to the earthquake there. At my request, the Youth Advisory Committee drafted a four-

year Cycle of Service Trips, with the aim of providing different service opportunities (local, national, international) to our youth in each of their four high school years.

This year we are doing WUSYG's first trip abroad, traveling to Nicaragua, where we will partner with a

continued on next page



local organization that helps empower residents and children through education-based projects. We will participate in hands-on service work like building schools and restoring classrooms. The exact tasks are unknown because we will respond directly to the needs of the community, at their request, as they arise. While in Nicaragua, we will learn about the people who live there, eating with them, celebrating and otherwise connecting with them. At night, we spend time reflecting on how our work there relates to our spirituality. Before the trip, we will learn about the history of Nicaragua, including focusing on colonialism in the further past, the US's involvement in the political landscape in the more recent past, and the connection between Central America and current immigration justice issues in the US. We intend to enter these communities with an awareness of who we are, who they are, and how we can be the most effective partners to them. To this end, this trip is about both service and experiential learning. The former provides support to people who need it; the latter ignites a passion and activism in youth that can be kindled for the rest of their lives.

For me, it is not just about the work that we do when we are on the ground during service trips; it is about the transformative power of these trips to cre-

Youth have not simply learned something — they have been changed.



ate leaders, activists, and advocates. When youth go on these journeys, they do make a real difference during that week, but that difference is exponentially increased when applied to what they do with the rest of their lives. The UU College of Social Justice, where I have been leading programs for the past seven years, shares why its trips now focus almost exclusively on the immersive learning aspects: “When people hear their stories firsthand, share their labor and their food, worship with them, directly encounter their struggles and victories and share aspirations for justice, then they have not simply learned something — they have been changed. And this kind of change inspires new commitment to the work of justice.” I get goosebumps when I think of the different effects these trips will have on our youth’s lives and, in turn, on the lives of those with whom they will continue to serve, learn from, and work alongside.

What we do in WUSYG matters: it changes the lives of our youth and, in turn, bolsters our universe’s steady progression along the arc of justice. ©

Hope *continued from p. 1*

What keeps my hope alive is the additional truth that while there are no guarantees of a happy ending, sometimes even when we are hopeless, grace intervenes. For every story of someone dying far too young, there is a story of someone also terminally ill who somehow survives. So, for me, hope is not believing that everything will resolve itself well but just believing that such an outcome is even possible.

Believing in this possibility can take spiritual vigilance. A verse from a song by Holly Near song has been making the rounds among those seeking hope. It has become somewhat of a mantra for me when I have felt the challenge of this chapter of our shared

life together: *I am open and I am willing, To be hopeless would seem so strange, It dishonors those who go before us, So lift me up to the light of change ...*

To be open and willing. That is all that is asked of us. We need not put our full faith in a promise of a miracle. We are invited to just remember that there are no guarantees in anything. And, in the space of that uncertainty, sometimes our worst fears do not come to pass. Sometimes the light of change shines through.

As we enter into the season of light, may we find and create new hope together.

Looking Ahead to January's Theme: Intention

By Rebecca Kelley-Morgan

I've been noticing that each year, sometime in the late fall, as the days draw to an early close and the temperature drives me inside for a greater number of hours that I spend more time reading, more time cooking, more time withdrawing from the social realm. There are all sorts of things that govern my behaviors. Sometimes I change my behavior as a reflex, responding to external circumstances. Sometimes I change my behavior intuitively, registering some need at an unconscious or subconscious level. And sometimes I set an intention and behavior change follows. In the case of late autumn, all of those things contribute to my quasi-hibernation. The intentional

slowing down is not something I generate as a to-do on a seasonal list but rather comes out of listening to those inner promptings, paying attention to what's going on around me and responding purposefully.

In a month or so we'll see a flurry of resolutions to begin the year anew. To change ourselves, to improve ourselves, to better our experiences and relationships. Sometimes those resolutions are intentions – setting a future course and a guiding principle for present and future behaviors. But most of the time, resolutions are reflexive and reactive, rather than reflective and responsive. Intentions rise out of reflection and lead to thoughtful and sustainable responses within the contextual landscape. I am not saying that remaining true to an intention is easy or permanent. But to live with intention is to use one's present day and future years most fully, to engage the self most deeply.

Institutions, likewise, can set intentions which will guide future behaviors. They can also write mission

statements or devise policies which are never referenced again. When they're paying attention to shifts and changes in the world and to the emerging needs and disappearing realities of constituents they can align their mission to reflect the values which they espouse. Values change rarely, the manifestation of them shifts in context.

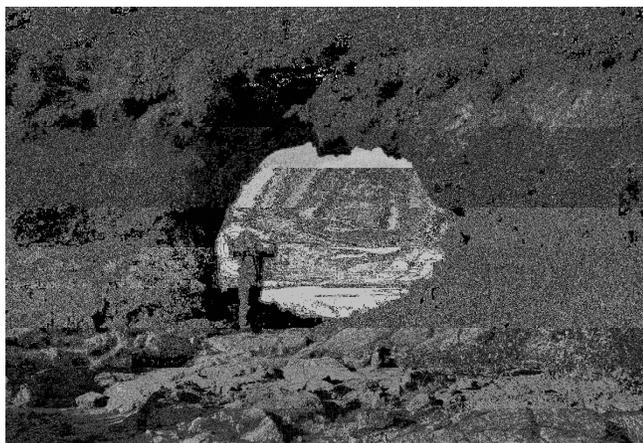
As a faith community we also respond to shifts and changes, as individuals within it and collectively. It's tempting to take on the new greatest thing, or check off a list of worthy causes and initiatives. Is that intention, though? Our

What does it mean to express our ideals with intention?

values as Unitarian Universalists are fairly straightforward. We are a home for believers and non-believers, affirming personal spiritual authority. We honor inclusion, justice and the preciousness of our earth. We choose love over fear and challenge over complacency. What does it mean to express those ideals with intention?

That is a question that our worship, institutional advocacy in words and dollars, and programs of the church all strive to answer. When we discern how we will be together, what wisdom we will impart to the next generations and how we will utilize our resources, we are on the way to developing a reflective response. When we rush to fix or avoid discomfort in the moment, we're merely delaying the opportunity to act intentionally.

Congregational life is by its nature, prone to drive up challenges. Anytime there is more than one person in the room, the possibility of difference is there as well. Rather than react, intentionality drives the choice to slow down, to accept discomfort and awkwardness and to manifest the values of our living tradition and our evolving communal lives. @



February's Theme: Perseverance

"People cry not because they are weak. It's because they've been strong too long." - *Shane Koyczan*

"This morning I have been pondering a nearly forgotten lesson I learned in high school music. Sometimes in band or choir, music requires players or singers to hold a note longer than they actually can hold a note. In those cases, we were taught to mindfully stagger when we took a breath so the sound appeared uninterrupted. Everyone got to breathe, and the music stayed strong and vibrant... So let's remember the advice of music: Take a breath. The rest of the chorus will sing. The rest of the band will play. Rejoin so others can breathe. Together, we can sustain a very long, beautiful song for a very, very long time. You don't have to do it all, but you must add your voice to the song." - *Michael Moore*

Have you "been strong too long?"

This is not the usual question when thinking about perseverance. Most often, we're asked, "Do you have the strength for this?" The mantra is familiar: Grin and bear it! Keep pushing! Keep moving forward! Dig deep - you are stronger than you know!

But maybe Koyczan is right. Maybe this typical roadmap isn't the path to perseverance. Maybe it's just the path to breakdown.

And when we combine Koyczan's quote with Moore's invitation to breathe, we suddenly see that balance plays a bigger role in perseverance than we often assume. *As people of perseverance, we are being called not just to keep going, but to gentleness and self-care.* Constantly pushing ourselves without also giving ourselves the gift of rest gets us nowhere. Digging deeper without making time to fill our wells is a recipe for self-inflicted pain.

As people of perseverance, we are being called not just to keep going, but to gentleness and self-care.

All of this is to say that maybe vulnerability is the real secret to perseverance. Maybe admitting we're tired and asking for help is the real strength that gets us through. The dominant model of Sisyphus pushing his rock uphill hasn't done us any favors. We assume that Sisyphus is suffering because his work is endless but maybe his true torment is his isolation and inability to rest.

So let's not torment ourselves. We don't have to give up positive thoughts about digging deep and being stronger than we know. But let's also make sure we're also doing the more tender work of propping each other up and reminding each other to breathe.

Rabbi David Wolf tells a story worth remembering:

A boy and his father were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. "Do you think if I use all of my strength, I can move this rock?" the child asked. His father answered, "If you use all of your strength, I am sure you can do it." The boy began to push the rock. Exerting himself as much as he could, he pushed and pushed. The rock did not move. Discouraged, he said to his father, "You were wrong. I can't do it." His father put his arm around the boy's shoulder and said, "No son. You didn't use all your strength - you didn't ask me to help."

What a gift to remember: perseverance doesn't have to be something we do alone... @

Have you been strong too long?

A reflection from Soul Matters on "Perseverance," the theme for February. If you are interested in learning more about the Soul Matters resources for congregations, contact Rebecca Kelley-Morgan or Heather Janules.

Me Too

By Rebecca Kelley-Morgan

I am storyteller by inclination and training, but there are some stories that I, like many women, have not shared. Stories that were hidden or hushed or stuffed away. Stories that are finally coming out of the shadows where the bright light of reason can shine upon them. Stories that speak the words “YOU are not alone” and “Me too.” We share our stories so that we may shift the culture, from silence and secrecy to dialogue and disclosure. We share our stories that we may change a culture that believes objectification is part of the price one pays for gender, or youth, or any of the labels affixed by a perpetrator to the victim.

So here’s a story.

I was serving tables for college tuition money at a posh country club. In the fall, there were fewer hours of daylight for the (all male) golfers to be on the green, and more hours spent drinking and eating in the club. If one smiled and ignored the most egregious comments, the tips were larger. One night, a drunken older white patron took his buddies up on a bet, charged across the dining room, scooped me up and ran up the stairs to—where? I never found out, because he stumbled, dropped me and then fell on me, to the accompaniment of uproarious laughter. In a few moments, I had become the butt of a joke I hadn’t chosen to participate in.

I was teased when I told the manager what happened. I was offered no support, or access to medical care. I was sent home, not because I was in pain, but because my clothes were covered with spilled drinks. I was a lowly server. And it was just a joke.

I needed the job, so I returned for my next shift and they were all there, drinking after golf, laughing about their adventure of the night before. The guilty patron approached me, admonishing me to say nothing when he came in with his spouse. That was my apology. I found another job a few weeks later,

and left the country club, setting aside and stuffing down my sense of wrongness.

I am many years past this incident, and others that have happened since. My life is a happy one, where I have a (mostly) positive relationship with my own body and self worth. I write this now, after decades of advocating for and leading Our Whole Lives and related comprehensive sexuality education courses for all ages. I write this as a white woman of privilege, who has had the benefit of education and time to sort through the complexity of my self-image. But I also write with rage for my young self, who had no protectors and had to accept violation of her body and spirit. And I write with rage that this is still so, and that most powerful among us see nothing wrong with defending or perpetrating emotional and physical violence against others.

We can only change this dynamic when we call it what it is. Violence, oppression, misuse of power. Those behaviors have nothing to do with positive, life-affirming sexuality, and those who believe that it does are missing the point. Perpetrators do so *because they can* and they are allowed to continue their behaviors *because they can*.

In this moment when the stories are spilling over in the telling, let’s make the consequences not worth the exercise of the behaviors. Let’s impose meaningful consequences on those who behave badly, even if the perpetrators are “just joking.” Let’s offer apologies, rather than defenses or coverups. Let’s refuse to laugh at the joke and support programs that teach our children likewise.

Because, you know what? It’s just not funny. @



Let’s make the consequences not worth the exercise of the behaviors.



2017-18 Concert Series continues...

Friday, January 26th, 8pm

Jazz in the Sanctuary

Every year, *Jazz in the Sanctuary* brings some of Boston's best freelance jazz players to Winchester for a fabulous night of music. This year's theme is food: think Salt Peanuts, Watermelon Man, and Scapple from the Apple.



Friday, March 16th, 8 pm

Vance Gilbert

With ten critically acclaimed albums, Vance Gilbert continues to refine his unlikely union of humor, virtuosity, and the unexpected. Whether with classic, original songwriting or ageless interpretations of covers, his is a presentation steeped in deep humanism and bravery, stunning artistry and soul, and contagious, unbridled joy. Vance is now on tour with his brand new CD, "Bad Dog Buffet." www.vancegilbert.com



Tickets available at the door.

\$20 adults
\$15 seniors
\$5 students

*The sanctuary is accessible
by wheelchair.*

Winchester Unitarian Society

478 Main St
Winchester MA 01890
(781) 729-0949
www.winchesteruu.org

Minister and Staff

The Rev. Heather K. Janules, *Minister*
heather.janules@winchesteruu.org

Rebecca Kelley-Morgan,
Director of Lifespan Religious Education
rebecca@winchesteruu.org

John Kramer, *Music Director*
john.kramer@winchesteruu.org

Sam Wilson,
Director of Youth Ministries
sam.wilson@winchesteruu.org

Alison Streit Baron, *Administrator*
office@winchesteruu.org

Jenny Goh, *Administrative Assistant*
adminassistant@winchesteruu.org

The Rev. Charles Reinhardt,
Minister Emeritus

These concerts are made possible by your generous contributions.

You can still become a concert series sponsor.

Sponsors \$125 | Forte Sponsors \$200 | Fortissimo Sponsors \$300

Thanks to the following sponsors of this year's concert series:

Fortissimo: Local Hero Tech Support | Pete and Joan Baldwin | Sioux Brokaw & Charlie Wright | Vicky and Peter Coccoluto | Sara Delano and Bill Zink | Rebecca and John Keller | Elizabeth Lintz and John Kramer | Joi and John Loewy | Kathryn Maffei and Joe Randolph | Jack McCreless and Janet Nelson | Judy Murray and James Pidacks | Martin and Nancy Scott Newhouse | Corie Nichols | Maggie and John Russell | Dirck Stryker | Frank and Judy Virnelli | Maury Wood and Shelly Ziegelman

Forte: The Erikson Family | Patrick Draine and Barbara Savage | Erin Graham and Matthew Bronski | Kathy Howard | Jo Morgan | Sophia Sid | Dick Spencer

Sponsors: Phil Coonley & Marilyn Mullane | Clem Cronon Marketing Consultants | June Edwards | Steve Forcucci and Fritzie Nace | Maren Judd and Larry Banks | Prescott and Barbara Keyes | Chuck and Julie Khuen | Gloria and Robert Legvold | Margaret Lowry and Brad Steele | Sarah and Steve Milt | Stephen and Cecily Parkhurst | Phyllis Preston and Earle Boudreau | Sheila Puffer | Donna Reed and Raym de Ris | Carolyn Schatz | Patty Shepard | Margot Sudbury | Deb Walsh and Peter McEntee | Jayne Zeamer and Jim Tilley