



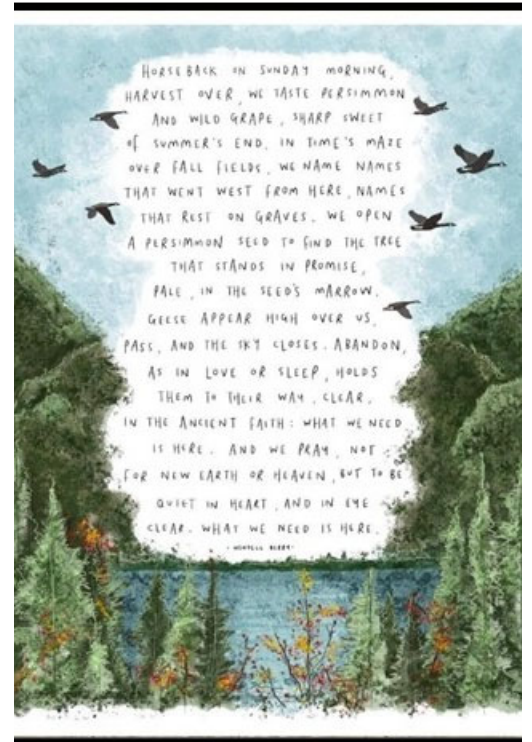
March's Theme is Renewing Faith

By Sam Wilson

Director of Youth Ministries and Interim Coordinatore of Religious Education

As I sit to write this article, my heart is heavy with events in the news this week. Here at home we have absolutely horrible, hate-filled legislation getting passed in Texas and Florida. Meanwhile, we watch with the rest of the world to see what's happening in Ukraine with bated breath, weary of a new world war in a world that's already been torn apart by war. All of this as we continue to live amidst a pandemic that continues claiming the lives of loved ones. How can I think about renewing my faith in anything when I live in a world with so much pain? I wrestled with that question this week as I thought about what I would write. Indeed, it feels pretty challenging to have faith in God, humanity, or the world right now. What I do have a lot of faith in right now, though, is you. You, the reader, who is a part of our community at the Winchester Unitarian Society. I have faith that, as Wendell Berry writes in his poem *Wild Geese*, "what we need is here."

I believe that we need to renew our faith in each other and the mission of our community - and other communities like ours - in order for us to survive, and thrive, in a world that seems insistent on pushing us down. Have



you ever heard about how fire ants survive floods? Alone, a fire ant in water can float for a few minutes before it drowns, but when nests of fire ants are flooded, the entire colony will shape itself into a raft that can actually stay afloat for months (with up to hundreds of thousands of ants surviving together!) What's even more fascinating is that none of the ants even get wet. The ants at the base of the raft push against the water's surface, shaping it around them without actually breaking the sur-

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April's Theme is Awakening

By Rev. Hank Peirce
Sabbatical Minister

I had a roommate that we called *Sailor Dave*, because he once wore a funny striped shirt and the name just stuck. I and my other roommates realized early on that if there were dishes to be done, Sailor Dave was the man to do it. Plates would be clean, glasses would sparkle, old cooking trays would come back to life in his hands. I remember asking him why he took such care in cleaning these dishes of ours, his answer surprised me. He said that as a child his mother saw him doing a bad job of cleaning dishes and asked him "would you want Jesus to eat off that plate?" He an-

swered that he wouldn't want Jesus to eat off that plate, so his mother told him, "Jesus isn't here today, but he may show up tomorrow so you, and these dishes better be ready."

The April worship theme is Awakening. Often we like to think of wisdom coming to us in either aha moments, or from kind and wise teachers, like the Buddha or Mr. Rogers. However, to be honest our mothers have probably bestowed more lessons upon us than most any other person. In my Unitarian family the inclusion of Jesus in a lesson would not have been as effective as in other families, but my own mother had her ways. I remember once eating din-

ner with my folks after returning from a UU youth conference. I told them that I had met some really cool kids who were all vegetarians and that I was considering becoming a vegetarian. Without missing a beat my mother calmly asked "where will you eat?" With those four words I realized that my desire for plant based meals was not nearly as strong as my desire for meals in general.

So may we be grateful for those people who shared wisdom with us, which helped us to become the people we are today. And may those with whom we share wisdom with today, look back at us with gratitude and humor.



May's Theme is Nurturing Beauty

By Rev. Hank Peirce
Sabbatical Minister

Holy Ground by Ann Weems

*The ground . . . the ordinary, al-
ways present,
Hardly in danger of extinction
ground . . .
and God called it holy!
I know that Moses took off his
shoes
Because God told him he was
standing on holy ground.
What I don't know is,
When is the ground holy and when
is it not?
When do I take off my shoes?
I walk upon the frozen ground in
winter,
And find it cracked and ugly, lack-
ing color.
There nothing here to make me
stop and say, Holy Ground,
Yet you know that underneath
spring is growing,
And in the months to come
I'll be stopped dead in my tracks
by crocus and tulip and daffodil
And in some morning's light I'll see
a blaze of forsythia
And a triumph of pink dogwood
and I'll have a whiff of lemon
thyme
And I'll take off my shoes.
When is the ground holy,
this ground that yields to us life?
If the earth is the Lord's
and the fullness thereof,
No amount of planting or tilling or
harvesting
Is going to mean the bounty is
ours
We can't earn it;
everything is a gift.
And the gifts are not unique:*

*They're everywhere . . . common-
place . . . ordinary:
Ordinary trees, ordinary vegeta-
bles,
Ordinary fruits, ordinary flowers
Ordinary beauty, ordinary bounty
Ordinary extravagant gifts.
Just in case
I'll take off my shoes from time to
time
and say, Thank You.*

If asked to think of Nurturing Beauty, the worship theme for May, you might think of tending a flower bed, or taking care of young children, or maybe even getting yourself ready for a night on the town. However, when I read Ann Weems poem entitled *Holy Ground* I think of this building. Our tradition does not say that a certain place is holy because it was built on a particular holy site, or because a certain ritual was performed there, or that it was blessed by a particular holy

person. This building is holy for two reasons, first because the whole world is holy and all things in it are as well, yes, even the most mundane. This is the Universalist idea extended beyond humanity to all of creation.

The second reason this place is holy is because of the work and toil, the love and joy that you all have put into this place. It has become holy because you and those who came before you have made it so with your presence, your involvement and your love. You have nurtured the beauty of this place not for yourselves alone, but for the legacy of those who came before and for those who come after you.

So next time you come to church, be like Moses, slip off your shoes because this is Holy Ground.



Photo by [Jon Butterworth](#) on [Unsplash](#)

March's Theme is Renewing Faith

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face tension at all. Scientists have done studies on these ants, too, putting thousands in beakers of water then swirling them around. Pushing down on the "raft" that



they create until it is fully submerged, etc. In each element, the ants quickly adapt as a team to support each other, form a new water-repellant object, and keep everyone safe.

I know that we can be each other's ants at Winchester Unitarian Society. Per usual, we simply need to look at our kids to help guide the way. This past week, we returned to in-person Religious Education in the morning for our K-7 kids, and without missing a beat, half of them excitedly built a pull-string piñata animal together ("you do the arms and I'll add the wings!") while the other half worked together to get all the fixings ready for some nachos. Each of them dove into whatever task

we asked of them to get things started. Our youngest kiddo couldn't use a knife but she had the perfect-sized little fingers for picking off individual cilantro leaves, which she did eagerly until the bowl was full. I learned later that she absolutely abhors cilantro (you know how some people have that gene where it tastes like soap?) It didn't matter to her that she wasn't even going to reap the rewards of her work; she did what



needed to be done for everyone. It was so exciting to witness them all working together for a common goal and it seemed like everyone had a lot of fun at their Feb Fest Finale Fiesta!

It's been a really hard year, and so many people in our community still have not been able to come back to church in-person. Many of us have been overwhelmed with everything going on and had to step back in some way or another from something that we were doing at church. The reality is that

some members of our church family may never feel comfortable coming back to sit in the pews on Sunday morning. However, as the case numbers continue to go down and the warm weather slowly begins to return, I know that many will begin coming back to our beloved building. We are even hoping to bring our children back inside to participate in a youth-led worship on April 3rd. Meanwhile, we are likewise continuing to live into our new RE Vision, with my role shifting, a new hire, and a new junior youth group. Our new Administrator has started and soon enough Rev. Heather will be back, too. It feels like we are beginning a new chapter in our lives together in some ways. As we come back and start this new chapter together, we will need to actively renew our faith in each other. We will need to practice gratitude, and trust. We will need to renew our commitments to each other and to the community, and find new ways of giving our time, our treasure and our talents toward building and maintaining a renewed vision for our community. We will need to be each other's ants. And I know that we will, for, it is true that all we need really is here. You are here. Now that's something that I can really believe in.



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Music in the Sanctuary presents...

Windborne

Friday, April 29, 2022

8:00 pm to 10:00 pm

"A quartet the likes of which I haven't seen since... Coope, Boyes and Simpson, the Watersons, or The Voice Squad. Just absolutely phenomenal!"##

-BBC Traveling Folk

