

“Finding Another Way” ©
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd
March 22, 2020

Online Homily

Week two and counting. I wonder how each of you are doing? Please let me or the caring team know how it goes for you. I also wonder how many things you have had to learn to do in a new way in the past 10 days? It seems as though everything in our personal, family, school, work, church, community, and world, has to be done differently than we did them just two weeks ago. It was only 10 days ago that we closed the church building. Only 10 days. Is that all? It seems so much longer. In my relationship with each of you I often encourage you to break out of the old ways of doing things, to get unstuck, to try something different, to look at something from a different point of view, to choose to step outside your comfort zone. It’s a hard thing to do. Most of us prefer the comfort of our old routines, even when they are not always healthy.

But, the sheer number of changes we are each making is beyond imagination. I never would have wished for you this much change at one time. How many of you long for the way things used to be, for the comfort of what was comfortable . . . like comfort food, like that warm feeling you get from macaroni and cheese. If only we could turn the clock back. If we could, how far back would we turn it? A month? Six months? Longer? Not at all?

My husband and I were out shopping this past week, not knowing how to make a grocery list for an indeterminate period of time. How do you make a list of the things you will need when you don’t know how long life will be like this?

So many new learnings. Worshipping online seems to come easily for some of us. Not so much for me – this technology isn’t in my wheelhouse. Maybe someday it will be, but not now. If some of you are struggling, believe me I understand.

Yes, we are doing things differently now. A week ago, I started separating our mail into three bags, first day’s mail, second day’s mail, third day’s mail. Then on the fourth day, I can open the first day’s mail. Who’d have thought? Suddenly the character who plays Monk on TV doesn’t seem so strange. That show might match perfectly the new normal we now share.

Later when we have our reflection time after the service, I invite you to share with us some of the new and surprising things you’ve had to do.

I've only mentioned the easy changes. Some of you are facing much harder changes. Some of you have family and children who are stuck in another country. Of course you are worried about them. We share in your worry.

Some of you are deemed to be essential employees . . . required to continue your public work in the service of the public good.

Some of you are on the front lines that include everything from medical intervention to delivering the mail.

How hard it must be to be so "essential". How hard it must be to find your balance as you tend to the public and take care of yourself and your family. Is there time to take care of yourself, too? How do you keep your perspective? How do you find peace? We thank you for your commitment to us.

This past week someone called me in crisis. The traumas of these days had triggered old memories she'd struggled to suppress for decades. She was trying to find a new way to ease her suffering.

Actually, she'd called me by mistake. She thought she was calling a different minister. I explained, "I'm a Unitarian Universalist minister." At first it didn't matter to her. One minister's as good as the next, I suspect! But, as my responses were not quite what she expected she began asking me about Unitarian Universalism. Surprisingly, we're not that easy to explain, are we? I told her about our free faith, a faith that is free of dogma . . . saying, "we won't tell you what to believe". We talked some more, and she asked again, "but what are your values?" And, I told her about our first principle, the inherent worth and dignity of everyone, and our 7th principle, the interdependent web of which we are all a part, and about our respect for democracy, and about our desire to be a compassionate people. That all sounded good to her. We talked some more, and then she asked again, a bit more persistently, "Yes, but if you don't believe in the G*d¹ I believe in, then what do you believe . . .!?"

I took a breath and said, "Each other. We believe in each other."

¹ Rev. Lloyd does not spell out the word, "G*d," because the term is loaded with many misconceptions and preconceptions. That which is the spirit of life and community, the spirit of love and death, the spirit of humanity, cannot be relegated to one three letter word. Rev. Lloyd invites others to reconsider the meanings of this word, and, to contemplate whether it is a noun or verb. Is G*d Love? The reader is invited to expand their vision and understanding . . .

That's why we're here today, isn't it? We are not showing up just for ourselves. Even when we can't touch, we show up for each other. We believe in each other.

PAUSE

I offer you these words from my colleague, Rev. Elizabeth Stevens in Idaho:

These are strange times. There are so many things that feel unfamiliar.
We are still figuring out how to protect ourselves and one another.
We are still figuring out 'social distancing'.
We are still figuring out phone trees and virtual community.
We are still figuring out how to weave a safety net secure enough so that no one slips through.

Some of us may not know how to manage these strange new technologies.
Some of us may not know where we can find toilet paper.
Some of us may not know where our next meal or our rent is coming from.

None of us know if we will get sick, or how sick we will get.
None of us know who we will lose.

But we know the things that are important:
We [do] know how to manage our anxiety [as uncomfortable as that is].
We [do] know that we are [a] resilient [people], as individuals and collectively.
We know how to come back to our best selves, again and again.
We know how to breathe.
We know how to be kind.
We know how to be generous.
We know that we can count on one another.
We know that when all of us offer what feels right, what feels good, we always, ALWAYS, wind up with everything we need.

We [also] know that this epidemic won't last forever.
[And, we] know that [spring is coming,] the world is a beautiful place, and . . . we are meant to rejoice and be glad in every day we are given.
Above all, we know that we are held in a love, a love whose tensile strength is limitless. It will stretch. It will give . . . It will not let us go.
[In these strange and uncomfortable] times, [may] we trust in that love . . . every day of our lives.

May it be so.