



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO

September 2017 Newsletter

First Unitarian Society of Chicago 5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637 (773) 324-4100

Thoughts in Ordinary Time

Rev. Teri Schwartz

This summer, I had the opportunity to go on a retreat. I stayed at the Holy Wisdom Monastery just outside of Madison, Wisconsin. It is an ecumenical women's Benedictine community; some of their core religious values are hospitality and environmental justice. I stayed in a hermitage—a one-bedroom apartment on the edge of a restored prairie.

I went for rest and renewal. Yet, it took me a day to realize that I harbored unrealistic expectations. For my short time there, I also expected that I'd read a stack of books, write a bunch, exercise, rest, and spend time in contemplation. I knew that I was retreating from a world of hurry and the world of material consumption. I had been looking forward to that. But in addition to my suitcase, I brought along some other baggage: an idolatry of the consumption and production of information. This is a sly form of materialism; one I've been conditioned to hold as a high aspiration and measure of intelligence.

After that insight, I decided I'd focus on the gifts the monastery had to offer me that I could only do while there. After all, the reading and writing would keep for a bit. I walked miles each day along nature paths in the prairie. I drank silence like water on a hot day. I rested whenever I felt like it. There were no thunderbolts of insight, no peak spiritual experiences. But it was a gradual emptying out of the chatter in my mind and a slow stilling of my rushed spirit. Ultimately, it's the space in the cup that is the most useful part.

For the most part, I ate meals with the community. At lunch one day, I asked the sisters, "What does a typical day look like? What do you do?" Sister Lynne paused thoughtfully. Then she replied something like this, "Well, we work. We administer the monastery. But if I were to ask you what you do, you'd tell me what you do for your job, what you do to get paid. But we do all of these things. We do manual labor; it keeps us humble. We pray. We take turns washing

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the dishes. We garden the vegetables we're eating. The Benedictine life is about balance and we do all of these things every day."

In the Christian tradition, this time of year is called "Ordinary Time," in contrast to liturgical seasons of feast or fast, exultation or contrition. Most of our days are just that—ordinary. What we do is more than the sum of

our paycheck or the title of our jobs, but is in the balance of our days, to whom we belong, and how we love. As we start the church year, may we find our ordinary times blessed—for it is truly the only time there ever is.

Blessings,
Rev. Teri



A prairie view of Holy Wisdom Monastery

Greetings from the Director of Religious Education (DRE) Beth Moss

As summer winds down, I wish to welcome you to the 2017-2018 religious education program. We have many great offerings and opportunities coming up that I am excited to share with the congregation, beginning with information about upcoming Sundays.

August 20th and August 27th—Summer RE programming continues. This summer we are using a curriculum called "We Are All Connected—Creepy Crawlies". All youth are invited to learn about the 7th Principle which shows us that all life on Earth is connected. Children are invited to start services in

Classroom 1. Class runs until 11 a.m. (or when the service ends). Nursery care also is available 9:30–11:30 a.m. on summer Sundays. Ushers can guide you.

September 3— Labor Day weekend—no RE. All ages are invited to attend worship.

September 10—Water Communion. This is a multi-generational service: All ages are invited to attend worship. After worship, please join the Director of Religious Education for 2017-2018 teacher training (location to be announced). All potential teachers, old and new, are invited to attend. Information will be shared about lesson delivery, classroom management, volunteer scheduling, and safe church policies. Light lunch and childcare to be provided.

Not sure yet about whether you want to teach? It's easier and more fun than you might think! E-mail the DRE at dre@firsttuchicago.org to get added to the e-mail list for more information.

September 17—First day of fall religious education programming. After the “Time for All Ages” part of the Sunday service, students are invited to join teachers in their classrooms to do welcoming and team building activities. RE open house to follow.

September 24—Regularly scheduled religious education classes for all ages. To find out more details about offerings for each age group, please contact the contact the DRE.

Special note—RE families, if you have not yet done so, please take the 8 question RE planning survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KK63VD5>. Your participation will help the DRE make this year's class offerings and family activities better fit the needs and wants of First Unitarian families. This survey should take less than 10 minutes and your participation helps immensely! Thanks!

In peace,
Beth Moss.

10 AM Sunday Services

September 3rd—Labor Day
The Varieties of Social Justice Experience
Rev. David Schwartz

Our task is to bend the moral arc of the universe toward justice, and the ways we do so are profoundly diverse. We can do direct action and policy reform; political campaigns and labor organizing; academic analysis, direct service, fundraising, and self-transformation. This Sunday, we explore this rich ecosystem of work for justice.

September 10th
Water Communion
Rev. Teri Schwartz & Rev. David Schwartz

At this beloved annual intergenerational service, you are invited to bring a small vial of water from your home or travels. We'll join them all together, uniting as one to begin this new, shared church year. We will also offer a “backpack blessing” for our children and youth, to pledge our love and support to them as they begin a new school year. Kids: bring your backpacks!

September 17th
Belonging = Being and Longing
Rev. David Schwartz

Poet and priest, John O'Donohue says, “The word “belonging” holds together the two

fundamental aspects of life: being and longing.” How do we belong in church and in the world? How can we welcome our longing? How can we welcome the newcomer in all of their being and their longing?

September 24th
Making Meaning
 Rev. Elizabeth Harding

All throughout our lives, we have opportunities to create meaning out of our experiences, feelings, and relationships. Our mortality offers us such an opportunity to really dig deep about what becomes important over our lifetimes. The process of making theology—of knowing our deepest values and beliefs—is written into our Principles of Unitarian Universalism as part of the search for truth and meaning and the call to spiritual growth. Come hear some stories about how different people approached this process.

Following the service, from 11:30-1:30, Rev. Harding will lead a workshop on palliative care, hospice, and advanced directives. The

workshop will explore the difference between palliative care and hospice care; learn more about creating documents that will help you and your loved ones plan for the future; and help you think through scenarios when palliative care or hospice care might be of service to you and your family. If you plan to attend the workshop, please bring a bag lunch and RSVP to Rev. Teri at teresa.schwartz@firsttuchicago.org.

Elizabeth Harding grew up Unitarian Universalist at the Second Unitarian Church of Chicago, where she was ordained in 2007. She obtained her degrees from Meadville Lombard Theological School and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. Elizabeth works as a bereavement counselor for JourneyCare, the largest non-for-profit hospice and palliative care provider in IL. Formerly, she has been a hospice and hospital chaplain, and a parish minister. She is married to Kevin O'Reilly, and together they have their son, Lucas, and three fish.

Call to Song Jeff Hamrick

With the new church year under way, the choir of First Unitarian Church has resumed its weekly rehearsal. Have you considered joining the choir? It's not too late!

The choir welcomes new singers throughout the year, but the beginning of the new church year is the ideal time to join. The ability to read music is helpful, and members must be able to match pitch, but no audition is necessary.

The choir rehearses most Wednesdays at 7:15 p.m.

Interested singers are invited to contact director Jeff Hamrick by e-mail at music@firsttuchicago.org.

Come sing with us!!

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Saturday 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Co–Ministers’ Office Hours

Rev. David Schwartz, by appointment on
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday

Rev. Teri Schwartz, by appointment on
Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday

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