



The Practice of
Embracing Change
Meaning Making Project October 2025

Meeting this Moment with Love & Justice

WELCOME

There is much advice about change: how to manage it, experience it, avoid it, choose it, survive it.

Change can be exciting and unsettling, joyous and uncomfortable. Whether we choose the change or it chooses us, there are always surprises. Some surprises are sharp and in focus, others float beyond our ability to put into words.

Lynn, Fiona, Arran and I put 'change' at the beginning of this year's Meaning Making series for a reason. Our theme for this year, "meeting this moment with love and justice," is ambitious. What my swim coach used to call a stretch goal.

I'm glad I don't have to wake up at 4 am to get to early morning swim practices anymore. But I do appreciate what I learned during that time:

- daily practice is what matters
- the first step in achieving a goal is understanding where I am at right now.

The spiritual work of embracing change starts with noticing and acceptance. If I try to paper over my grief at my losses (for example), I miss out on an important experience. When I sit with my grief, when I share it with my community, and we are able to hold that grief together, a shift happens. The grief that was inside me is now in our communal space and this shifts my relationship to it. When we can look at it together, it doesn't go away, but I am a little bit less overwhelmed by it.

We won't be able to meet this moment with love and justice if we cannot meet ourselves and one another with acceptance, if not love. This is not a new idea. It is our legacy from the earliest Unitarians and Universalists: we are loved, we have inherent value. Accepting this message for ourselves will help us bring love and justice to one another, and to all the beings on this planet.

A big goal, for sure. But what could be more important?
I look forward to this year with you.

Yours in community,

Karen

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The Practice of Embracing Change

- What helps you to stay grounded in the midst of change?
- When so much is in flux, how do you stay true to your values? How do you find the strength to act?
- How are you in relationship with the changes that you are experiencing right now – both the changes you have chosen and the changes that have been imposed or chosen you?
- What have you learned about the role of change in growth and transformation?

QUOTES

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
is Change.

God
is Change.

Octavia E. Butler

When we are no longer able to
change a situation, we are
challenged to change ourselves.

Viktor Frankl

It doesn't matter how strong your
opinion are. If you don't use your
power for positive change, you are
indeed part of the problem.

Coretta Scott King

God grant me the serenity to accept the
things I cannot change, the courage to
change the things I can, and the
wisdom to know the difference.”

Reinhold Niebuhr

You never change things by fighting
the existing reality. To change
something, build a new model that
makes the existing model obsolete.

Richard Buckminster Fuller

Accepting that the chaos is normal
and natural will help us claim our
creative potential in it. Accepting
the chaos allows us to stop
demanding impossible things from
each other (such as clear prophetic
answers on how everything in the
future is going to work) and shift
into inviting each other into co-
creation of futures that work for us.

adrienne maree brown

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

One of the late Joanna Macy's legacies is 'The Work that Reconnects.' The work is a set of practices that help people honour their pain and grief for the world and find ways to activate hope and action for change.

One of the practices is to "see from our hopes." A practice of creating active hope - choosing to act from our values.

This practice can be done alone, using writing, drawing, or simply closing your eyes and thinking. It can also be done in pairs, with one person asking the questions and the other taking a minute or two to respond. Then the pairs switch roles.

Seeing from Our Hopes

Starting point. Take a couple of minutes to see what words follow this sentence starter:

Facing my concerns, what I deeply hope for is . . .

This is you, looking at your hope, daring to let it into your awareness and your imagination.

Imagine, just for a moment, that your hopes have happened, that things have worked out as well as they possibly could, from the starting point you face.

Picture yourself stepping into that hoped for future. You may want to mark the "time travel" of this step in some way. Perhaps with some movement, deep breaths, sound, or anything else that enables this shift in time perspective for you.

For example, you could visualise a natural landscape that you are travelling across, following a path, from the valley or plain of your present, to a mountain that symbolises your hoped for future . . .

Let yourself be playful and explore whatever will enable you to take this leap of imagination.

Standing in the place of your hope, what does it feel like to look from here? What can you see and hear (or, even, touch, taste or smell)? What do you like or love about things working out this way?

What I like or love about things working out this way is . . .

You might start this sentence several times, each time describing a different aspect of what you like or love.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 2

Seeing From our Hopes - Continued

Looking Back. Having taken a really good look around at your hope, from the inside, then look back - from that point - at this time we live in now. What did they do back then that helped this hoped-for version of the future come about?

Spend some time describing one or two things that people did in the 2020s that played a role in helping your hopes happen .

A possible sentence starter to use is:

One of the things they did back then was . . .

And also: Something else they did was . . .

Now, remembering that you were (and are) one of those people. Ask yourself:

How did I find the strength to act?

What sustained me?

How did I nourish my capacity to play my part?

Coming back. Allow yourself to step back to this time now using whatever time travelling technique you used earlier. Bring with you your sense of the changes that happened in this potential timeline, and consider what role or roles you could play that might help these changes come about:

Something I could see myself doing is . . .

Or: I could help this happen by . . .

From <https://www.activehope.info/>, created by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy.
(As long as this work attributed correctly, it is free to share)



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES - 3

In *My Grandmothers Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, Resmaa Menakem shares body-based practices to help people of colour and white people stay grounded, healing the wounds that get in the way of justice work. **Anchoring** is one of the useful practices for challenging moments. What follows is a brief highlight of a few of the practices of anchoring. Many more examples are shared in the book—we highly recommend it.

- **Anchor 1: Soothe yourself: quiet your mind, calm your heart, settle your body.**
 - Stop talking. For a few seconds, don't say anything. Just breathe.
 - Do something to slow things down. Take a long, slow drink from your mug; open or close a window; pet the cat; excuse yourself to go to the bathroom.
- **Anchor 2: Notice the sensations in your body.**
 - Notice sensations: your back against the chair, your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Name what you notice: heat, cold, constriction, pressure, etc..
 - Thoughts, emotions, and reactions will arise. Don't run off with them. Come back to your body and its sensations.
- **Anchor 3: Accept the discomfort—and notice when it changes.**
 - When your mind spits out actions, sit with them. Notice when the speed or focus of your thoughts changes.
 - Remind yourself that discomfort is protective, not defective.
- **Anchor 4: Stay present and in your body as you move through the experience.**
 - When your mind moves to what's wrong with you or with the other person, use the first three anchors to bring yourself back to the present moment.
- **Anchor 5: Safely discharge any energy that remains.** *Use this anchor after you have worked through the conflict, or disengaged from it for a time.*
 - Move your body consecutively for at least 20 minutes: exercise, walk, play sports (except those with long pauses), dance, do physical labor.
 - Follow your body's guidance. If you experience an urge to push your hands in the air or shake, do it. Unless your body wants to do something harmful, such as putting a fist into the wall. In that case, discharge the energy in a less harmful way—by punching a cushion, for example.

From the Canadian podcast *A Little Bit Easier*, a 2023 episode on Embracing, Encouraging and Celebrating Change. Two white middle class women, Sarah Lang and Pam Lund, discuss the difficulty of personal change, even though we know “growth is on the other side of change.”

IN COMMUNITY

The Rev. Shige Sakurai (they/them) uses the five elements to symbolize the work of transformation in community. Transformation is not a linear process. It requires action on many levels:

- Spirit: Discern why transformation is needed.
- Water: Dream what the future might look like.
- Fire: Craft how we can live our values together.
- Earth: Deepen who we are as a people.
- Air: Refresh ourselves with the breath that makes space for possibility.

This is a brief taste of the model. Check out their guide to community transformation [here](#).

IN FOCUS: CHANGING YOUR VIEW

Want to change the world? According to Ojibway author and journalist Richard Wagamese, it's easier than you think—all you have to do is talk to your neighbour.

“It’s an elemental thing,” he explains. “The boundaries and perceived limits of your world change when you stop and talk to another human being. When you exchange stories—where you came from, how you got there, how your life is going—the addition of that one story to your reality changes your world.”

Seem too simple? For Wagamese, that’s the beauty of it. “It’s not a huge undertaking, it’s not an enormous task or a quest,” he says. “It’s just talking. If you multiply that exponentially over seven billion people, where everyone is sharing one story with each other, the number of strangers in the world shrinks by the same process—you actually affect change by sharing stories.”

From an Interview by John Threlfall | Mar 15, 2011

**THE WORLD CHANGES ACCORDING TO THE WAY PEOPLE
SEE IT, AND IF YOU CAN ALTER, EVEN BY A MILLIMETER,
THE WAY PEOPLE LOOK AT REALITY, THEN YOU CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD.**

JAMES BALDWIN

The Bookshelf



Trusting Change: Finding our Way Through Personal and Global Transformation Karen Hering (UU Minister) 2022 Skinner House Books

We might think that shedding skin is for caterpillars and snakes, but it is also what we humans do. We are continually letting go of the skin we wear, that largest of all our organs, protecting all other organs, constantly communicating between inner and outer realms and often a key player in how others perceive and respond to us.

Where in your life or in the world today do you feel constriction that might indicate a skin—a belief or identity or opinion—too small for who you are or who you are becoming?

Karen Hering. Read more [here](#).

Sing out Love:

Changing the Way We Share Songs

It's been awhile since the UUA has published a new hymnal. What some of us call the “new” hymnal was published two decades ago! A lot has changed in congregational life, including the way we share information.

Rather than another paper hymnal, the new resource is a curated digital collection called *Sing out Love*, accessed through subscription.

The goal of this digital hymnal is to “build a living collection of song resources through an accessible, equitable, online platform ground in UU values.”

Canadian singer-songwriter Lynn Harrison has two songs in the collection, including “Hold Fast to Love.” The collection is growing: more songs are added all the time.

Check the offerings out here:
www.singoutlove.org

“Winds of Change”
by Lynn Harrison was
written for Neighbourhood
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation in Toronto
around 2007.

Available with [Lynn singing](#)
or in a [virtual choir](#)
arrangement by Susanne
Maziarz.

WITH CHILDREN

This is a very old daoist story from China, from the Huainanzi text from the 2nd century. It has been adapted for storytelling by Rev. Fiona Heath.

Once there was a farmer named Sei Weng who lived in long ago and far away China. Now Sei Weng owned a young mare, a horse which was praised far and wide for her strength and beauty. Much of his wealth was in this horse, for whom he cared for tenderly.

One spring day the beautiful horse simply ran off and disappeared. That night, the people of his village came to Sei Weng's house and offered sympathy to him for his great misfortune. "What a terrible thing to happen!" they said, patting him on the back. Sei Weng bowed and said, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

Many days later the lost mare returned, followed by a beautiful wild stallion. The two horses made a wonderful pair and Sei Weng knew his wealth was greatly increased. That night, the villagers came to Sei Weng's house and congratulated him for his good fortune. "How lucky you are!" they said. Sei Weng bowed and said, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

A few weeks after that, Sei Weng's only son was training the wild stallion to the saddle. While out riding, the horse, unused to a rider, bucked fiercely and the son fell off and broke his leg. That night, the villagers came to Sei Weng's house to offer sympathy over his son's injury. "What's a terrible thing to happen!" they said, bringing healing food for the son. Sei Weng bowed and said, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

Many days later, soldiers came by recruiting young men to the emperor's army. All the young men had to go, whether they wanted to or not. But Sei Weng's son was still healing from his leg injury and so the soldiers left him behind. That night, the villagers came to Sei Weng's house to praise his good fortune in keeping his son. "How lucky you are!" they said, crying over their lost sons. And all Sei Weng did was bow and say "Maybe yes, maybe no."

Blessings may turn out to be misfortunes, and misfortunes blessings. They change from one to the other endlessly; life can be a mystery. All we can say is "maybe yes, maybe no."

VISUAL PRACTICE

Make a change collage

Brainstorm all the ways that the change is affecting you, including losses, gifts, ambiguous experiences. Browse magazines or the internet, letting the images speak to you. Tear the images or take screenshots. If you find words that speak to you, tear those out or take screen shots of them.

- If you are making a physical collage, compose the images and words on a blank sheet and paste them down. You might circle, outline, or paint over some of the images or words. Write about the experience in a journal or share with your small group.
- If you are making a digital collage, import your images into a program with collage capabilities and move them around into a pleasing pattern. You can alter the tone and hue of photos, creating a unified whole. (Canva is a good example of an online design program. It is relatively easy to learn and has a free option).

Pay attention to your other senses while making the collage. .Drink something warm (or cold). Play some favourite music.



Discussion Guide

Welcome

Greet everyone. If this is a drop-in group or if there are newer folks present, do a go round of names. Give a brief overview of the session, including time expectations.

Today's theme is the practice of embracing change. When so much is in flux, how do we stay true to our values of love and justice? How can the challenges of this moment become an opportunity for growth and transformation?

Chalice Lighting

Our chalice lighting the poem "Connections" by Marge Piercy.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.

You cannot always tell by looking at what is happening

More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.

Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.

Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.

Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden

Gnaw in the dark, and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.

Live a life you can endure: make life that is loving.

Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in, a thicket and
bramble

wilderness to the outside but to us it is interconnected with rabbit
runs and burrows and lairs.

This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always.

For every gardener knows that after the digging, after the planting,
after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

Check In

Offer a choice of these questions or one of your own:

- How goes it with your spirit?
- What's in your mind and heart today?

Covenant

If this is the first session of a new group, you will want to take some time to create your group agreements. It helps to have a starting place. Here is a sample – ask your group what needs to be refined or added.

Continued . . .

Sample Covenant

In this group we intend to

- Speak as personally and deeply as we wish--or not. It is always okay to pass;
- Speak kindly about ourselves and others;
- Speak from our own experiences;
- Hold confidentiality. Share our experiences of the conversation, not other people's stories;
- Listen respectfully. Avoid giving advice or asking probing questions about others' lives;
- Consider our own and others' identities and how identity shapes the impact of our contributions.

Conversation

This month we are reflecting on our relationship with change.

Invite participants to respond to a reflection question or share their experience with a practice. You may choose to begin with a go-round or simply let the conversation flow, making sure everyone has a chance to share. If there is a lull, let the silence sit for a time, then offer up a question to continue the conversation.

Optional Starting Questions:

- What helps you to stay grounded in times of change?
- What is one of your experiences of change, and what did you learn from it?

Sharing Silence

Before closing the session, offer a minute of silence to give people a moment to process all that has been said and to share a time of quiet.

Leaving

From this conversation about change, what is staying with you, in your heart, mind or spirit?

Closing Words

Adrienne Clarkson has said that "each of us is carving a stone, erecting a column, or cutting a piece of stained glass in the construction of something much bigger than ourselves."

We are not alone.

Extinguish the chalice

LETTING GO - NEW BEGINNINGS

Rev. Rosemary Morrison

**Watch and learn from the trees,
their leaves are dying.
They do not suffer in silence,
they are shouting death from
the tree tops...
"Look, look!" each leaf
proclaims in vibrant colour.**

**This is the season of new beginnings,
of fresh starts, another chance to try again.**

**Do the trees know they will leaf out again?
Is this why they bravely allow each
precious little one to fall from their grasp?
Learn from the trees.**

**As they let go, beauty emerges
with each falling leaf, each bare branch,
and the promise of new life in the spring.**

Meaning Making Packets

are created by a team

of Canadian UU ministers:

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www.MeaningMakingProject.com