



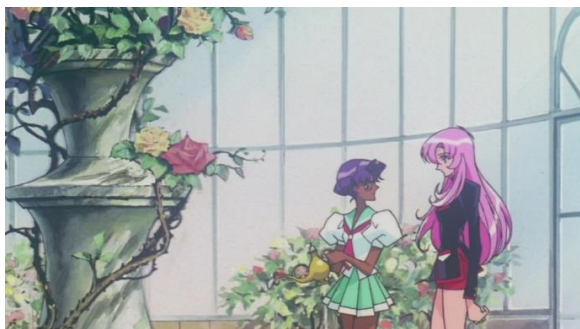
Stone Temple News

March 2024

[OPEN THE ATTACHMENT FOR ACTIVE LINKS]

Pop Culture Theology with McKayla

By McKayla Hoffman, Ministerial Intern



[Anthy (left) standing with Utena (right) in the rose garden in “Revolutionary Girl Utena”]

This month’s Pop Culture Theology article brings us to a powerful story about revolution, resistance, and transformation: our March Soul Matters theme.

A couple Sunday’s ago, we wondered during worship how one person might change the world. This is the charge of one character in the surrealist, allegorical anime series entitled “Revolutionary Girl Utena.” The protagonist, Utena, is a popular genderfluid teen who is determined to become a prince one day. She meets a mysterious character named Anthy Himemiya at the dreamlike Ohtori Academy. On the surface, this academy is beautiful, life is simple, and gender roles are neatly followed (by most). And, nothing here is as it seems.

Utena discovers that Anthy is no ordinary girl, but is the “Rose Bride,” whom dueling students fight to “win.” Rightfully so, Utena believes that no one should be won or bought, and a spark to revolutionize this world is lit in her. She believes, though, that the only way to revolutionize the system is to participate in it, so she duels to “save” Anthy in her white-knight-in-shining-armor kind of way. Meanwhile, Anthy is in no way safe—or free.

Through their friendship and budding feelings for one another, both Utena and Anthy come to understand the abusive illusion of Ohtori Academy in their own ways. And, they realize that they cannot break free by remaining steeped in the system themselves. Both Utena and Anthy’s “revolution” so far was not about breaking down and rebuilding, but about keeping the system “revolving” by remaining in their respective roles. So, with courage, they both “smash the world’s shell” and change the world by disrupting the cycle of abuse that once claimed them both. Indeed, they both learned and embraced a “revolution” that ultimately freed them both from the patriarchal evil of Ohtori Academy.

This story calls us to consider those cycles that harm many, benefit others, and *rely* on the participation of those with power. In your life, what systems do you personally witness or experience harm? What action, or inaction, might make us complicit? What levels of accountability must we fight to systematize? And through the transformation of the world that our faith calls us to engage, what helps nurture resilience and courage? Black lesbian author and intersectional activist Audre Lorde once said that “the Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house.” Revolution, as an act of transformation, calls us to risk doing differently, intentionally.

And so, this month, think on those social issues that exist in your immediate world: perhaps preserving bodily autonomy for women and those assigned female at birth, supporting trans lives, ending voter suppression, reforming the justice system so that it is not stacked against Black and Brown communities, housing, food equity, and more. How can your passions, gifts, and sources of strength aid in the transformation of these injustices?

And then, beloveds on the journey,
Let us recognize areas of passivity and engage in the “good trouble,”
Let us embrace an individual and collective honest about what is ours to do,
And let us lean into the God (or Presence) of Justice, of Love, of Courage.
In doing so, may there be room for more of the compassion, equity, humility, generosity, and love that all deserve.

Spirit Circle: Transformation

By Nan Moore, Director of Family Ministry

We are approaching a time of year where the equinox, holy days and holidays all intersect. It is also a time of the returning light that companions us into springtime. This is a time that evokes our own childhood and adulthood when maybe we celebrated a holy day or holiday and family, or are experiencing holy days and holidays in a new way since our childhood years. There are some interesting multigenerational events coming up this month and many more the first week in April.

We have new child carers, which we have been seeking since the beginning of this year and I am so happy to report Sol Selinger-Batista and Lily Selinger-Batista are able to help out on Leila and Alex’s days off. The 4 carers, who are youth members, will pair up so that we have full coverage the rest of the year for the youngest children in Spirit Circle. There are some children who don’t have siblings, so it is nice for them to have the teens model how we care for one another.

March 3: Art with Max Olson(transformation) Max will discuss how caterpillars transform into butterflies, using a clothespin to represent our caterpillar, and then coloring in paper wings to glue onto the clothespin. The butterflies will be a part of the March 17th multigenerational service. The RE HELPER this week will be Andrew Carleen.

March 10: Earth Care with Jon Belber. Jon has been off for the winter months. We welcome him back at the onset of spring. The children will be outside during their class, so please have them dress according to the weather. The RE HELPER this week is Andrew Carleen.

March 17: MULTIGENERATIONAL WORSHIP; see Rev Rebecca’s description in newsletter. The RE HELPER assisting Rev Rebecca during the service will be Albert Vaughn.

March 24: Art project with Max Olson; Max will be making maracas with the children this Sunday and the RE Helper will be Marie Louise Jackson Miller

March 31: EASTER: Music with Olga Popova. Olga will share a sample of a traditional Russian Egg, and the story Rechenka’s Eggs will be presented. The RE HELPER will be Mariah Maines.

EASTER EGG HUNT. There will be a UFPC traditional Easter Egg hunt following Spirit Circle class. There will be announcements, specifics and updates the week before Easter.

Youth Group Updates: Christian Church in Quincy (tentative)

UFPC is hosting a local Christian church, Life Community Church, with campuses in Quincy, Weymouth, and Braintree. They are having a service on Good Friday March 29, which will be a very BIG audio-visual experience. Rebecca will be the lead advisor meeting with the teens for pizza at 6:00 pm and the service will be at 7:00 pm. McKayla will contact youth group members on Wednesday March 27 via text if you are interested in meeting and respond yes or no to their text. We are intentionally introducing the youth to multiple faith traditions this year to expose them to a greater understanding of religious environments and cultures as in their growth moving towards adulthood from youthhood.

MARCH activity schedule (Theme Transformation)

3/3 Workshop (with Rev. Rebecca and McKayla) TIME: 12-1:15 pm

3/17 Father Bill's Sandwiches (with McKayla and Peter) TIME: 12pm-1:30 pm

3/29 Christian Church - Life Community Church (location at UFPC) TIME: 6:00-8:00 pm

Welcome to the Gift of Transformation

A reflection article from Soul Matters theme-based ministry program

“Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God.”

-Henri-Frederic Ariel

Make a bit of room. Leave a little space. That may not sound like anything radical or revolutionary. But it turns out that it is one of Life's favorite ways to make us into something new.

Be cautious with those cultural messages about aggressively tilling and turning up your whole soil. Watch out for all the heroic talk about striving and perfecting, struggle and control. Much of the time, transformation is a much subtler art. It's about stillness, listening and waiting to be led, not fighting with yourself and others to make sure you are in the lead.

In short, when it comes to transformation, the message of spirituality is “Be careful with what you've been taught and told about transformation because much of it takes us in exactly the wrong direction.” Our challenge as communities of transformation is to remind each other to take those different tacks. Such as:

It's about breathing rather than becoming better.

It's about patience not perfection

It's about depth not dominance.

It's about attention not improvement.

That part about attention instead of improvement is especially important. It's so easy to get transformation mixed up with fixing. And fixing is transformation's biggest foe. Trying to purify or perfect ourselves is the surest way to stay stuck. The pursuit of purity and perfection focuses us on our inadequacy and inferiority, causing us to overlook those unexpected guests that Henri-Frederic speaks of.

And, friends, we don't want to miss those unexpected guests! Those seeds brought by the wind and those passing birds are the partners that make transformation possible. They help us notice new paths. They invite us to walk with a new step. They awaken in us new songs. They remind us that transformation is not something we do alone. They assure us that transformation doesn't have to be a long and lonely struggle, but instead can be more like learning a new dance with a new friend. All we have to do is trust, take the hand of that “unknown God” and follow its lead.

So, friends, this month, leave some room on that dance floor of yours. Keep your eyes peeled. See attention and attending as your greatest assets and tools. And when that unexpected guest reaches out its hand, don't be afraid.

Social Justice Action Committee: Human Being and Human Doing

Mark Your Calendars. The Social Justice Action Committee (SJAC) recommends that you consider two upcoming events: Earth Hour (March 23) and our Plant Based Potluck Dinner (April 20).

Earth Hour is an international effort sponsored by the World Wild Life Fund to pay attention to Planet Earth by shutting off all our electrical devices. Some whole towns have shut off their lights. Locally, it will be observed on Saturday, March 23 from 8:30-9:30 pm EST. That is an awkward time to organize any sort of Action: however,

it is a great opportunity to power down and just be quiet and present with yourself, friends and/or family. For more details visit: <https://www.earthhour.org/>.

The SJAC will coordinate with the Congregational Life Committee to host a Plant Based Potluck Dinner on Saturday, April 20 from 6:00-8:00 pm. We will have a speaker, Sara Sezun who is the Chair of the Sierra Club's sub-committee on Plant-based Diets. Sara is a friend of StandOut Quincy4BlackLives who used to join us monthly when she came to Quincy from Somerville to shop at Good Health before it moved to Hanover. If you have a favorite dish, please prepare it and bring copies of the recipe to share.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am [unless otherwise stated] in-person and via livestream.

[March 3]

“Funding the Future of Our Faith”

Rebecca Froom and McKayla Hoffman

As we enter our Stewardship season, we reflect on the role we each have to play in supporting our congregation in Quincy and in supporting our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition. Our service features a special musical performance from “Tuned In” a musical trio of UFPC congregants Sharon Gamache, Lee Forest and Ann Marie Willer.

[March 10]

“Keep Your Eyes on the Prize...Keep Plowing”

Reggie Harris, guest preacher and musician

We're pleased to welcome Reggie Harris back to our pulpit for him to share his music and wisdom. Reggie Harris is a passionate songwriter, storyteller, activist, recording artist and song leader, who travels worldwide using music and stories to bring hope, inclusion and empowerment to audiences of all backgrounds. For over 45 years, Reggie has been hosted as performer and lecturer at arts centers, universities, schools, music festivals and diverse places of worship throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. His repertoire of traditional and contemporary songs and stories, empowered by his accessibility, creative concerts and events that educate, inspire and entertain. Featured in the recently released film “Truth Tellers”, Reggie is a 2021 FAI Spirit of Folk and WEB Du Bois Legacy Award winner, Reggie's recordings are chart topping examples of the power of song. <http://reggieharrismusic.com>.

[March 17]

“Learning from Butterflies”

Rev. Rebecca Froom and Albert Vaughn

In this multigenerational service we turn our attention to butterflies. Long honored as a symbol for transformation and change. In our changing times butterflies face increasing habitat destruction. How can we use the wisdom of butterflies to help care for and transform our world?

[March 24]

“Naming Trans-Formation”

McKayla Hoffman and Rev. Rebecca Froom

[March 31]

Easter Sunday

Rev. Rebecca Froom and McKayla Hoffman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

For our most up-to-date announcements, please see our “Weekly Announcements” which are emailed to the congregation on Thursdays or Fridays, posted on our website and available by print on Sunday mornings.

Sunday Morning Meditation

Sundays, 9:00–9:45 am, in-person

Meditation is offered on Sunday mornings from 9:00am to 9:45 am. We meet in the parlor, and when weather permits, we meet outside in the garden. We begin with a poem by Thich Nhat Hahn to center our intentions, followed by a walking meditation, then silent meditation, and ending with sharing our thoughts and insights. Feel free to contact Marie-Louise at 857-526-2579 or mariejm1961@yahoo.com.

Defending Freedom:

Honoring the Historic Link Between Quincy and Sierra Leone

Sunday, March 10, 4:00–6:00 pm, in-person, United First Parish Church

United First Parish Church and the Adams National Historic Park will be hosting a special visit from Her Excellency, Dr. Fatima Maada Bio, the First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone who is making her first visit to Quincy. The program will commemorate the special connection between the people of Sierra Leone and President John Quincy Adams through his work defending the Mende people of Sierra Leone who were captured and transported on the slave ship “La Amistad.” It was President John Quincy Adams who argued their case before the Supreme Court gaining their freedom to return to their country as free people in 1841. Her Excellency Madam Fatima Maada Bio will offer keynote remarks reflecting on this connection as well as her current international humanitarian work to end sexual and gender-based violence. A reception will follow in the parish hall.

Kindred Spirits Discussion Group for Seniors

Friday, March 15, 10:00–11:30 am, in-person

Join us for a monthly discussion group, grounded in our UU values, where we reflect on current events and pressing social issues. This group is open to seniors aged 60+ and will meet on the third Friday of the month at our church in the parish hall. Coffee and tea are provided. Please contact Rev. Rebecca with any questions at rev.rebecca.froom@gmail.com or 617-803-1159. If you need to enter the building via the handicapped accessible entrance, please contact David Bousquin at 617-842-1706.

Trivia Hour Stewardship Lunch

Sunday, March 24, 12:00–1:00 pm, in-person

Your ministers and Stewardship Committee invite you to a special “Trivia Hour” and potluck lunch following the service on March 24th. Inspired by our pledge drive theme “Everything Possible: Funding the Future of our Faith,” our trivia questions will be connected to Unitarian Universalism and UFPC. Topics will range from famous UUs to UUism in pop culture, from social justice movements in our history, to emerging trends in Unitarian Universalism, and everything in between! We’ll be grouping folks into teams, and by the end of the hour we’ll all learn more about one another, as well as UUism.

Book Group

Thursday, April 4, 7:00 pm, on Zoom

The UFPC Book Group meets on the first Thursday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, with a gap in summer and in December. All members and friends of UFPC are welcome to join us. We meet on Zoom. We try to select a balance of styles. You can come even if you have not finished the book.

The book this month is [Apeirogon](#) by Colum McCann. An epic novel rooted in the unlikely real-life friendship between two fathers—one Palestinian, one Israeli, both connected by grief and working together for peace. They inhabit a world of conflict that colors every aspect of their lives, from the roads they are allowed to drive on to the schools their children attend to the checkpoints, both physical and emotional, they must negotiate. Both men have lost children to the violence. They recognize the loss that connects them. Together they attempt to use their grief as a weapon for peace.

Join by computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89427298331>

Join by telephone: 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 894 2729 8331

Writing Group

Sunday, April 7, 12:00 pm, in-person

Our UFPC Writing Group is meeting again this year. We meet the first Sunday of the month in-person in the parlor at 12:00 pm. There are no meetings in January or June. As in past years, we welcome everyone to join us in a free writing session and optional sharing of our words that pursue thinking on a theme. This is a non-critiqued, open minded, generous group that encourages self-expression in a supportive gathering. You can attend one or more sessions. No advance reservation is required. Groups tend to vary in size between 6 and 14 participants, and the session lasts for forty-five minutes to one hour. Contact facilitator Jim Petosa at jimjamespeto@aol.com or 301-442-3781.

Visitors Program Vignettes

By Bill Westland, Church Historian

We are always trying to explain who we are, but we cannot really know who we are unless we know who we were. Thus, I thought that it might be interesting to try to explain who we were as well as who we are. Originally in 1639 we were called the Church of Christ, probably so that people wouldn't confuse us with the Church of England. We were known as First Parish Church when the towns of Quincy, Braintree and Randolph were incorporated in 1792 from what was then the town of Braintree, and were known as the Congregational Society of Quincy when our current "Stone Temple" was dedicated in 1828, having been renamed in 1824. Sometime after that we became First Parish Church (Unitarian) and when we merged with Wollaston Unitarian Society in 1958 became United First Parish Church (Unitarian). It is interesting to note that when we celebrated our 300th anniversary in 1939 we never seemed to use the term "Unitarian" at all. Also, the Wollaston Unitarian Society was gathered in 1888, when our minister, Reverend Daniel Munroe Wilson, suggested that "the liberal Christians of Wollaston" form their own church even though most of them actually were members of our church.

After this merger Reverend Bradford Gale became the minister and served until 1971. He was very much revered both in the church and the City of Quincy. Here are some quotes from a pamphlet that the church printed back then about itself. "The Stone Temple" with its meetinghouse interior is a House of God for all people." "This church is a member of the Unitarian Universalist society yet it attaches secondary importance to sectarianism and no creed binds the spirit of this place." "It accepts the witness of Jesus to its full depth and mystery, but it does not believe that the full depth and mystery of God are exhausted by that example. It believes the religious quest is never ending and universal." You can see how this church still had a strong Congregational bent back then.

In 1959 the worship was at 10:45 am and a school of religion for all ages at 10:30 am. Communion services were offered every quarter, and the 17th century silver was used. On Easter Week there were services every noon. There

were both an afternoon and evening “Women’s Alliance” group plus a “Fragment Society” sewing group. There were both a “Junior High School” and “High School Group”, an “Adult Education Discussion Group” and “An Adult for Action Group”.

We even had a poem in the pamphlet written by one of the members, Vlyn Johnson. She wasn’t a Longfellow or Whitman, but she tried. Here is the final stanza:

Glowing with light today these stones are vying
Each with its solid force to keep undying
The worship of man’s soul in shelter granted
Wrought with that radiant love in all life planted.

We date our church becoming Unitarian in 1750 because John Adams wrote a letter in which he said that the minister at that time, Reverend Lemuel Briant, was a Unitarian. Interestingly, we have never officially voted on that as far as I can see. In 1971 the Unitarian and Universalist societies merged and so we now are a Unitarian-Universalist Congregation. We began to call ourselves “The Church of the Presidents” in 1976 when we opened for tours during the Bicentennial Celebration of the founding of the United States, and that’s the name most people call us now.

The best description of what United First Parish is now is the quote from Reverend Sheldon Bennett in our 350th anniversary booklet. “This church now includes men and women of many different religious backgrounds who seek to join with peoples of all faiths to build a more just, peaceful and beautiful world. Regardless of the personal theologies or world views of individual members, this church will ever hold fast the values of freedom, friendship, and faith as the common thread that make the venerable fabric. In 1639 the members of this congregation sought to walk with each other with brotherly love and sisterly communion for the building of a new and free land. Today we seek to help to build a new world.”

We also have an important and unique place in the history of the United States. We would be a National Historic Landmark even if we didn’t have the presidential crypt as we are one of the best examples of Greek Revival Style architecture in all of North America. On top of that, we have a long and important history dating back to the Puritans to preserve. Finally, we have the Adams legacy to pass on to future generations. Not many other churches have these same duties and responsibilities. The memorial tablet to John and Abigail next to the pulpit defines our responsibilities as members of United First Parish Church.

“From lives thus spent thy earthly duties learn,
From Fancy’s dreams to active Virtue turn,
Let Freedom, Friendship, Faith, thy Soul engage
And serve them thy Country and thy Age.”

Church Staff and Lay Leaders

Staff: Rev. Rebecca Froom (Lead Minister), Rev. Dr. Sheldon Bennett (Minister Emeritus), Nan Moore (Affiliate Lay Community Minister and Director of Family Ministry), McKayla Hoffman (Ministerial Intern), David Bousquin (Office and Property Manager), Norman Corey (Music Director)

Board of Governors: Fiona Sankey (President), Jacqueline Rodriguez (Vice-President), Clyde Cortright (Treasurer), Erwin Schaareman (Assistant Treasurer), Patricia Sullivan (Clerk), Karl DeBisschop (Stewardship), Claire Fitzmaurice (Social Justice Action), Jamie Grassmann (Communications), Marie-Louise Jackson-Miller (Congregational Life), Peter Kovach and Andrew Carleen (Religious Education), Open (Worship Committee)

United First Parish Church, Unitarian Universalist, 1306 Hancock Street, Quincy, Massachusetts 02169
617-773-1290, www.ufpc.org, www.facebook.com/ufpc/uu