



Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

The Reverend Alison Wilbur Eskildsen, Parish Minister
The Reverend Don Randall, Community Minister

“Recreating/Re-Creating through Writing”

© by the Writing as Spiritual Practice group

Reflections delivered on July 17, 2016

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens, GA

Centering Thoughts

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Proverbs 25:11, NRSV

And what could be more comforting than to fold grief / like a blanket - / to fold anger like a blanket, / with neat corners - / to put them into a box of words? Mary Oliver

Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it—every, every moment?
Emily in Thornton Wilder’s “Our Town”

The moving finger writes and having writ, moves on. Omar Khayyam

Reflections

This service was presented by members of the Writing as Spiritual Practice group, one of the Adult Education offerings for members and friends of UUFA to explore ideas of spirituality in different ways in a program called Stepping Stones. Writing as Spiritual Practice is open to all adults. To learn more about this Stepping Stone go to

www.uuathensga.org/OldSite/education/adult-education/writing-as-spiritual-practice/.

In the service, the writers shared their responses to writing prompts based on the monthly themes which are used in worship and other activities. The prompts are prepared by Myrna Adams West, Lay Minister of Spiritual Arts and facilitator of Writing as Spiritual Practice. The prompts are presented below, followed by the writers' name and written response.

Prompts for July 2016’s theme on Recreation & Re-Creation elicited the following poem in three parts:

Chase White: "I"

Happiness is a forest - /decayed, it’s replenished, / but alone in the sun / it should perish. / Luckily, you can / count on the clouds / to come, dropping rain. / You can expect lightning, / too, to set the forest ablaze - /don’t be frightened if / something unnamed, / in the dirt, is excited. / *Devastation* - / it might be occasion / to rise, despite, / *to surprise yourself*.

"II"

Of the world's darkness, / You need no reminding / And I'm sure you well know / What our world should be, / But have you had leisure / To read about India - / Have you seen its bright colors? / Have you taken a dip in the stream / Behind your house and felt / Why it's worth protecting? You know / All about how Our world should be - / Do you know how it is? / The world is how it should be. / (Strange gift, imagination - / I see how this world could be better. For us at least.) / Of the world's darkness / You need no reminding. Come out / Into the sun / Where ambition looks pallid and sickly. / (To blend in with the sun, / Be happy for someone.) / Would you do the good work alone? / No one way of life / Is enough. There is a reason we are made / Of the inanimate, all of us, / Different.

"III"

Mark Twain wrote of an old man / who thought the fight for justice was complete selfishness. If you sleep during the / day you won't be able to sleep at night. / It follows that we can recreate selflessly - to remind us what it is we're fighting for. / Those that do the most good for our planet know how good it is to us. / Those leading us to Dr. King's dreamy future probably care for their own family / before anyone else's. They may know more about Athens than foreign policy. I bet / they laugh as much as they cry, maybe more. / Beauty itself is unscathed / while we destroy the planet. And ourselves. It is humanity at stake, and humanity / is well worth fighting for.

A prompt from July 2016 on "Recreation/Re-Creation": What other means, besides writing, do you use for re-creation and recreation?

Betsy Bean: "Discovering the Drama in My Front Yard"

I minimize the computer screen, let go the mouse and walk out to the front porch, seating myself in the comfy plastic chair, binoculars in hand; a front row seat to the drama of feathered and furry creatures. I survey the green and blue stage before me; The set includes tall pine trees, leafy dogwoods, various shrubs, large and small, stumps, utility poles and wires, and of course, recently tamed grass.

Let the play begin; except it's not a play...it's life and death, and utterly fascinating to watch the lives of small wild creatures without the discomfort of a safari or a scientific expedition. It was around twilight and the two little brown birds seemed to be playing. I had earlier watched 3 or 4 of this same type following each other, jumping from limb to limb on a nearby bush. I surmised they were youngsters and cautiously testing out their world and their place in it. Follow the Leader, we called it.

So I thought these 2 were siblings. But the one was awfully aggressive, flying up and flapping his wings on the side of the drain pipe, over and over as the other one seemed frantic to get away (but wasn't for some reason). I'm a city girl and all I know about nature I learn from PBS. The two were so noisy. Then suddenly the hullabaloo stopped. There they were together in the shadowy corner of a ledge...for just a moment. Do birds smooch? It was fully dark by then but I now knew they weren't siblings.

With my trusty binoculars, I've watched a mama woodpecker wrest bug from limb and cram down

her youngster's throat. Another time, a tiny, black-capped chickadee was jumping around an overhanging tree limb right in front of me while (mamma?) in a nearby limb was frantic and chirping madly. I interpreted that as "come back, pay attention, don't do something stupid." The off-spring seemed to be purposely ignoring her as he blithely hopped about.

Then there is the really impressive and scary hawk or hawks who have commandeered a large swath of the neighborhood, even their shadows or most particularly, their shadows are intimidating. The other day, one swooped low over the yard, gripping a chipmunk, I believe; no wonder the little cuties run so fast in open space. Jurassic Park in the front yard.

Yes, I enjoy my recreational breaks from my own dramas; it gives a little perspective. Then I come back to the computer, and I'm faced with the latest news on human flight, birth, death, hunger, nurture, predation. LIFE, (in all caps), thrilling and scary for us all.

A prompt from November 2015 on the theme, "Whole/Holiness": Is there a place(s) in your life that you consider "holy"? What do you associate with that place? Why? What makes it holy to you? How would you describe it to someone who has never been there?

Margaret Robbins: "My Holy Place: October 2015"

Sometimes, I feel closer to God on the field or outdoors than I do inside the walls of a church. I've grown tired of churches that tell my LGBT friends to pray the gay away, that look down on me for being single, and that take the Bible "straight outta context." But here, on the Kennesaw Mountain walking trail, I can hear God whispering to me through the breeze of the trees and the chirping of the birds. I like to refer to God as "zhe" the universal pronoun because regardless of what the beautiful, but dated Bible says, I'm just not convinced that God has a definable gender. But I believe that today, on this fall day of luscious colored leaves, God is telling me that zhe is taking care of Leah, even though Patty, the Davis family, and I won't see her for a very long time. I believe that even though I don't know where I will be or WHAT I will be doing a year and a half from now, the universe will hold me, as I try my best to do right by it, and the universe by me. People are insensitive and cruel sometimes, but life is hard, and I don't always know what others are thinking or feeling. So I should be kind, not harsh, and understanding, not passing judgment. I wish the universe and nature were kinder and gentler at times, but I have to face the fact that I'm just not going to always understand God's or the universe's ways.

I am an academic, a scholar, and a writer. It's my job to understand language and images and to help people interpret them. Bob, my mentor who gave me this journal, taught me to write my way through the confusion, and that's all I know to do when things like Leah's tragic death and the Mexico weather happen. This journal is now my holy place, as is this trail. Here, although some things still don't make sense, I feel peaceful.

A prompt from July 2016 on the "Recreation/Re-Creation" theme: How do you feel when you are writing? How do you feel when you have finished writing?

Diana Torell:

I started journal writing when I was in elementary school. It was especially helpful in 6th grade when I moved from Saginaw to Atlanta, my fifth move, and I didn't have any new friends yet. I start out listing the particulars of a situation or a sensation and end up realizing what I really feel about what's going on. I play with the language to joke and to vent and articulate all the un-sayable thoughts. I can voice all the weak, scared, selfish, lazy, immature, self-satisfied parts of myself. After I write down all of the things I can't say out loud I start to recognize what rings true. Sometimes in the end I am so relieved and satisfied that I laugh out loud at the ridiculousness of this crazy life.

Meditation: "Beautiful World," by Diana Torell

Our hearts are lifted / when we let go / of all of our immediate concerns / and look / at this beautiful world. /

We breath it in, / and stare wide-eyed, / memorizing, / listening for a clue. /

What does it mean / to play this little part / in this / huge production? /

With our hearts light / and our breaths deep, / we feel for a moment / a perfect part / of this beautiful world.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. How do you feel about writing? Is it fun or work? Or both?
2. Why do you write? OR Why do you not write?
3. In the age of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. have some of the mystery and wonder of writing been lost? Has it become trite, trivial, simplified? Defend or disparage the use of social media.
4. How might writing make you aware of good or bad thoughts, feelings, parts of your life that you otherwise ignore, avoid, overlook, deny or cover up? Explain.