



Unitarian Church of Underwood March 2015 Newsletter

The Unitarian Church of Underwood is a welcoming community of diverse people where our celebration of life and common search for meaning bind us together.

March 1 – Deb Wallwork with her film “Grow Fergus Falls”

March 8 - UCU Writer's Rescheduled, "Resolution and Renewal"

March 15 - Desta & Tim Hunt, "Doing the Most Good"

New Member Welcoming & Brunch provided by Fergus Falls/Underwood U Group

March 22 - Women's History Month featuring notable Unitarian Universalist Women

March 29- Bob Worner – “Preaching to the Choir.”

Note: Prior to beginning of service, at 10:20 a.m. there will be issued a “Call to Gather” to alert folks to assemble in the sanctuary so that the service can start promptly.

Upcoming Religious Education

March 1 – 9:15 a.m. downstairs - Discussion of Emerson’s Essays led by John Minge

9:15 a.m. upstairs - New Member Getting Acquainted

March 8 – 9:15 a.m. - Writing as a Spiritual Practice

March 22 – 10:30 a.m. - Children’s Religious Education and Teen’s Coming of Age

March 29 – 9:15 a.m. - Gospel of John Adult Religious Education. Read gospel chapters 12-17 and Spolng’s book, part four: “The Passion Narrative,” pages 206-262.

Other Meetings @ church:

March 11 – 5 p.m. Safety Plan Task Force

March 18 - 5:30 p.m. Speakers Committee

6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

Note: AA Meets every Monday evening @ 7 p.m. at UCU

Newsletter Submissions

Please submit your ideas and articles for the Newsletter to: maryanderson8380@msn.com. Editing is provided by Stephanie Sanderson and emailing/ mailing is provided by Ellen Eastby and JoAnn Larson. Mickie Edmonds provides one of her paintings each month for our appreciation! Feedback is appreciated.

Handicap Accessible Parking

Please be aware that the curb immediately in front of the church entry has been painted blue to designate handicap accessible parking for those with handicap parking stickers. Please extend every courtesy to assure that persons in need are accommodated.

Cancellation/Postponement Due to Weather

Cancellation/Postponement Due to Weather: for weather related announcements, tune to Lakes Radio Family of Stations – 103.3, 96.5 FM and 1020, 1250 AM or online at www.lakesradio.net under "News." You can also check the UCU website at www.ucofu.org or the UCU Facebook page.

More about March Speakers

March 1 – "Grow Fergus Falls," a short film by **Deb Wallwork** is about the local food movement in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. It features interviews with Minnesota State Senator Franzen and the graduates of MNSCU's Sustainable Agriculture program. It is an inspiring testimony to the energy and verve that these young people, who hope to be farmers, are contributing to our community. The film also questions how rural communities could better attract and meet the needs of the millennial generation, which are now the largest segment of our population as well as the least represented in rural areas.

March 8 - UCU Writing As a Spiritual Practice Group, "Resolution and Renewal" - Per Diane Johnson: "When Luke Anderson started our Spiritual Writers Group over three years ago, he stated that it would be about the "practice of the art/discipline of writing as personal and communal expression. He went on to further define the practice – "It is often an intense process to break through clichés, old assumptions, and expectations to find authentic self-expression. It is not showmanship with language to produce a product. It is an often difficult and humiliating process to break through and discover the authentic, the truth, the spiritual. On the other hand, it is a transcendent feeling to find new insights and wholeness for oneself and with others."

On March 8th the group will have their third opportunity to share their personal reflections with the congregation. The theme will be "Resolution and Renewal." Luke has written the responsive reading for the program, followed by creative writings by Liz Sweder, John Miersch, Sandy Barnhouse, Rod Broding and Diane Johnson."

March 15 - Desta & Tim Hunt, "Doing the Most Good" & New Member Sunday with brunch after the service, provided by the Fergus Falls/Underwood evening U Group. Desta and Tim

Hunt will talk about their experiences as Emotional and Spiritual counselors with the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services. The Hunts spent many years overseas and observed the good work of the Salvation Army wherever and whenever people were in need. When they retired, they decided that volunteering with the Salvation Army, especially in disasters where people have lost so much, would be a way to give back to the community. Tim and Desta will speak about their experiences and particularly about how they have found different people deal with the trauma of major loss in their lives.

March 22 - Women's History Month featuring notable Unitarian Universalist Women

In the 19th century Unitarians and Universalists were at the forefront of many social movements, among them, feminism. This program will feature portrayals by five of our members, of Unitarian Universalist women ministers who brought enlightened liberal thought to the Midwest, the Dakotas, and California. It's a little known fact that Unitarians were the first to ordain women as ministers in large numbers, and this happened during the nineteenth century, before women could even vote.

March 29- Bob Worner – “Preaching to the Choir” - Bob will talk about how, like a choir, our separate parts create a harmonic whole and together we make beautiful music.

The Month That Was

February 1 - Col. Stanley A. Carignan, USAR, a recent new Member of UCU, spoke on ‘Our Sacred Secular Texts’ that include the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution with the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

Stan began with raised hand and recited the oath he took 34 years ago at the age of 18, when he joined the Military. That “sacred” oath is as important to him as the Service he joined. That sacred oath brought him to UU. It shows the connection to God, that service members are leaders of men and here to defend your right of belief. He speaks on no religion or creed. We are a Judeo-Christian country and much more.

In 2003, Carignan was deployed to , and later he had other deployments including Iraq (2x) and Germany for the Libyan crisis.

In joining the military and taking the oath, Stan swore to defend the Constitution. (God is not mentioned in the Constitution).

Declaration of Independence: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Our rights are preserved in the Bill of Rights. The first ten amendments to the Constitution give us our protected rights and protects the minority view. Our founders believed that natural rights, universal truths can be discerned through reason. We the people are empowered. Stan had taken for granted our organizations of citizens, the Rotary, the Lions, etc. etc. He did not find a civic structure in Afghanistan so one lesson he learned there was an expectation of its

citizens for government to solve the problems. Americans inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was for the individual responsibility, believe that "We are the answer to our problems."

Lincoln's Gettysburg address was the 2nd Declaration of Independence referring to the founding of our country. Lincoln used religious words to connect again to the promise of our country.

We may not appreciate what we have inherited. Henry David Thoreau: "money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul." There is no excuse for evil, no matter what religion. We must live up to our highest values, that all men are created equal, the general well-being of individuals, peace, liberty and justice for all the peoples of the world.

Look to associate ourselves with others who believe in those same values, tolerance, commitment, a refuge of acceptance, peace, liberty and justice for all.

February 8 – Katy Olson spoke on Satya – Truthfulness, Search for Truth and Meaning.

Satya and Satyam imply that "which supports, sustains and advances reality, being." It literally means, "that which is true, actual, real, genuine, trustworthy, valid."

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, it is written, "When one is firmly established in speaking truth, the fruits of action become subservient to him." In Yoga sutra, *Satya* is one of the five yamas, or virtuous restraints, along with ahimsa (restraint from violence or injury to any living being); asteya (restraint from stealing); brahmacharya (celibacy or restraint from sexually cheating on one's partner); and aparigraha (restraint from covetousness and craving) – from Wikipedia.

In her studies, Katy read the autobiography of Gandhi. He didn't want to tell people of his life, but of his search.

Truth is much more than just not lying. A lie can be withholding of facts. Corporal punishment teaches a child to lie. At times we all lie. We lie to save our own skin.

Mark Twain said if you tell the truth, you don't have to remember it. Truth is subjective. What is truth? Understanding of Truth at the age of 20 or 40 or now at 56 changes. Al Gore's book, "An Inconvenient Truth" indeed covered an inconvenient truth.

Every religion has some of the truth. Truth is the source of everything good.

Gandhi was not a good writer; he was an average man; shy about speaking in public but no opposition could affect him. He was a humble seeker of truth translated into action.

Note: See full written text of Katy's talk at end of this Newsletter.

February 15 – Victoria Creek, "Hosting." Victoria Creek currently lives in Underwood, and works as a Success Coach at MState and as an Inhome Counselor for Lutheran Social Services. She grew up in Chicago and has lived in many parts of the U.S. Her topic this morning was

“hosting” being welcoming and open and accepting of yourself and others. She felt that UCU was a warm welcoming congregation, but asked if we, as individuals, can be welcoming. She considers this to be part of her journey; one aspect being that she is a person of color.

Several times during her talk, Victoria sang verses of “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” The first one she sang was “sometimes I feel like a motherless child”, referring to the small, tender, fragile part of each of us that is buried inside unless we feel safe.

The second verse she sang was “Sometimes I feel like a soulless child”. In order to counter this feeling (and fight our internal fears of rejection) we need to gain internal peace – to host ourselves first before being able to truly host others.

The third verse she sang was “Sometimes I feel like a hopeful soul”. Three parts of being hopeful are: 1. Accepting the wonderful and icky parts of ourselves; 2. Being OK with silence; and 3. Permitting ourselves to be soulful (= feel emotions as well as intellect).

February 22 – Dr. David Sanderson, Medical Visit to Haiti

Our own Dr. David Sanderson shared pictures and observations of his medical trip to Haiti last November. Dr. Lonnie Berger invited Dave along with 20+ others from the Nazarene church to work at the clinic and work on the church building they’ve established. Dr. Berger makes 4 trips each year at his own expense. Since David retired, he had missed seeing patients. And in Haiti, see patients, he did! David and Dr. Berger saw more than 150 or more a day at the clinic in SE rural Haiti! In 2005, 300,000 Haitians died and 1 ½ million were left homeless. It has been a slow recovery and the rural areas are suffering especially.

Heart to Heart (similar to Doctors without Borders) has established 14 clinics in Haiti. Dave’s group traveled 8 ½ hours over a distance of about 84 miles to reach the clinic. They had to walk the last 1 ½ miles. The clinic is in an area of 17 waterfalls and they have a sign posted that translates to: “We choose to protect the Pichon waterfalls.”

The group had with them two translators who want to be doctors. The both want to become obstetricians because presently there is little or no prenatal care.

The majority of problems they saw were back pain (farmers), head and neck pain (loads carried on their heads by women), trachoma, parasites but one little 4 year old carried there by her parents was diagnosed with leukemia. The parents will not be able to afford the travel or care for the child although treatment can be 95% effective. This was very distressing to Dave. The other Church of the Nazarene volunteers completed construction of the church, and the evening before leaving Kaskade Pichon, there was a dedication of the church with much singing, dancing and praising by the local residents.

The group traveled to Bleck, where the clinic built by the Nazarene Church is located. This clinic is under construction to add a 2nd level so they used the church as a clinic. They plan to make eye glasses , do minor surgery and continue to serve about 150 patients per day. A new solar power system is being purchased, because they lack electricity, which will allow them to have

more lab tests available. Thousands of dollars of medications have been donated by pharmaceutical companies, so there is a well-stocked pharmacy. At this 4 year old clinic, people seen are healthier because they've had medical care these past years.

UUSC has several active projects in Haiti. For example 40 families/40 homes and sustainable farming tire gardens – giving people the basics of shelter and food.

The cholera outbreak (water contaminated, no waste treatment) shows the need to teach people basic sanitation – hand washing.

The trip for Dave was rewarding and life changing- seeing what is really important, people spiritually rich, valuing their children and families. He plans to go again in 3 weeks. He has also submitted an application for an empowerment grant.

Invitation to Join UCU As a Voting Member

To become a voting member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Underwood, you indicate your wish by signing the membership book. We invite you to participate in new member “getting acquainted” on **March 1 at 9:15 a.m.** and the new member welcoming ceremony during Sunday service **March 15, 2015**. Please see JoAnn Larson for details.

UCU Annual Chili Dinner Fund Raiser March 27, 2015, 5-7 p.m. Underwood Community Center

Bring your friends and family to the 15th Annual Chili Dinner Benefit whose funds help support the Underwood Senior Dining Program. This event began as a way for UCU to connect with the larger community and raise the visibility of the Unitarian Church of Underwood in the community. The dinner has raised over \$15,000 over the years for the program and we hope to continue the tradition this year!

Ron Roller was the chili master for over 10 years, but this year he has turned it over to John Minge and Dave McRoberts. Twenty-five to thirty other church members also help with the chili dinner including ticket selling, cooks, servers, folks to set-up and clean up.

Approximately 150-180 people attend the dinner every year, although one year 200 people attended! We hope to exceed our goal of 200 tickets again this year. It is a great joy to serve up the chili and watch the locals visiting with each other. It is often the only time that some of us UUers visit with residents of Underwood. So sell your tickets and come join the fun!! Tickets in advance: adults - \$9.00, at the door: \$10.00, 5-12 years \$4.00, under 5 Free.

The Chili Dinner includes beef chili, turkey chili, vegetarian chili, chili toppings, cornbread, veggie trays, beverages and treats. And who knows, with new chefs, there may be surprises!!

Need Hat Makers

For the last two years, we've made puppets to send with Bernice Johnson to Thailand for the Shan refugee children. This year Bernice suggests we make hats – fleece hats, knitted hats, crochet hats. So if you can help make hats, please contact Mary Anderson @ maryanderson8380@msn.com or 218/346-6638. We'll have them done by late October to send back with Bernice in her suitcase.

Equal Exchange Coffee

Thank you to everyone who purchased Equal Exchange coffee. Your purchase supports small farmers in developing countries. A limited amount of Equal Exchange chocolate and tea will be available. Also, decaf drinkers, decaf coffee is available. Equal Exchange products are on sale upstairs at church. (Kathy Kensinger – Coffee Coordinator)

Habitat for Humanity

Spring Fling

Thursday, April 9th 5:30 p.m.

Spring Fling, Habitat for Humanity's big fundraiser will be held Thursday, April 9th at MState Legacy Hall beginning at 5:30 p.m. We would like our UUsers not only to be the top attendees, as they always are, but also to provide things once again for the Silent Auction. In addition to the silent auction, there will be a few items auctioned at a live auction. We have received a kinetic sculpture from Jeff Zachmann valued at \$3000 that will be either auctioned or sold through a raffle. It is a wonderful and generous gift. Tickets to the dinner are \$25.00. See Bob Worner for tickets, to donate silent auction items and for more information.

"Listener"

Services Volunteered by Stephanie Sanderson

Stephanie Sanderson has volunteered to be a spiritual companion for those in our congregation seeking one. Your spiritual journey as you experience its infusion in your daily life, relationships, and moments of inspiration are the central themes for our sessions together. Experiencing your own truth, acceptance of yourself, expanding your awareness of yourself as a child of the universe, finding and living according to your own purpose, and exploring the mysteries in which we dwell are all part of that journey. We will use contemplation, meditation and conversation in one and a half hour sessions (approximately). You are the expert on yourself. What Stephanie will be to you is a listener, fellow traveler, and companion; what she will not be is a therapist, guru, counselor or advisor. If you would like more information, or would like to make an appointment, call Stephanie at 218-736-2616 or email highlife@prtcl.com.

UCU Witness Series

The Speakers Committee has endorsed a new speaker's series called the UCU Witness Series. The Concept is to promote, develop and schedule various members of our congregation to speak on the topic: "Why I am Unitarian". This past year as we celebrated our 125th year anniversary, we conducted forums with long-time members to share the history of the church. This sharing was important to new members to understand the history of this church. It also gave our older members an opportunity to recall and celebrate our success as a community. These forums impressed upon all of us the wealth of experience, knowledge, and spiritual growth within our community.

This past summer, Joseph DeMasi held a concert in the park in Fergus Falls. His songs and commentary were a celebration of Unitarian principles and values, as well as the story of his life. While the UU faith is not an evangelical faith, we should not shy away from standing firm in our beliefs and to encourage each other to act upon them. There is a strong tradition of activism in the UU Faith and many of our members are doing important and exciting work. We want to identify members of the congregation who have a desire to share their story of how they have come to be members of UCU and why they believe in the UU Principles. How does your personal spiritual journey nest in the UU Principles? How does the work of your life testify to UU beliefs?

The purpose of the series is to share and document our church motto that "no single belief includes us here; no disbelief excludes us. Our celebration of life and common search for meaning bind us together." This would give us a forum in which to celebrate this diversity of spirituality with the whole community.

The desired outcome of such a speaker's series would be to tap into the spiritual wealth of our community. It will allow us to share our spiritual journeys with each other. The seeds of spiritual knowledge in each of us can be shared with everyone to help inspire, comfort, and promote the growth of our church. While it is important to keep inviting outside speakers to come to our church, and we will, it should not be at the expense of knowing who we are and sharing our gifts of spiritual knowledge with each other. (Speakers Committee: Chair - Betsy Wells, Members –Sandy Barnhouse, Stan Carignan, Lowell Carpenter JoAnn Larson, Diane Johnson, Kris Warhol, and Bob Worner).

Winter Woods



“Winter may be (finally) almost over. It wouldn’t hurt to remember some of the beauty.”
Mickie Edmond

Dear Parents with Young Children

Extracted from Jamie Bruesehoff’s Blog with the Huffington Post
“I am Totally *That Mom*”

“You are doing something really, *really* important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring.

I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

And I see you with your toddler and your preschooler. I watch you cringe when your little girl asks an innocent question in a voice that might not be an inside voice let alone a church whisper. I hear the exasperation in your voice as you *beg* your child to just sit, to be quiet as you feel everyone's eyes on you. Not everyone is looking, but I know it feels that way.

I know you're wondering, is this worth it? Why do I bother? I know you often leave church more exhausted than fulfilled. But what you are doing is *so* important.

When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, we are reminded that this worship thing we do isn't about bible study or personal, quiet contemplation but coming together to worship as a community where all are welcome. When you are here, I have hope that these pews won't be empty in 10 years when your kids are old enough to *sit quietly and behave*

as expected. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. I see them learning. They are learning the importance and values of a faith community.

I know how hard it is to do what you're doing, but I want you to know *it matters*. It matters to me. It matters to my children to not be alone in the pew. It matters to the congregation to know that families care about faith, to see young people... and even on those weeks when you can't see the little moments, it matters to your children.

It matters that they learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that *their* worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are *enough* right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their badly (or perfectly-timed, depending on who you ask) cries and whines *are* a joyful noise because it means they are present.

I know it's hard, but thank you for what you do when you bring your children to church. Please know that your family -- with all of its noise, struggle, commotion, and joy -- are not simply tolerated, you are a vital part of this community gathered together.”

*Jamie Bruesehoff is a mom, pastor's wife, runner, camp director and writer. She strives to live and parent with love, grace, and courage. Jamie writes honestly about parenting her spirited children, faith, her struggle with depression and anxiety, running, and of course, those *that* mom moments when motherhood leaves her doing things she never imagined or even swore she'd never do at *I am totally *that* mom.**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-bruesehoff/parents-kids-church_b_3909085.html

Underwood Community Playground

Dave Wass and Kris Warhol are members of the newly formed committee with Farmers State Bank of Underwood to upgrade Centennial Community Park. The committee is making plans to upgrade the park and equipment, including equipment for handicapped children. They will also be responsible for raising funds and if all goes well, the upgrades will be completed by summer. The park was established in 1986 and has served the needs of the community including being a fun place for UCU's RE kids.

Proceeds from the church rummage sale the first Saturday in June will go to the playground. If you wish to otherwise donate, see Dave or Kris.

U Groups Community Projects

As one of their community projects, the Perham U group members donated to sponsor Heather Czeck and her brother, Nick Pleimling, part of the 4 member team from the ReUse It Thrift Store in the Polar Plunge. On February 8, the team was among the 78 jumpers who plunged into the cold water of Little Pine Lake. This event raised \$17,000 for Kinship in this years "Freezin for a Reason" fund raising event. John Minge, Kinship Mentor and Perham U Group member, was there to assist jumpers coming out of the water. BRRRR!!!

For the second year, members of the Battle Lake and Perham U Groups and the U Group Facilitators, dressed in white and black, helped serve lunch for the Someplace Safe Annual Fund Raising Tea held February 15 at Legacy Hall in Fergus Falls. They were joined by 10 honor students and served many at beautifully theme decorated tables.



Back row: Dave Wass, Wally Warhol, Susan Groff, Carole Mitchell
Front rows: Mary Worner, Heather Czeck, Bob Worner, Diane Johnson, Connie & Duane Stigen

If you wish to join a U Group, you are welcome at any time. Just contact Connie Stigen at dcstigen@gmail.com or phone: 218/731-1445 or Tere Mann at teremann@gmail.com or phone: 218/205-1064 or 303/641-7381. Each U Group has a chair empty at each meeting to welcome a new member.

- Battle Lake Afternoon Group – 2nd Tuesday of each month beginning at 2:45 p.m. co-facilitated by Bob Worner and Joanne Cress or Kris Warhol at the home of Ross and Mary Larson
- Fergus Falls/Underwood Evening Group – 2nd Tuesday of each month from 7-9 p.m. co-facilitated by Diane Johnson and Carole Mitchell at the home of Sandy Barnhouse (corner of Highways 1 and 35)
- Fergus Falls Afternoon Group – the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 4:30-6:30 p.m. co-facilitated by Tere Mann and Bonnie (Bell) Albers at the home of Diana Ziesemer

- Perham Afternoon Group – the 2nd Thursday of each month co-facilitated by Mary Anderson and Mary Worner at the home of Mary Anderson.

February Topic: Take the Time

TIME. . . .

“Time is very slow for those who wait; very fast for those who are scared; very long for those who lament; very short for those who celebrate; but for those who love, time is eternal.” ~ Wm. Shakespeare

“The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough. Time is a wreath of change, but the clock in its parody makes it mere change and no wealth. Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.” ~ Rabindranath Tagore

“Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.” ~ Anais Nin

Unitarian Church of Underwood Approved Board Minutes for January 18, 2015

Board members present: Ellen Eastby, Norman Kolstad, David Sanderson, Mary Worner, Don Siems, Mary Anderson, and Kris Warhol. Absent: Alisha Piekarski, David Wass, and John Miersch. Also present: Administrative Consultant JoAnn Larson, Ron Roller, Tere Mann, and Stan Carignan.

The meeting was called to order at the church by Board Chair Ellen Eastby at 12:14 p.m.

Ellen Eastby shared a reading/meditation.

The agenda was approved (Siems/Sanderson).

The minutes of the December 17, 2014 meeting were approved as printed (Warhol/Anderson).

Reports:

Treasurer: presented by Ron Roller

Administrative Consultant: JoAnn Larson

Program Committee: Mary Worner

Outreach Committee: Ron Roller (Empowerment Grants)

Facilities Committee: no report

Membership Committee: Mary Anderson

Celebrants: Ellen Eastby

Foundation Advisory Committee: David Sanderson

Old Business: The present policy task force of Mary Anderson, Norman Kolstad, and Kris Warhol is to write a comprehensive safety plan (Worner/Sanderson). Other topics: electric boiler, snow removal payment.

New Business: the UCU will certify 61 members to the Unitarian Universalist Association for 2015 as recommended by the Membership Committee (Worner/Warhol). The UCU will pay expenses for two people to attend the 2015 Mid-America annual assembly, not to exceed \$2500.00 (Sanderson/Siems). Tabled: Amazon Smiles charity. Other topics: annual goals, nominating committee.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 6:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Kolstad, secy.

**Satya-Truth and Patanjali and Gandhi
Presentation by Katy Olson
February 8, 2015**

Patanjali's 36th sutra of the second chapter states that when one is firmly established in the practice of truth, his words become so potent that whatever he says comes to realization. Gandhi's assertion that India would be free from colonial rule through non-violence and the fruition of that dream was the direct result of his devotion to truth. Today, we will explore what that devotion to truth meant to Gandhi and how we can implement those principals in our own life.

When I went to India to study yoga I was not aware that Pune was where Mahatma Gandhi was buried and where the British imprisoned him for his political view that India should be free from the colonial yoke. I decided that since I was in India and Gandhi's presence was so tangible I would read his autobiography, My Experiments with Truth. This reading changed the way I looked at truth and forever changed my understanding of Gandhi, not only as an important political figure but, more importantly a spiritual giant. Gandhi's inspiration and actions came directly from the Bhagavad Gita and the yogic principals from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. I was inspired to deepen my own study of these great texts so as to follow Gandhi's example.

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras we find a philosophical system that elucidates for the seeker a path from ignorance to one of knowledge, which also leads to emancipation from the pain and sorrows of this embodied life. The first sutras tell us what yoga is and why we fail in our quest for its goal, the union of our consciousness with the divine or supreme reality. He states that we fail because we

identify with our ego rather than our eternal soul. It is this ignorance of our true nature that leads to all of the suffering we experience.

Patanjali tells us, intelligence is inherent in every aspect of our being from the physical to the blissful. The quality of intelligence is inherent but dormant- so our first step must be to awaken it. Through yoga we can remove the obstacles and impediments that stymie our spiritual development and awaken to the truth of our own atman, our own soul.

Most people think of the physical postures when we say yoga but Gandhi did not practice that limb of yoga. What he did practice was the yamas; the universal codes of conduct and niyamas; the personal observances.

These are the first limbs of the eight fold path of 'astanga' yoga, the mighty universal vows, the Yama's which are: ahimsa-nonviolence, satya-truthfulness, asteya-non-stealing, brahmacharya-religious studentship and sexual continence, and aparigraha-without possessions or possessiveness. These were the guiding principles of Gandhi's life. Satya=truth was central to Gandhi's moral and ethical code and the principal which he built his life upon. Satya= truth is what we are exploring today.

In the intro of My Experiments with Truth it is written:

"Gandhi's autobiography is very different from other autobiographies. Autobiographies normally contain self-praise by the authors. They want to criticize their opponents and boost their own image in the people's eyes. Gandhi's autobiography is completely free from all this. It is marked with humility and truthfulness. He had not hidden anything. In fact, he is rather too harsh on himself. He did not want to show to the world how good he was. He only wanted to tell the people the story of his experiments with Truth.

For Gandhi, this was the supreme principle, which includes many other principles. Realization of the Truth is the purpose of human life.

Gandhi always strove to realize the Truth. He continuously tried to remove impurities in himself. He always tried to stick to the Truth as he knew it and to apply the knowledge of the Truth to everyday life. He tried to apply the spiritual principles to the practical situations. He did it in the scientific spirit. Sticking to the truth means Satyagraha. Gandhi therefore called his experiments as 'Experiments with Truth' or 'Experiments in the science of Satyagraha.' Gandhi also requested the readers to treat those experiments as illustrative and to carry out their own experiments in that light."

This book put my own quest for an honest life into a clear perspective and gave me courage to pursue the path of truth in all situations and in every moment of my life. I, in my limited understanding had interpreted Satya as "not-lying" a narrow interpretation at best. After reading, My Experiments with Truth, I understood truth as the fundamental basis of all of existence.

[Generally speaking observation of the law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the Truth. But we should understand the word Satya or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be truth in thought, truth in speech, and truth in action. To the man who has realized this truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessary included in it. There can be no inward peace without true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this never failing test of Truth, we will at once able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, and what is worth reading.]

Gandhi stated that we have to become the change we would like to see in the world. For me that meant bringing every aspect of my life into alignment with yoga, the union of my will with God. And from the yoga sutras. I came to an understanding of God that I could accept.

There are three sutras in which Patanjali defines God:

I.24 God is the Supreme Being, totally free from conflicts, unaffected by actions and untouched by cause and effect.

I.25 God is the unexcelled seed of all knowledge. And,

I.26 God is the first, foremost and absolute guru, unconditioned by time.

There is no hint of the wrathful, judgmental God of Abraham from my youth that I had vehemently rejected. I had thrown the baby out with the bath when I left that notion of God behind. But still I have a strong spiritual bend and I longed to find a path that resonated with my inner longing for truth.

In yoga I found it and through my study of the Yoga Sutras and The Bhagavad Gita I am coming ever closer to living a life of truth.

What, you might be wondering was my relationship with truth prior to that reading? Well, I will tell you that it was situational and conditional. Starting with the little white lies we tell as children, the cookie we sneak or the gum we take from our mothers' purse, and we deny any knowledge of. In the family that I was raised in, withholding information was an accepted form of lying. 'What you don't know won't hurt you' was the order of the day, regardless of who might be incriminated. Save your own skin at all costs even if it meant telling an untruth. Of course we were told not to lie, and the soap bar was ever at the ready if we were caught in a lie.

Children, however, are very sensitive to the truth for they are still closer to the source; they feel the energetic quality of truth or subterfuge and get quite indignant if they think you are trying to get one over on them. But it does not take long before the cultural norms of bending the truth corrupt the pure state of a child's heart and mind.

Corporal punishment alone goes a long way towards making a liar out of a child. When faced with a beating or telling a lie... most of us will lie. This is extrapolated in our judicial system by the way of plea-bargaining, a practice that while serving the interests of judges and prosecuting attorneys does not have the result of the guilty going to jail and the innocent walking free. In fact, the opposite happens because the witnesses have agreed to incriminate the accused to get a 'lighter' sentence. If

you insist upon your innocence and a trial, you are more likely to get a longer sentence than if you plea-bargain and incriminate yourself. So much for "the whole truth so help me God" and the idea that every accused has the right to a fair trial judged by their peers.

At times we are dishonest to protect the innocent. As a child, I lied to protect my twin from the wrath of my father. Instinctively, I knew that it was better to agree with him and take the lighter sentence than insist upon my version of the truth and incur greater wrath. She, however, had a deeper sense of justice and would fight for her own truth regardless of the consequences and so in my mind needed protection from herself. At any rate, my habit of lying was honed in the piercing gaze of my father's brilliant blue eyes. Not that he was a monster, he had his gifts and good points too, and it is just that as he had been beat so he beat us. And so it goes, perpetuating the cycles of deceit and guilt through the generations. A cycle I took great care to NOT perpetuate.

I did understand the value of truth and I experienced the sick feeling that comes when we lie. I wanted to be a truthful person; never the less I was willing to lie if it suited my purposes. By the time I was in grade school I had absorbed that truth was subjective. I remember the ridiculous, even to my 6-year-old ears, notion that George Washington never told a lie. I knew from personal experience that every single person in my small world if not outright told lies, they bent the truth. The history we learned in school was not the history that my Mother filled out for us at home around the dinner table. A view of history gleaned from her relentless studying of historical accounts and told from the perspective of the dispossessed and under-represented peoples of the world. I learned to question authority and as she would say: believe half of what you read and a quarter of what you hear and rely on your own direct experience for the truth. Good advice that we will return to later.

By the time I left home at 16 I could tell a 'bald-faced-lie' and not even blink. A telling term, bald faced, one does not even need to hide your face, and the lie is told so convincingly. I did not think of myself as a dishonest person, just one who said what I needed to save my own skin or to get a desired outcome. There were concentric circles of varying degrees of truth; from family and friends that I mostly told the truth to, outward to teachers to whom I had only occasionally lied, to government officials and agencies that I did not hesitate to lie to. Mark Twain said, "If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything." A notion I had yet to learn and implement in my own life.

I also remember the shock I experienced when, having told the truth about an incident on the playground, the person whom had wronged my friend turned on me and with such vehemence declared me the liar! Her accusation put my honesty and my character into question and I remember the sting I felt at being accused of lying. A practice that has become blood sport by the likes of Karl Rove and his ilk, and has so marred our political process that it has it's own idiom 'Swiftboating'. Whistle blowers face persecution from their associates and often from the press, ruining their careers and even putting their own life at risk for the truth.

The notion of truth in our cultural lexicon is so perverted that fact-checking websites have proliferated at an alarming rate. It is a sad fact, that there are even fact-checking websites to check on the accuracy of other fact-checking sites. The market place is clogged with claims of truth in advertising when we all know that purveyors of goods in our commercial market place are constantly trying to dupe the public for their own profits.

This notion that truth is subjective is pervasive in our culture. We insist that we have the right to "our own truth". As if truth was a suit of clothing that we put on rather than the very ground upon which we stand. I know from my own experience that how we perceive ourselves changes over time. I am not the person I was at 16 or 25 or 40. And what was true for me at 20 is not what is true for me at 56. I am not fat or stupid or bad even though those were the prominent themes of my early years. And while we all do have our own reality, truth has more to do with our intrinsic nature than with the cultural baggage that we collect and carry along with us as we travel through life.

Many have the mistaken notion in our culture that the truth as we see it, gives us the right to trample the rights and 'the truth' of others. While we each do have our own journey and our own relationship with the truth, truth itself does not change.

[Gandhi wrote that what may appear as Truth to one person will often appear, as untruth to another person, but that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appears to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Yet we know that He is one. But Truth is the right designation of God. Hence, there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so.]

Experience itself is subjective. There can be 5 people at the scene of a crime and you will get 5 different versions of the event. Memory too is unreliable, each telling changing subtly, perhaps to put the event into perspective or to put ourselves in a better light. More consistent with our notions of what we want to be rather than what we are.

Al Gore hit the nail on the head when he called his movie an "Inconvenient Truth." Truth often is inconvenient. It is hard and uncompromising. It demands much of us. And not just in speech, to refrain as the Native Americans say, of speaking with a forked tongue. But to also bring all of our actions into a direct relationship with truth. Are we consuming more than we need? Do our actions cause harm to the environment? Are we contributing to the impoverishment of the third world nations? Are we fair in our dealings with one another? Most importantly and perhaps the most difficult, are we truthful with ourselves?

I could go on but I think it sufficient to say that our perceptions of truth are beleaguered and a bit tattered at the edges. George Orwell said that in a time of

universal deceit – telling the truth is a revolutionary act. I think we need a revolution.

My own revolution regarding truth began in earnest when I met and married Ron Roller. For the first time I came to know someone for whom truth was not subjective or situational. It was as natural for him to be truthful as to breathe. Not only did he not cheat on his taxes or break rules but also he told the truth in the simple day-to-day experiences. Every time I had the urge to bend the truth and he did not it acted like a shock to my system.

Slowly I began to change my own relationship with truth. When I took up the practice of yoga and learned the first two limbs of astanga yoga; the Yamas, which are the mighty universal, codes which we spoke of earlier and the Niyamas, personal observances of saucha-cleanliness, santosa-contentment, tapah-burning desire, svadhyaya-selfstudy through the study of the scriptures and Isvara prandihana-devotion to God, I knew that I had found a code of ethics and a path that I could tread towards a fully truthful state of being. No longer was truth situational, for I had found a way forward toward a truth bearing reality that Aldous Huxley calls the Divine Ground, common to all the great religious traditions.

Our own Unitarian Universalist tradition of a Free and Responsible Search For Truth and Meaning, is a good place to start. We are free to search and we have a responsibility to not hurt others in the process. Patanjali yoga sutras state that:

- Sutra I.7: Correct knowledge is direct, inferred or proven as factual.
- Sutra I.48: When consciousness dwells in wisdom, a truth- bearing state of direct spiritual perception dawns.
- I.49: This truth bearing knowledge and wisdom is distinct from and beyond the knowledge gleaned from books, testimony, or inference.

Books, testimony and inference are useful tools for beginning the journey, but something more is required if we are to come into a direct experience of the truth.

Every religious tradition has some form of contemplative practice, prayer for the Christians, Zazen for the Buddhists and Meditation for the Yogis are a few examples. By clearing the chatter and listening deeply we can begin to hear with our inner ear the way of truth. Each and every moment of our day this ground of truth is available to us if we could only listen close enough.

This is what Gandhi practiced and this is what he wrote about truth: " Truth is within ourselves. There is an inmost centre in us all, where Truth abides in fullness. Every wrong-doer knows within himself that he is doing wrong for untruth cannot be mistaken for Truth. The law of Truth is merely understood to mean that we must speak the truth. But we understand the word in much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action.

Gandhi says "We cannot realize Rama by reading the Ramayana, or Krishna by reading the Gita, or Allah by reading the Koran, or Christ by reading the Bible; the

only means of realizing them is by developing a pure and noble character. Character is based on virtuous action and virtuous action is grounded on Truth.

Truth, then, is the source and foundation of all things that are good and great. Hence, fearless and unflinching pursuit of the ideal of Truth and Righteousness is the key of true health as of all else."

How are we to accomplish this, which may seem a herculean task?

Patanjali tells us in the following sutras:

- Sutra I.20 – Practice must be pursued with trust, confidence, vigor, keen memory and power of absorption to break this spiritual complacency.
- And then he gives us the reward to spurn us on to greater heights.
- I.21 – The goal is near for those who are supremely vigorous and intense in practice.

Ghandi dealt first with truth. His very life was built upon it. Satyagraha, the pursuit and attempted practice of truth. Ghandi stated that:

[The word satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God, In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say God is Truth. And where there is Truth, there also is knowledge. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word Chit or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss. (Ananda). There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as Sat-Chit-ananda, one who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.

Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life.

But how is one to realize this Truth, which may be likened to the philosophers stone or the cow of plenty? By single-minded devotion (abhyasa/practice) and indifference to all other interests in life (vairagya-renunciation) replies the Bhagavadgita.

How beautiful it would be if all of us, young and old, men and women devoted ourselves wholly to Truth in all that we might do in our walking hours, whether working, eating, drinking, or playing till dissolution of the body makes us one with Truth? God as Truth has been for me a treasure beyond price; may He be so to every one of us.]

On the mountains of truth you can never climb in vain: either you will reach a point higher up today, or you will be training your powers so that you will be able to climb higher tomorrow.

[Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a man considered one of the great sages and prophets. He was held as another Buddha, another Jesus. Indians called him the

'Father of the Nation'. They showered their love, respect and devotion on him in an unprecedented measure. They thronged his way to have a glimpse of him, to hear one word from his lips. They applied on their foreheads the dust on the path he had trodden. For them, he was almost an incarnation of God, who had come to break the chains of their slavery. The whole world bowed to him in reverence. Even his opponents held him in great respect.

Mohandas Gandhi was, however, not a great scholar, nor was he a great warrior. He was not born with exceptional faculties. Neither was he a good orator, nor a great writer. He did not claim anything exclusively divine in him. He did not claim being a prophet or having superhuman powers. He considered himself an average man with average abilities. Born in a middle class Bania family in an obscure princely State in a corner of India, he was a mediocre student, shy and nervous. He could not muster courage to speak in public. His first attempt at legal practice miserably failed.

But he was a humble seeker of Truth. He was a man with exceptional sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. For him, understanding meant action. Once any principle appealed to him, he immediately began to translate that in practice. He did not flinch from taking risks and did not mind confessing mistakes. No opposition, scorn or ridicule could affect him. Truth was his sole guiding star. He was ever-growing; hence he was often found inconsistent. He was not concerned with appearing to be consistent. He preferred to be consistent only with the light within.