

Minister's Article for November 2022

Rev. Amy Kindred

It was a quiet morning in the office at UUC on October 31. The building was empty, and I was completing many tasks.

Suddenly, the lights flickered off, then on, then off again. The air handler became eerily quiet. I picked up the phone. The dial tone was gone. The internet was down. With nothing to do, I looked out the window and noted the cloudy day. After about 10 minutes, I went to my cell phone to call a board member. No luck there either. I decided I would have to step outside or possibly go home and wait it out. I cleared my desk and put a paper in the file cabinet. Who knows if it is in the correct place?

As I shut the file cabinet drawer, an enthusiastic voice clearly declared, "launching into uncharted territory!" I rushed to the hallway and looked both ways. No one was there. I looked out the window, the front door and in a nearby closet. No one was present.

Totally creeped out, I gathered my stuff and prepared to leave. As I turned at the door to look over the darkened office, I noticed the large pile of toys the congregation had collected for the children who had survived Hurricane Ian in southwest Florida. And then I saw something. It was the darkened outline of a tiny arm sticking out of a sack. I put my stuff down and bent to pull the object out of the bag. I took the plastic item to the window for a better view. It was a toy replica of Buzz Lightyear from the Toy Story movie who famously declared, "To infinity and beyond!" Apparently, when I shut the file cabinet door earlier, I must have nudged the voice-activating button on the donated toy. It was Buzz's voice that I had heard.

Even though I had discovered the source of the mysterious statement in the dark, I came to view it as a very fortuitous moment. I mean, in so many ways, you and I are "launching into uncharted territory." Although the pandemic seems to have hastened the approach, we have to admit that our current times in small ways and in big ways are like no other.

For example, it wasn't that long ago that I went to the bank to deposit a check. Now, I take a picture of the check at home, and it deposits directly into my

checking account. No car needed. When I go out with friends, we don't ask for separate tabs like we used to do. One person pays the total, calculates what each person owes and we "Venmo" the money to that person who paid for the total bill. These are just two small examples of "uncharted" or "we couldn't have imagined it" scenarios.

The political terrain is changing which is huge. Whether we like it or not, the landscape is quickly morphing. Books on library shelves are being contested and medical procedures for trans individuals are being questioned. Many of us grew up trusting the system of representation. Now? Ask any woman if she has equal rights under the law and you too may come to understand that as a society, we are entering "uncharted" territory. And, perhaps one of the revelations of the times is that there has been more awareness of racial injustice. What used to be in the shadows is now in full view for all to see. Consider George Floyd and the other countless videos of gross wrongdoing. There is no question. We aren't living in the world we have been dreaming and striving to build.

So right now, the question is not "Will we use the same approaches we have always used in the past to create change?" but, "How will you and I adopt new ways to make needed transformations and to adapt new approaches to thriving in times totally like none other in American history?" This is true of general society and it's true of life at Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater.

My hope for all of us is two-fold:

First, that we might reconsider altering the phrase, "That's not how I or we do it." to "Sure, I or we can try something new." Of course, there is no question change is very uncomfortable. It's scary even. However, enormous shifts have arrived (and are still coming) whether we want them or not. It's true in society, in our home lives, and in our congregations.

Two, that we become more aware of a couple of unhelpful aspects of our existence in a culture of white supremacy. There are more but these are the two I want to reference here: *perfectionism* and *a sense of urgency*. How do we adjust our demand for perfectionism? Learn to embrace more opportunities to show appreciation for workers, volunteers, family members, and complete strangers alike. Allow for more understanding when mistakes are made. Perfectionism is harmful. Compassion and appreciation are helpful.

A continued sense of urgency makes it difficult to reflect on how to become more inclusive. Look around and seek voices that aren't normally included and consider different approaches to problem-solving. Make sensible workplans and set goals with realistic timelines that may take longer than one might have expected in the past. It is truly a different day. Can we learn to acclimate to our "new normal?"

WOW. Who knew a tiny, toy-size voice in the dark would lead to such reflections?

With you on this UU journey, dear ones. "To infinity and beyond!"

Rev. Amy