



# UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

A Place to Connect, Grow and Serve

## Reflections from the Board: Wholeness

*By Warren Wright, Board of Trustees*

"To be courageous, it is not necessarily to go anywhere or do anything except to make conscious those things we already feel deeply and then to live through the unending vulnerabilities of those consequences."

-- David Whyte

This month's Soul Matters theme is "Wholeness". My go-to person on this topic is Parker Palmer. His book [\*A Hidden Wholeness: A Journey Toward an Undivided Life\*](#) brings forth the notion that every person has two selves.

The first is the inner self which is the true you. This is where you have both shadow and light, where life's best-laid plans are dashed by the unexpected. This is your actual life. The stories you tell about your inner self are the ones you want the people you love most to know—the joy, but also the pain and vulnerability. The stories are told in music, poetry, art, or in just being present with a tree upon first bud in the spring.

The outer self, on the other hand, is your armor. Comfortably tailored to suit the outside world, your armor assures that your stories have a predictable linear path and a happy ending. It is where life's high spots are accented and success affirmed. It is your Facebook page. The outer self contains the stories you tell at a party when someone asks, "What do you do?" They are told in prose, sometimes involve numbers.

Parker Palmer posits that wholeness is the merging of the inner self with the outer self. It is hard to merge these two selves into wholeness. It is especially difficult in today's polarized, 'judgy' society. We feel we have to line up and take sides, and then never get into deep conversation with 'the other', so we can stick with our righteous crowd. New research by psychologists Jillian Jordan and David Rand introduced the concept of 'virtue signaling', where being outraged is primarily based on a desire to be seen positively by others. This is a mechanism that reinforces our outer self and keeps our inner self hidden.

So how can we come to wholeness? Well, we can start right here at UUCA to meeting people where they are. We can listen, truly listen to one another. We can be open to dialogue and ask more questions that we have answers to. We can empathize, forgive, and be present to help each other heal. And we can laugh at ourselves and not take ourselves too seriously. Creating the environment for wholeness-making starts with helping others first, then helping ourselves.

Mother Theresa said, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." Let's start there. The Beatles were right, "Love Is All You Need."

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