



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

A Place to Connect, Grow and Serve

March 28, 2018

MINISTRY MATTERS

The Reverend Beth Miller
Temporary Senior Minister

Spring has arrived! Alleluia! And our SoulMatters theme for April is *Emergence*, a great theme for Spring and for UUCA right now. Life returns again to the earth and we're beginning to return from the pain and confusion caused by the loss of Reverend Aaron. I said beginning. We're not there yet. Some aren't even close. But I see signs of emergence from this hard time. Like different flowers, we bloom at different points in time. What I'm seeing is like the redbud trees, the crocuses and a few daffodils. It's not like summer; not a fully fertile scene with dogwood, rhododendrons and roses. But still, early signs that new life is emerging.

One sign is our welcoming of fifty-eight new members on March 18, eleven of whom had just joined the previous Sunday. Another sign is that we're dedicating eight to ten children this coming Sunday. New members and children are definite signs of emerging life. The Social Justice Service and Fair on March 18 were both high signs of life emerging.

We're also in the middle of our planned opportunities for members of UUCA to come together to address feelings. The Service of Appreciation for Reverend Aaron McEmrys' Ministry on Sunday evening, March 18, was a beautiful, honest, and deeply moving time for the one hundred plus members and friends who came. Three members who had worked with Reverend Aaron spoke: D Ohlandt, Art Stevens and Kristine Wood. They spoke of the gifts he brought that will always remain part of UUCA and of their feelings of loss, hurt and anger. Our Intern Minister, Christin Green, sang a beautiful solo, lead us in congregational singing, spoke of her sense of loss, and led a Drumming Circle that many participated in for the postlude. We shared a ritual releasing Reverend Aaron and the congregation from the covenant they had made at his Installation Service. People brought beautiful and delicious food for the potluck, and Art Stevens videoed all who wanted to send a personal message to Reverend Aaron. Many who attended told me that the speakers spoke for them, too, that the ritual helped them let go, and that the service was moving and healing for them. It was an important step toward emergence.

This past Sunday after second service, we held the first of three Congregational Listening Circles with about seventy members attending. Using a fishbowl technique, those who wanted to share their feelings sat in a semi-circle and spoke from their hearts while others listened. No one was expected to speak, and most did not. Afterwards, many speakers and listeners expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share openly in a safe space. This, too, was a step toward emergence. There are two more Congregational Listening Circles scheduled and I encourage you to come. They are in the sanctuary this Saturday, March 31, at 10:00 a.m. and on Wednesday, April 4, 6:00 p.m.

Facilitated Small Groups are also being planned as part of our efforts to give everyone who wishes to engage

with other members in addressing their feelings plenty of opportunities, but dates have not yet been set. Meanwhile, we keep having visitors who come back, the spirit on Sunday mornings feels positive, Covenant Groups are going strong, plans are underway for moving ahead with ministerial searches, members are marching and advocating and writing letters about crucial social concerns, and I'm working with pastoral care and worship associate teams to be sure those areas of congregational life remain strong. I'm also available to speak with any of you for whom that would be useful. Email me at bmiller@uucava.org to set up a time to meet. I'm here to help in whatever ways I can

No, we're not all healed and on firm ground yet. There is much unsettled about the future. But it is a rich and fertile time nonetheless. We can hold both the continuing grief and uncertainty and the emergence of creativity and hope and new life in our hearts at the same time. Enjoy this beautiful Spring.

March 27, 2018 - Ministry Matters Column