



# UU ORIGINAL VOICES

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse  
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## A Collection of Our Writings



### A Seasonal Lament

On this eve of the beginning of autumn  
I notice how far south the sun sets in the west.  
I fight the urge to judge myself harshly.  
I pose hard questions about the level of appreciation  
I demonstrated for the offerings of summer.

When the daffodils bravely popped forth despite the  
snow,  
Did I bow down?  
And the lilacs?  
Did I stop in awe enough?  
Then the day lilies on their graceful stems,  
What can I remember of their glory?  
The echinacea came on seemingly so fast this year  
And I didn't soak in the vibrance.

The black eyed-Susans, the happiness of the garden  
in the fall,  
Why didn't I stop and sit there among them,  
And let that happiness soak into my soul?  
Ah, summer, your gifts were loved.  
Each year, you come and go faster and faster.  
I am grateful, yes.  
And I am sad.

Mary Van Valin  
September, 2020



## Straw Flowers

Pine needles skittering through October  
catch at the rims  
tangle into edging: a basketful of garden.  
    Ankylosed stems nearly ready to dislocate  
    lean on Hot Papaya, Marmalade  
    flower cones: faded banners.

Mums spread apart their clusters  
blossoms all bristled, a hint of perk  
in a garden so tendered  
    so tousled by rabbits and rodents  
    flattened by my clompers  
    a tumbled old yucca, stray turkey fanfare.

Today subdued by light cloud cover  
damping crimsons of tumbled leafall,  
hues of blue asters deepen  
    though still dazzle when my shadow shifts.  
    This morning I'm wayward caught  
    snagged by drooping seedheads.

Dragon Blood sedum blanched overnight  
after dreams of mounding brews:  
Paprika, that boldest yarrow, now  
    as anemic as the mallow. Snakeroot  
    bottlebrushes, arched into bottle-seed  
rattlers.  
    Clusters of bee balm, bobbing dark omens.

Blink, and the last petals of daisies  
a shimmering memory.  
Veronica left gray with split ends.  
    Tickseed & gaura twist their peppermint  
stripes,  
    blackeyed rudbeckia & triloba strive to  
outlast  
    mixed family huddles.

Odors basketed in a scent of pine.  
What petals remain, a kiss of tissue,  
tear-stain another's shoulders.  
    Gusts whip up a drizzle, chill  
    stretches over from the lakes,  
    imbues plot center.

Time to put this garden to bed:  
inward turning,  
nose cold and dripping on cleome, phlox mildew  
    has been climbing our legs, we remain  
interwoven  
    oblivious, wiggling toes together, family  
roots  
    familiar soil. Turning into more

ready to sacrifice a season's growth  
nearly compost by now binned by straw and cones,  
a blessing for the perennials among us.

C J Lee    Straw Flowers



## *Death Takes No Holiday*

Warm soft skin like golden buttered toast,  
Espresso bean eyes.  
The little boy plays at the water's edge.  
A salt-water crocodile lay in the shallows,  
Watching hungrily.  
"Be careful, now. That croc will eat you",  
His father reminds him,  
Scrubbing the hull of his outrigger  
With damp sand.  
One foolish move of the boy  
Or one seize-the-moment impulse of the croc  
Could result in tragedy.  
This reckless standoff between luck and fate

Is not unique to the relaxed beaches and barrios of  
the Third World.  
Our children walk behind their mothers through  
Walmart parking lots  
Bouncing along distractedly  
Out of sight, behind powerful machines with motors  
running,  
Back-up lights ready to pop on.  
Dutiful Dads chauffeur their kids to Taekwondo  
lessons  
Merging into tightly-packed beltway traffic  
averaging 80 miles per hour.  
Rain-slick pavement.  
Oh, things happen. Not often, but they do happen.  
Rusty nails and invisible viruses.  
Both Belize and Baltimore.

*By The Northwoods Writrix*

#### Charles the Chickadee, part 2



After calling off their engagement, Charles and Carolyn went their separate ways. Charles was hanging out with his friends one day, just going to and from one of the human neighbor's bird feeder, when they all felt a very strong drop in barometric pressure. They all quickly flew to find shelter, but the gale force winds came so quickly that Charles did not have enough time to find a safe place and found himself being tossed through the air with no

control over where he was going. He remembered his granddad telling him if he was ever caught in tornado type winds that he should just go with the flow and eventually he would be thrown out of the wind spin and hopefully come to a safe landing.

But this wind went on and on and on and he could see no safe exit from his predicament. It felt like he was being battered around for days and days and days, but he didn't know if that was right because there was no day or night.

After what seemed like forever, he felt the wind starting to slow down a little. He still couldn't see land, but he felt the wind starting to slow down a little and he felt a change in temperature. Soon the wind lessened some more, and he could see through the clouds to water below. All he could see was water, for miles and miles and miles, so he decided to try to stay up in the wind for a little longer in hopes of seeing land. He was really glad that he had eaten at the bird feeder before the storm, but he was getting very thirsty and very worried. He stayed up in the winds for what seems like a whole day when he finally saw some land approaching. He had no idea where he was, he was just hopeful that he could find good water and some friends.

When he finally was able to land, he found some water in some upturned petals of flowers and he drank deeply. He had never seen such huge flowers. After he quenched his thirst, he looked around to see if he could find any of his friends, but he didn't see any birds anywhere. He decided to stay near the big petaled flowers until he could rest a little – after all, he had been in the air for at least a week. And since chickadees do not migrate anywhere, he had never been in the air that long and he had no idea how long he had travelled.

*To be continued....*

Judy, the Chickadee Lover