

Belonging, Becoming, Beyond

As Noreen and Dave said, I have some brief remarks.

Associated by proximity to the Harvard Divinity School is the Sacred Design Lab. Their website is [sacred-dot-design](http://sacred-dot-design.com). And among a rather rich trove of insights, they speak of a congregation's spiritual journey as consisting of belonging, becoming, and beyond. *Belonging, becoming, beyond*—three legs in the sacred design stool.

Belonging means membership in a community; the UU term of art here is beloved community. And the hallmark of beloved community is mutual affection, respect, and trust. One important dimension of trust lies with the compassionate care community, which can act as a resource for rides to doctors' appointments and so on. And in our services, our Joys and Concerns ritual invites a certain kind of sharing, of belonging, as we over time, in bits and pieces, speak of what is going on in our lives. And, by the way, one of the psychological benefits of participating in such rituals is that rituals build mutual trust, build a common sense of belonging.

The second leg of this sacred design stool is *becoming*.

Becoming means that we recognize that we each of us are works in process, that we can and should grow, spiritually, intellectually, and morally. Or if you don't like the word spiritual, growing more emotionally intelligent works well. Some part of becoming involves speaking of our own journeys, our own quandries. In the last few months, UUCC co-sponsored the class Shared Pulpit, and we had about five of our members complete

that class, which involves writing a sermon, mainly from our personal experiences.

The Shared Pulpit experience creates some serious mutual bonds, by the way.

Equally important, perhaps even more important, to speaking of our spiritual journeys is listening to the journeys of others. Such listening, such deep listening, develops our empathy, our social awareness, our sense of gratitude, even our sense of joy. And sometimes, this crosses over into straight-out emotional intelligence, bigger souls, blossoming souls.

The third leg of the Sacred Design stool is called *Beyond*. I'm not going to go all Buzz Lightyear on you—he's the Pixar Movie character who said "To Infinity and Beyond!" Here beyond means that we work to impact not just ourselves, not just our social circle, but to something not ourselves, something beyond ourselves.

Working to nurture UUCC can count as something beyond ourselves. And UUCC also works on something beyond itself. In the last year, UUCC ran two fundraisers, for ALAS and Senior Coastsiders, and raised about seven thousand dollars all told. UUCC contributed volunteer hours to CoastPride. And we have tangibly assisted three other UU congregations, in three different counties might I add. Thanks to the efforts of Joanne Rokosky, our twice-monthly newsletter always leads off with an Opportunity for Good. And I know some of us work for environmental justice.

So, to recap, belonging, becoming, and beyond—terms articulated by Sacred Design Labs.

I want to close with this quotation from the Rev Mark Morrison-Reed, #580 in the Silver Hymnal.

“The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

“It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.”

End quote. Come, let us now lean forward and Zoom together.