A Message from Francesca

Just by being human?

This past Sunday during the service, the older class learned about John Murray and Universalism. John Murray became a central figure in American Universalism and was extremely influential in creating a unified Universalist church in New England and the United States as a whole. However, our lesson focused on his theological switch from his belief in predestination to his belief in Universal salvation. After personal tragedy, Murray moved his life from England to the American Colonies. The ship he was on got stuck in a sandbar off the New Jersey coast. Murray came ashore and was wandering through the wilderness of the pine barrens when he came across Thomas Potter. Potter had built a meeting house and was waiting for a preacher to come and fill the pulpit. With some convincing, John Murray preached in Potter's meeting house on September 30th, 1770. Murray Grove, where he preached, is still a UU meeting house and retreat center to this day.

When we shifted our talk to Moral Universalism, we made a list based on this question: "Like, human rights… **What is something that everyone deserves, just by being human?**"

I grew up about fifteen minutes from Murray Grove, the wilderness Murray walked through is one I know well. I have been thinking a lot about the pine barrens this week. How much I miss its uniqueness, its tracks of sugar sand, its smell, its sheer abundance! When I walk in the Lynnwoods and I find a pitchpine, it feels like seeing an old friend.

Tom Brown, who recently died, was once the greatest tracker in the world. He started a school for people to learn natural survival skills, though there was also an optional spiritual component. In our mini van, my family would pass by Murray Grove, on route 9, on the way to the Tracker School or Well's Mills County Park— along with what was once the oldest working nuclear power plant in the country!

My father, who was a tracker student, and many other tracker students, who either lived with us or would visit, all seemed to have their own specialty; firemaking, tanning, edible plants. Among them there was a strong belief that everyone deserves to know natural skills. Every human being should be given the skills to survive in the woods, or another natural environment. Our ability to live in the wilderness was our birthright as human beings, as well as our responsibility to be caretakers of the earth and all living things on the planet. Many (certainly not all) of the former tracker students would teach their skills for no or very little money considering the monetary value of what their knowledge was worth.

As I look out the window from my office at the endless oak leaves that beautifully carpet the ground, both grateful for shelter and a desire to be outside, I pass the question on to you… "What is something that everyone deserves, just for being human?"

Wishing you a nourished spirit,
Fran :)