

Hello! Welcome to the Minister's Monthly Message for November, 2021. I'm the Reverend Jen Raffensperger, and I am the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York.

And this...is something new! Each month on the first Thursday, we will have a new video available, with a little information on what's coming up this month and a few moments of reflection. While coming up with this idea I kept using the term "fireside chat," thinking of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's conversational and informal addresses that he made from the Oval Office throughout his presidency. And while President Roosevelt broadcast from his desk, I have an actual fireplace to use!

I like to think of a warm hearth at times like this. In the month of November, we have shorter days and longer nights, and it gets colder as we move toward the end of autumn and the beginning of winter. Long nights make me think of quiet, restful times - but the truth of the matter is that it can be challenging to find those times of quiet and rest in this particular season!

November is a busy month...coming up on what for many is the busiest time of the year. At the end of this message I will go over a bit of what UUCY has planned for the month, but for now I would love to ask you to settle in for a bit of poetry/prayer. To me, those two things are often one in the same. One of my colleagues, the Rev. Gretchen Haley, is an extraordinarily talented crafter of these both-and messages, and today I'd like to share with you her piece called "Here We Re-member Ourselves."

Give up the fight
For some other moment
Some other life
Than here, and now
Give up the longing
for some other world
The wishing
for other choices to make
other songs to sing
other bodies, other ages,
other countries, other stakes
Purge the past; forgive the future -
for each come too soon.
Surrender only to this life,
this day, this hour,
not because it does not constantly break
your heart but because it also beckons with
beauty
startles with delight
if only we keep waking up.
This is the gift
we have been given:

these "body-clothes,"
this heartbreak, this pulse
this breath,
this light,
these friends,
this hope.
Here we re-member ourselves
All a part of it all - Giving thanks, and
centering joy. Come, let us worship.
Together¹

¹ Permission secured by Soul Matters

“Giving thanks and centering joy” sound like the two most important tasks for us to consider as we enter into the season of winter holiday busy-ness. I want to use them to ground myself even when stress may feel like it wants to pile up. I often hear about people having a “gratitude practice” and I think that is such a wonderful idea - but I wonder about the glorious additional possibilities of a JOY practice.

You will definitely hear more about gratitude AND joy in the near future at UUCY. Just to highlight a few important things coming up in November:

This Saturday, November 6, we have an introductory class for people interested in learning more about Unitarian Universalism and UUCY. It’s on Zoom from 2:00 until 3:15 p.m. Please email membership@uucy.org to sign up!

This Sunday, November 7, we’ll have a beautiful Veterans Day service co-led by Russ and Janie McKnight that you won’t want to miss - so don’t forget to set your clocks BACK one hour for that glorious extra sleep!

On Saturday, November 20 there will be a vigil for the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance, held at Dreamwrights Center for Community Arts beginning at 6 p.m. Join me and other community and faith leaders in honoring those beloved transgender lives lost this year, as we pray and work for a world where our transgender siblings are safe and free.

On Sunday, November 21, our Sunday service will be our annual Bread Communion, followed by a community bonfire event here on campus starting at 11:30! These two events will inform and enrich each other, and offer many ways to be in community!

The annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service will premiere on YouTube on Tuesday, November 23.

On Sunday, November 28, I will offer a contemplative Lectio Divina service in the morning. It is the start of the sacred season of Advent in the Christian tradition and in the Jewish tradition, Hanukkah, the festival of lights, begins at sundown.

Thanks for taking the time to watch and listen to our first-ever Minister’s Monthly Message! Watch this space as we learn and grow!