

# Wind on the Water

A Newsletter To Encourage  
Unitarian Universalist  
Theology and Spirituality

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## UUs In Hell

There was a Unitarian-Universalist who died.

She found herself walking along a road. She came to a fork. A sign with an arrow pointing to the right said, "To Hell." A sign with an arrow pointing to the left said, "To A Discussion On Hell."

She turned left and after a while came to a circle of empty chairs, where she sat down and waited for the others to arrive.

She had not waited a long time, not a long time at all by the standards of that place, before she realized that the signs had lied.

## Taking Your Freedom -Mary-Allen Walden

A couple of years ago Gyorgy Sebok taught a piano Master Class at Indiana University. He said that one of the most important things a pianist has to do is to take his or her musical freedom.

"You have to take your freedom," he said, "you take it to yourself. No

one can give it to you. Until you take your freedom you have nothing to say. You are only repeating what someone else has told you."

He then told a story about a young German student that he had.

"A very correct and proper young man," he said, "and a rather stiff and correct pianist. I became very frustrated with him one day and said: 'Take your freedom! Rebel! Rebel against me!' and he turned to me and said, 'yes, sir.' And I realized what a terrible position I had put him in, because no one can give your freedom, and no one can order you to take it. You have to take it yourself."

I think that the most exciting thing about Unitarian Universalism is that it offers support for people to take their freedom. Taking one's freedom does involve going through a sort of adolescent rebellion, and we attract people who are in rebellion against their pasts - spiritual adolescents, so to speak. Now, this is a mixed blessing, of course. Adolescence of any kind is a difficult time - people in rebellion are often angry, lost, confused, and apt to do foolish awkward things. But on the other end of this struggle - if it's successful - and it is a risk, not every one makes it through - out of this comes people who no longer need to oppose themselves to others to feel their individuality who really are themselves, who seek truth, whose lives are integrated, who look to their own inner authority, who are able to

express compassion and generosity to the world around them. This is, of course, an ongoing process without an end, and yet it does, in a way, have a beginning, and I think that Unitarian Universalism's greatest gift is that we are able to nurture that beginning. Most wonderful of all is that this happens without conscious intent on anyone's part - it comes through us from the universe, and this is why this really is a religion, because through this place the Universe nurtures the spiritual development of its children, those who are ready, those who respond to their inner knowing.

When we reflect on our Unitarian and our Universalist forebears who established our values of Freedom, Truth, and Justice, most of us think or hear of them as beloved and admired, wise and nearly enlightened people who helped bring this association a long way. And they were! But they got that way the same way we all have to get that way, by breaking through obstacles and taking their own freedom, and that's not always pretty.

They went through very difficult growth and we supported them through that, for we are committed to inner truth, rather than external appearances.

Let us reflect on how we can support each other in our growth.

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## Climbing

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A motive behind our spiritual work is the disjointedness, the out-of-kilterness of life, the anxiety and boredom and confusion and pain. This can lead us to craziness. The function of a community is to keep us sane.

In a spiritual community, we are all rock climbing, working our way up the side of a mountain. Our hand and foot holds are our ideas, myths, habits, rituals, and metaphors, and at any time our weight rests on some while we reach for others. We do not often jump to new heights, usually we only shift our weight.

In a community, we are tied to each other, so that when we slip the others can pull us to safety. We must not expect ascent to the top to be easy or swift - if there even is a top. But here we are. This is our rock face. And we climb.

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## The Wheel

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Here is a ritual that has been used in small groups. The people gather in a circle facing in. With the right hand, each person grasps the right wrist of the person to his or her left in a "star by the right" fashion and places his or her left hand on the same person's right shoulder. Then the leader recites chapter eleven of the Tao Te Ching: Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub; It is the hole in the center that makes it useful.

Shape a depression in the clay;  
So is the cup made useful.  
Cut windows and doors;  
So is the room made useful.  
Although profit may come from what is there;  
Usefulness comes from what is not there.

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## Holy Community

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In his remarks at the 1985 Annual Meeting of Second Unitarian Church of Chicago the late Rev. Brooks Walker said:

When I completed my first decade in the liberal ministry, I found myself thinking along some vaguely mystical lines -- Jewish mysticism, but mysticism just the same. I found myself looking for, imagining, trying to conceptualize what a holy community would be like. I was never able fully to conceptualize it, though I did know that it would be a place where people cared a lot for each other, and where they were good at nurturing each other. I also knew that the members of such a community would reach out to each other's needs, and that its members would find ways of speaking the truth to one another in love. I hadn't discovered that such a community must have a means of letting go -- or actually ejecting -- the recalcitrant troublemaker who attaches her/himself to it. I didn't know that such a community would require an exquisite way of networking, with a willingness to let hierarchical considerations go by the way. I had no idea of the forbearance it would have to exercise when some of its members were slow to grasp new situations, slow in developing new skills, or perhaps a

little thickheaded in heeding the advice of their peers. But I did believe that such a holy community could exist. I'm glad that I lived into my late forties and early fifties. Otherwise, I would never have been part of such a community. You have built it, and you have sustained it. It is a mystical, holy, living presence, that exists here on the crowded north side of Chicago. Preserve it carefully, my sister and brother congregationalists, for it is precious beyond all reckoning.

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## A Sociologist's God

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A view from sociology is that God is a symbol for society.

Experiences are divided into the sacred and the profane. The profane is our common everyday kind of experience while the sacred is experienced especially during certain rituals such as church services and mass protest rallies. The sacred, the sociologists say, is the experience of solidarity, the experience of acting as part of a group. This experience is evoked by shared ritual, symbol, myths, and beliefs.

God is a symbol for society, since everything asserted about God true of society. Society is transcendent: it is larger, more extensive, longer-lived, and more powerful than we are. It is not fully comprehensible by our minds. We depend on it for our language, our ideas, our roles, our jobs, our daily bread, our very lives. Simultaneously, Society is immanent. We have internalized society's customs, rules, and ideals.