

Simple Gifts

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The All Souls Journal

The Wisdom of Letting Go

-by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, Senior Minister



Monkeys in India are easily trapped and caught for one reason: they are unwilling to let go. For centuries, Indian trappers have simply placed food inside a container with an opening big enough for a monkey's open hand to enter, but too small for its

closed fist to withdraw. When a monkey reaches in and grabs the food, it then remains trapped by its failure to let go. We humans often do the same thing when we are unable to let go in times of change and loss or even in times of celebration.

Every life is filled with innumerable losses and changes that require a person to find ways to let go and adapt to new realities. They range from something as simple as bad weather on a special day to the death of a loved one. Our ability to navigate the smaller losses gives us the capacity to pass through the larger ones.

The Buddha taught that we also need to be careful not to become attached to the joyful mo-

ments, because they too will change. Even in the midst of eating an ice cream cone of our favorite flavor, we can suddenly begin to grieve that it is almost gone. Here we are, in the middle of a pleasurable experience, and our mind has already fast-forwarded to another point in time and we become saddened by the anticipation. The Buddha taught that change is constant and gave his followers techniques to learn how to live in the present moment, so that they would not burden themselves with attachments.

The awareness of impermanence becomes helpful when we are dealing with an unpleasant situation because we can also remember that "this too shall pass." Each emotion and thought is like a cloud in the sky passing over and will eventually be gone. Trying to hold on to pleasant moments forever is futile and leads to disappointment.

Conversely, our sorrows, depressions, anger and fear will also pass away in time. However, it is possible to convince ourselves that our grief or depression or fear will never end, and in doing so, we can create the conditions for a perpetual state of suffering. The antidote is to learn



Letting Go:

*Please
Release Me*



*Letting Go
in Love*



*A Buddhist
Perspective*



*A Mighty Cloud
of Witnesses*

to live in the moment, enjoying the pleasures while they last and experiencing the more painful emotions while they are with us. In a world governed by the law of impermanence, when we grasp and try to hold on to the way things are, or were, we set ourselves up for disappointment. And we end up like an Indian monkey, trapped by our own inability or unwillingness to let go.

In March, we will be focusing on the theme of *Letting Go*. Many Christians will practice

giving something up in the 40 days leading to Easter. Such a ritual can be a meaningful way for a person to learn about and explore his or her own relationship to letting go. If you choose to try it, pay attention to how it feels at different moments. At times you may long for that which you have given up. At other times you will notice the sensation has passed. Such awareness is a building block to finding personal satisfaction in a world of uncertainty and change. How wise are you in the realm of letting go? †

OUT OF AFRICA

(Blog Excerpts)

I am honored to stand with my colleague from my partner church in Uganda as he risks so much to stay true to what he believes. He does not ask, "If we do this, what will happen to us?" But, "if we don't support the gay and lesbian community of Uganda and their families, what will happen to them?"

On Valentines Day, more than 200 LGBT Ugandans gathered in Kampala to strategize and organize a response to the anti-gay bill that is about to be voted on by the Ugandan parliament.

Risking arrest and imprisonment these courageous activists convened by Ugandan Unitarian Universalist Minister Mark Kiyimba, in conjunction with Spectrum Uganda and other grassroots LGBT community organizations engaged in hours of discussions.



The conference attendees called for complete decriminalization of homosexuality, full access to services, human rights and protection by the state. Sessions included talks by religious and human rights activists. The keynote speaker was Anglican Bishop and Integrity Uganda president Christopher Ssenyojo, a champion ally of LGBT rights who spoke on the theme of Love and justice. Bishop Christopher, who was formerly exiled from Uganda and continues to offer Christian sanctuary to the LGBT community at great risk.

According to Pastor Kiyimba, whose church members include many LGBT persons, "I cannot stand by and watch as my community is exterminated. My church will become illegal and cease to exist if this bill becomes



Rev. Mark at New Life School

To read blogs in entirety and see more photos visit our website at www.allsoulschurch.org/marlininuganda

Please Release Me



Sometimes we hold on to relationships so tightly that our knuckles turn white from the clenching, maybe without our even knowing it. *But I love him* we say. *If only...*

If only he was more romantic then it would be perfect. If only she loved me as much as I loved her. If only he was more committed. If only, if only. Then it would be perfect. These are the warning signs of impending doom. Our responsibility is not to shape and mold our partner or loved ones into our idea of ideal. We have one responsibility only, which is to sort out our own lives and stop trying to coerce, plead, bully, or manipulate others in order to make our lives happier.

The fact is that the healthiest relationships I have seen have something in common. They are about each person being the best they can be independent from the relationship at the same time that they are committed to one another. In this scenario, we are our partner's biggest fans. In these relationships couples release ownership of their partner for partnership.

Here are some questions to think about to help you decide whether or not you need to loosen your grip on your loved one. Do you wish you could:

1. *Spend less time obsessing about other people's problems?*
2. *Feel perfectly comfortable saying, "No"?*
3. *Take responsibility for the way you feel?*
4. *Feel perfectly content when you have time alone?*
5. *Trust that those in your life are doing the best they can most of the time?*



-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister

6. *Have more time for yourself without worrying about what someone else is or isn't doing?*
7. *Let (and I say this understanding the irony) other people make their own choices and mistakes?*
8. *Speak the truth in love?*
9. *Release yourself from situations when you know you're being damaged?*
10. *Be gentle with yourself and still hold yourself accountable?*

How does one arrive at this place? It begins by getting real with our significant other about what we see happening, or not happening, and what we would like to change. Sometimes it takes individual or couple-work with a therapist, counselor, minister, or spiritual director.

For me, I can say it definitely takes spiritual practice. Last month's theme of *Spiritual Practice* helps prepare us for this one, *Letting Go*. Without the practice we are not prepared for the opportunity. But when we are

grounded, centered, and anchored in our values it is so much easier to let go. It begins slowly – this kind of transformation happens by letting go incrementally.

So what can you let go of today, tomorrow, this week? What can you let go of, in order to make some of your own dreams (see numbers 1-10 above) come true? †

Letting Go in Love

-by Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



Letting Go – saying goodbye – is probably the hardest thing we do in this life. It’s so difficult and feels so permanent that there are folks I know who refuse to even say the word, “goodbye.” In our society, the dominant culture in the U.S., saying goodbye seems to imply finality, as in “The End” as in “I Give Up” as in “You Lose.” We are conditioned to be Winners or Losers – what else is there? We are also conditioned to work hard in order to be able to possess power, money, status, and important things. The Winner has the most Stuff and the best of Everything. Taken from this perspective, which we can scarcely avoid, is it any wonder that we find it difficult to say goodbye?

Of course, beyond letting go of things, the ultimate circumstance in saying goodbye is death. We commonly use the expression of losing. I say it frequently. “I’m sorry for your loss.” Of course, what I hope to convey is my compassion for the loss of physical companionship, the loss of shared adventures, the loss of whatever potential for the relationship there might have been, and the loss of a sense of knowing and identity. When someone we love dies, we feel diminished and left to drift on a sea of unknowing. When someone we care about dies, we can feel as if a part of us dies, too. Physical pain can be preferable to this kind of pain. So, what do we do?

Avoidance, as I mentioned before, is one way to address the inevitable losses in our lives such as disease, death, and broken relationships. Don’t say goodbye. Don’t return phone calls. Pretend not to know or understand painful truths. How does that work for you? It might be a relief in some respects. Avoidance is an important survival skill to get us through for awhile. However, I’m a living witness to the suffering caused by such a strategy used in the long term. It amplifies, and deepens, and increases dis-eases of all sorts. This leads to the kind of heart-sickness and soul-sickness that claims ever more lives. Avoidance, when used as the consistent method of choice, leads to a downward spiral



toward the very thing that people try to avoid. So, if long-term avoidance doesn't work – if it is not life-giving and life-affirming, as we claim to desire – what does? The answer is: staying present. When what we want is to flee the pain and the reality of letting go, there are promptings and urges and sometimes well-meaning people saying, “Don't look at the source of the pain.” Yet, this is exactly what we must do if we want to live a life of joy and abundance.



How can we live a life of joy and abundance without the person or things that affirm our identity and worth in the world? Isn't it a betrayal of our love for them? Not if you are talking about the kind of love that asks only that you be your whole, authentic self; the kind of love that invites you to share your gifts, your talents, and your skills; the kind of love that wants you to be true to yourself and kind and compassionate to yourself and others. That Love wants you to keep living. That Love wants you to gently let go and keep moving into the Mystery that holds your potential and offers possibilities beyond your imagining. That Love – that Amazing, Compassionate Love – is with you always and All Ways. It never abandons you. You can definitely shut Love out if that is your choice. But Love understands. Love stays.

So, this is the key. This is our practice of all souls. We say that Love is the Spirit. It is in

our imperfectly beautiful community where we practice our commitment to each other. This is the practice. We practice holding each other in our suffering and in our pain. We practice staying when we might feel like running away as fast as we can. We practice listening with compassion and open hearts. We go to the places that scare us, such as infidelity, addiction, anger, deceitfulness, shame, and abuses of all kinds. We go there within the boundaries of our continuing definition of right relationship for the health and safety of the community. We are in this messiness and beautiful chaos together.

At All Souls, we practice choosing to embrace the possibilities for new birth that the experience of change and chaos bring. This isn't easy, nor is it pleasurable. Yet, holding on tightly to a relationship of any kind – human or otherwise – beyond its particular boundary of finitude is akin to the image of Mr. Scrooge's partner, Jacob Marley, being bound by heavy chains that drag behind him for a long, long way. Instead of clinging and grasping (the win-lose scenario) it is possible to hold on loosely (a win-win scenario.) There is a spiritual freedom available to those who let go with love. We can cast off those chains of our own making. Together, we can continue to move into this place of freedom and trust. Together, we can claim this amazing and infinite Source of Love. May it be so. †



Our church program-year (September-May) is fashioned around nine theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings each month are by no means limited to the themes. However, these topics provide an axis around which many elements of church life gain more meaning and depth. They provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Be warned: Seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

- September - Vocation & Calling*
- October - Unity*
- November - Gratitude*
- December - Peace*
- January - Grace*
- February - Prayer & Spiritual Practice*
- March - Letting Go*
- April - Salvation*
- May - Truth*

Three Steps under One Fold

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director



Four Fold Path of the Shaman:

1. *Show up.*
2. *Pay attention.*
3. *Speak the truth.*
4. *Let go of the results.*

You can ask the youth (and my family) how many times I've

lost my patience, seemed intolerant, and been downright disrespectful to them for not responding as I would have them respond to my teachings on patience and acceptance and respect.

The irony is not lost on me. I think god made me a youth director – and a mother – so I would have lots and lots and lots and lots of opportunities to work on my control issues. Because that's what my negative reactions are about – *control*. Control of the outcome, control of other people's reactions, control of how I'm perceived, control of feeling like a successful youth director (or mom). Control, control, control.

When I was ready to begin working on this control-Nazi thing, I ran across the Four Fold Path of the Shaman. Oh, I was so excited. Only *four* folds to wisdom? That's way fewer than *12 Steps to Overpowering your Inner Dominator* or *30 Days to a Much, Much Less Controlling You*. And the first three folds were going to be no-brainers for me. I'm not only there, I'm fully engaged, and I speak the truth in abundance. So, really, I only had one BIG fold – letting go of the results.

In *The Little Book of Letting Go*, Hugh Prather breaks the letting go process into three steps (three steps under one fold is still doable).

1. Look at what obstructs your experience of wholeness and peace. He says when our desire is for people to change or circumstances to go our way, we are not taking responsibility for our state of mind, and that our state of mind should

be more important than anything that we're doing. When our goal is to maintain our sense of wholeness and connectedness – regardless of what's going or NOT going on – nothing is beyond our control because we are not interested in being in control. And, by the way, no one has ever been made more thoughtful or engaged by being bullied. Oh, yeah.

2. Be certain you WANT to go beyond what obstructs you to wholeness and peace. If my reaction is irritation, it probably means I don't *want* wholeness or peace at that moment. If I want to be right, it means I want to be separate. Our society has gotten so caught up in feelings of righteousness and cynicism that it feels natural. But do I *want* stay in a position to judge and be right? Or do I want to go beyond that? If so, I must continually interrupt my patterns of self-righteousness, judgment, and control, and replace them with something – anything! – loving. Do I sincerely want a mind that knows stillness, wholeness and a deep bond with the youth, my family, my co-workers, my friends? Oh, yeah.

3. Respond from a place of wholeness within you, from the whole mind, not from the conflicted mind. Prather, and others, contend that we are constantly of two minds – one whole and peaceful and unchanging, and one fragmented and separate and busy. When we respond from that place of wholeness and connectedness, letting go doesn't require control of anything – not the outcome, other people, or our negative thoughts and feelings. Letting go only requires letting go. When I find myself in a useless battle to control the outcome, I can simply walk off the battlefield and toward that place in my heart that is quiet and loving and connected to all.

Do I have a place like that in my heart and do I know the path to get there? Oh, yeah. And the map has four folds. †

A Mighty Cloud of Witnesses: Rev. Suzanne P. Meyer

-by Kathy Keith, Executive Director

This is the first Mighty Cloud written to remember a person who actually conducted memorial services at All Souls, and whose ashes now lie beneath the Atlas Blue Cedars outside the sanctuary window.

Suzanne came to All Souls in 1997, called by our congregation to serve as Associate Minister. During her candidating week, I complimented her on her beautiful fingernails, which she kept tended and lacquered as long as I knew her. I admired her honesty when she confessed a love of “shelter magazines,” a vice a bit more worldly than one might expect from a minister, but oh, so human.

She wrote lyrically, and with a self-deprecating humor that allowed us all to take a step back from our egos and laugh at ourselves. Her pulpit presence and delivery were powerful and honed, perhaps from her pre-ministry days in radio.

Brent Smith was our Senior Minister at the time, and they relished working together, having known each other since seminary at Meadville-Lombard Theological School. Clearly the search committee recognized Suzanne’s gifts dovetailing with Brent’s in a way that created a whole much greater than the simple sum of their two parts. Suzanne’s portfolio included Adult Education, and under her guidance Wednesday Connections flourished and grew. Suzanne also participated enthusiastically in the life of the congregation, including costuming herself each year for the children’s Halloween Party. She loved the children, and especially the Children’s and Youth Choirs.

When Brent announced his call to a much larger congregation, Suzanne’s situation shifted dramatically. She served as chief of staff during the interim year, working with Jack Bryant as inter-

im associate minister and Peter Raible as interim minister. She led the staff through a transitional time with loyalty and grace.

Following her tenure at All Souls (1997-2000), Suzanne served the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne.

After receiving a diagnosis of Stage 4 colon cancer last August, Suzanne proceeded to put her affairs in order, including not just expressing her wishes for her memorial service, but, for the convenience of all concerned, writing her own eulogy. In Suzanne’s own words:



When one of my coworkers died of cancer, our director gave us an afternoon off to attend her memorial service. Although I did not know the deceased woman well, I went to pay my respects. The memorial service was held in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Unitarian Church.

I had been to my share of funerals and I found them dismal. I had planned to stick my head in the church, sign the guest book, and make a quick exit. Was I in for a surprise! The service was a typical Unitarian Universalist service – up-lifting, life-affirming, positive, unlike anything I had experienced in the Baptist Church. There was no sermon, no altar call, no mention of heaven or hell. I forgot about my plans to make a fast exit; I found myself glued to the pew.

I was an instant convert to Unitarian Universalism, not for intellectual or theological reasons, which would come later, but for emotional reasons. Like so many other UU converts, I had experienced a homecoming at that memorial service. I had not known that I was looking for a home, until I had found one. †

Daily Thoughts On

MARCH 1

The creative process is a process of surrender, not control.

~Julia Cameron

MARCH 2

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

~Lao Tzu

MARCH 3

Give up all bad qualities in you, banish the ego and develop the spirit of surrender. You will then experience Bliss.

~Sri Sathya Sai Baba

MARCH 4

There are things that we never want to let go of, people we never want to leave behind. But keep in mind that letting go isn't the end of the world, it's the beginning of a new life.

~Unknown

MARCH 5

All of our reasoning ends in surrender to feeling.

~Blaise Pascal

MARCH 6

Love is an attempt at penetrating another being, but it can only succeed if the surrender is mutual.

~Octavio Paz

MARCH 7

The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.

~Vince Lombardi

MARCH 8

The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender.

~William Booth

MARCH 9

At fifteen life had taught me undeniably that surrender, in its place, was as honorable as resistance, especially if one had no choice.

~Maya Angelou

MARCH 10

If you surrender completely to the moments as they pass, you live more richly those moments.

~Anne Morrow Lindbergh

MARCH 11

Better indeed is knowledge than mechanical practice. Better than knowledge is meditation. But better still is surrender of attachment to results, because there follows immediate peace.

~The Bhagavad Gita

MARCH 12

Love conquers all things; let us too surrender to Love.

~Virgil

MARCH 13

All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.

~Havelock Ellis

MARCH 14

As I started to picture the trees in the storm, the answer began to dawn on me. The trees in the storm don't try to stand up straight and tall and erect. They allow themselves to bend and be blown with the wind. They understand the power of letting go. Those trees and those branches that try too hard to stand up strong and straight are the ones that break.

~Julia Butterfly Hill

MARCH 15

Breathe. Let go. Remind yourself that this very moment is the only one you know you have for sure.

~Oprah Winfrey

MARCH 16

True love doesn't have a happy ending, because true love never ends. Letting go is one way of saying I love you.

~Unknown

MARCH 17
Courage is the power to let go of the familiar. ~Raymond Lindquist

MARCH 18
Creativity can be described as letting go of certainties. ~Gail Sheehy

MARCH 19
Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward. ~Unknown

MARCH 20
Hanging onto resentment is letting someone you despise live rent-free in your head. ~Ann Landers

MARCH 21
Inner peace can be reached only when we practice forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the past, and is therefore the means for correcting our misperceptions. ~Gerald Jampolsky

MARCH 22
Let go. Why do you cling to pain? There is nothing you can do about the wrongs of yesterday. It is not yours to judge. Why hold on to the very thing which keeps you from hope and love? ~Leo Buscaglia

MARCH 23
Letting go doesn't mean giving up, but rather accepting that there are things that cannot be. ~Unknown

MARCH 24
Loving someone is setting them free, letting them go. ~Kate Winslet

MARCH 25
People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar. ~Thich Nhat Hanh

MARCH 26
Some think it's holding on that makes one strong; sometimes it's letting go. ~Sylvia Robinson

MARCH 27
Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over. ~Gloria Naylor

MARCH 28
Stand up and walk out of your history. ~Phil McGraw

MARCH 29
The harder you fight to hold on to specific assumptions, the more likely there's gold in letting go of them. ~J. Seely Brown

MARCH 30
By letting it go, it all gets done. The world is won by those who let it go. But when you try and try, the world is beyond the winning. ~Lao Tzu

MARCH 31
You never leave someone behind, you take a part of them with you, and leave a part of yourself behind. ~Unknown

Letting Go



Letting Go: A Buddhist Perspective

-by Ann Jackman



Over the past several years it has been my privilege to facilitate groups we have here at All Souls, called *Grieving Souls*. In my work with griever I have found the Buddhist perspective on suffering to be beneficial.

The word used is *Dukkha*, which literally means “bad (duk) to the mouth (kha).” In English it is translated variably as suffering, pain, impermanence, unpleasantness, imperfection, emptiness, or insubstantiality.

The Buddha discussed three kinds of dukkha:

- **Dukkha-dukkha:** The pain of pain, which includes death and bereavement.
- **Viparinama-dukkha:** The pain of alteration; it means violated expectations and the failure of happy moments to last.
- **Skandhas:** The attitudes of individuals and the factors constituting the human mind.

The Buddhists identify four possible interpretations of suffering:

Optimism

The denial of suffering in the face of all evidence.

Pessimism

The passive resignation to the inevitable.

Rationalization

The camouflage of suffering by use of pompous sophistry or attempting to diminish the suffering.

Rational

The faith in the possibility of overcoming suffering.

Participating in a group such as *Grieving Souls* is emotionally difficult. It requires honesty, vulnerability, and facing the pain. Because it is so difficult, we often choose optimism, pessimism, or rationalization and not the rational. And in grief’s most acute phase, it is impossible to hope that relief can be ours. †



Because interest in Grieving Souls dwindled, group meetings have been on hiatus. However, the Care Team sees the need for this group, so if you have suffered a loss of any duration and would like to participate in a professionally facilitated grief group – or if you just want more information – please call Ann Jackman, L.C.S.W. at 742-4429. When enough people have responded to form a group, we will do so.

Spiritual Practices: Release

-by Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



Last month, *Simple Gifts* offered many different ways to think of and to perform spiritual practice. This month, our spiritual practice focus is about letting go. If you feel stuck in one place and notice that you feel unhappy, restless, or discouraged, finding a way

to address the spiritual nature of your situation can help move you toward a more vibrant way of living. If you regularly engage in a spiritual practice that at one time was nourishing and supportive, but now find that it no longer provides the energy, comfort, and inspiration it once did, it's time to enter into a different practice. It is possible to depend upon a method as "the answer" to every aspect of our life; in other words, to turn the practice into the Answer instead of a path to hope, healing, and compassion. Spiritual practice is a *process*, not an event. Likewise, *letting go* is sometimes a very long process.

Any action or inaction, any pain that you have caused or felt, if denied and stuffed deep down inside can bring much mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual anguish. Therefore, the first step in a spiritual practice of letting go is to admit to yourself that there is something (a habit, a wrong-doing, a fear, a possession, a way of life) or someone to which you have become inordinately attached. (Go to the places that scare you.) Once you have acknowledged its existence, the next step is to admit that you are powerless to let go all by yourself; that you need help. There are many ways

to accomplish this: telling a trusted person, writing, breathing it, praying it into the wind. The method doesn't matter. It's the intention and the action that matter.

The intentional work of letting go can encompass reading, thinking, talking, writing, drawing, skiing, or washing dishes. It can be any activity that helps you focus, helps you listen to that still, small voice within, and allows you to reflect on that which you wish to release. You might consider the practices that were offered in *Simple Gifts* last month. In addition to your private spiritual practice, sometimes it is necessary to work with a professional counselor individually or with a therapeutic group. Of course, some of your important processing can occur as you worship and attend church classes and activities. Books can also be a wonderful resource.

One book that I'd like to recommend is, *The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About*

Living, by Ira Byock, M.D. His medical practice for many years has been in the field of palliative care; he works with individuals who are dying and their families. He has discovered, in his years of practice, that when it gets right down to it, there are four things that need to be said to help the individual release their hold on life when the time comes:

*Please forgive me.
I forgive you.
Thank you.
I love you.*

(continued on page 12)



Imagine how wonderful it would be if we could each do our own difficult personal work in order to have the courage to say these things to the important people in our lives. Imagine how freeing it would be to do this now and not wait until we are almost dead. Best of all, imagine teaching our children by example and by including them in the process. (Actually, at All Souls we are practicing this in our children's religious education program and activities.)

However, I know that sometimes it is impossible, for various reasons, to have a conversation about the four things with people who have hurt us or whom we have hurt. When you reach this point in your process, a ritual of release becomes very important. Here are a few ideas:

Writing letters can be very helpful. Write a letter to the person (living or dead); say everything you need to say. Then, take the time to tear it up in itty bitty pieces. The pieces can be burned safely (we don't want to cause further harm!) or buried (in an appropriate spot, with permission) or placed in a container of water to dissolve away.

In some cultures, beautiful boats or rafts are made (out of paper, twigs, leaves, etc.) and sent down a river. They often symbolize a person who died. When making the boat, decorate it with colors and forms that are meaningful to you (with materials that are healthy for the water's ecosystem). As you release the boat, you could read a poem, say some special words, sing a song, play an instrument – whatever assists you in making meaning of the release.

There are Native American cultures as well as Eastern cultures (such as in Tibet) that make prayer sticks or prayer flags. Similar to the boat idea just described, paint or draw symbols that are meaningful to you on the sticks or flags. Then, place them somewhere outside where the sun and wind and rain will gradually accept the suffering of your heart and release it, returning it

to the dust from which we all come. May you have the courage and the strength to face your pain and befriend it. May you discover the trust that allows you to move forward into new possibilities. And in this important work, may you feel companionship of all souls and a mighty cloud of witnesses to support you and help you along the way. †



Letting Go – Personified

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister, & Kate Starr, Youth Director

The birth certificate proves her legal name is Letting Go, but no one calls her that. Family and friends use nicknames: Release, Relinquish, Submit, Defeat... which really says more about us than it does about her.

I call her Surrender; she likes to call me Control. We first met at the theatre. I was in high heels and must have put my foot down in an awkward position, because my ankle gave way, and there I was, all dressed up and on my knees.

Over the years that I've known her, Surrender has never had a job where Grief hasn't also worked (at least in the same building). They often bump into each other in the break room and have, on occasion, accidentally eaten each other's sack lunch.

Surrender also has a dear friend named Acceptance. They meet every morning before work for coffee and to plan their next excursion. Each always reaches to pay the bill.

Surrender is a fantastic travel companion. She lets me drive. She sits in the passenger seat with the window rolled all the way down, hand outstretched, playing with the resistance of the wind. To please me, she buys a crisp new map as soon as we arrive. Usually they are still folded like an accordion when we get home.

Surrender has many hobbies. She is a student in Serenity's painting class and is quite good. She loves to sing, especially supporting the weak voice of her cousin Pain with her strong melodic alto harmonies. She has a regular meditation practice with a Buddhist sangha.



She's certain she memorized most of the Zen koans, but has forgotten them all. Surrender also likes to attach wheels to heavy things like chairs, and beds, and bathtubs and race them in imaginary boxcar derbies down steep hills in her hometown.

Surrender has been in love with Risk for as long as she can remember. She writes him poetry and watches him come and go from her life and then back into the comfortable arms of Routine.

Surrender enjoys just a bite of chocolate, a lick of ice cream, and only a handful of buttered popcorn. (And she calls *me* Control...) She usually has restaurant left-overs which she boxes up and offers to Pain, who is always nearby and always hungry. †

All
Souls



Hallman earned her M.Div from the University of Chicago Divinity School, and a Doctorate of Ministry degree from Meadville Lombard Theological School.

Dr. Hallman, a delightful presence, was senior minister of First Unitarian Church of Dallas for more than 20 years, and is always much in demand across the country to lead seminars and retreats.

Enjoy this (half) day of spiritual refreshment with the originator of the *Living by Heart* practice. An opportunity to learn how to engage the natural world, great literature, and your own words and passions in a unique liberal religious discipline.

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JOHN B. WOLF LECTURE

Living By Heart

*A Guide to Spiritual Practice
for Unitarian Universalists*

Rev. Dr. Laurel Hallman

Saturday, March 20

9:00 am to noon

\$10 ADMISSION

\$75 SPONSORSHIP

Includes private catered
reception with author.

\$100 SPONSORSHIP

Includes reception, and advanced
autographed copy of book.

Child care and scholarships available on request.

Laurel Hallman's sermons are challenging, affirming, bright and deep; this collection includes her best.

Anyone who has heard a sermon by Dr. Laurel Hallman will know why to buy this book. If you've never heard her, or of her, this book will introduce you to her amazing gifts. Likewise, if you don't know much about what it means to be a Unitarian, this is a great way to learn.

This book was a long time coming, but worth the wait. If you're already a Unitarian, this book belongs in your collection. If you aren't yet, then you owe it to yourself to give it a try.



ALSO: FREE PUBLIC LECTURE (Emerson Hall Forum)

Sunday March 21

What Is Faith and Can We Teach It?

Save the Date for

Rick Fortner's 50th BIRTHDAY BASH and New Orleans Fundraiser

FRIDAY MARCH 26
6:00 pm

Fun, Fellowship, and the JAMBALAYA JASS BAND!

In lieu of presents, Rick would like proceeds
and donations to go to the
New Orleans UU Churches in his honor.

Resources for Further Reading

The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living By Ira Byock
These inspiring stories demonstrate that a degree of emotional healing is always possible, even in the wake of family strife, personal tragedy, divorce, or death. With practical wisdom and spiritual punch, *The Four Things That Matter Most* gives us the language and guidance to honor and experience what really matters most in our lives every day.

The Little Book of Letting Go By Hugh Prather
Bestselling author Hugh Prather gives voice to the internal chatter that prevents us from enjoying or pursuing our true desires. "Throughout the day, the world urges us to be at war with ourselves and each other..." He compares these thoughts to stale clutter in the back of our refrigerators. By cleaning out our minds, we allow room for fresher and more nourishing thought.

The Art of Letting Go: A Pathway to Inner Freedom By Vidya Frazier
With refreshing insight, Vidya Frazier demystifies enlightenment for us. Speaking as a human being, not as a guru, she reveals a pathway to spiritual freedom that is simple and practical, yet powerfully profound. She guides us in letting go of our mistaken identity, our ego, and points to our true Self that is already free, here and now, living in peace and harmony with all that is.

The Secret of Letting Go By Guy Finley
There is such a healing power in the act of letting go, especially of those things that drag us down such as self-doubts, critical friends, unrealistic ideals, rigid ideas, and painful thoughts and feelings. Finley explains the obstacles that can be overcome in the search for freedom, happiness, and transformation.

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When submitting articles for church publications:

- 1) Submit your text electronically via email. Plain text is best.
- 2) Include your name and daytime number.
- 3) Not all submissions will be published. Submissions may be edited.

Questions? Call
Laurel Williamson
at 743-2805, ext 305.

March Highlights

March 5	Soulful Sundown - <i>Please Release Me</i>
March 6	Coffeehouse: <i>Will Kimbrough</i>
March 7	Andrew Harvey Preaches All Souls 303 - <i>Joining the Church</i> Academy Awards Watch-Party and Fundraiser
March 11	Day Alliance
March 13	Coffeehouse: <i>Ruthie Foster Trio</i>
March 14	Heritage Sunday
March 20	JBW Lecture: <i>Rev. Laurel Hallman</i>
March 21	Ordination of Sarah Gettie Burks
March 23	Evening Alliance
March 24	All Souls 101
March 26	New Orleans Fundraiser / Bday Party for Rick Fortner
March 27	Women's Retreat

See inside for

Parish Notes

The All Souls Weekly Bulletin



ALL SOULS
ALTERNATIVE
WORSHIP

SOULFUL
SUNDOWN

Please Release Me

MARCH 5,
7:00 pm

With
ANNIE ELLICOTT & OTHERS PERFORMING
Codependent Love Songs

Childcare available by reservation.
(Call 743-2805 ext. 308)

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