

## Welcome to our month of Welcoming!

This year our overarching worship theme is a simple one: What does it mean to be UU? Ok, maybe it's not so simple. But it is an important question and one that I invite you to explore together this year. To do this we will be engaging the values and covenants laid out in the proposed new Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association's by-laws. This is the part that describes the purposes and principles of the UUA and of Unitarian Universalism.

We begin with the theme of Welcoming. While not a stated value, I hope you agree that it all begins with welcome. Welcoming others in all their uniqueness and welcoming our own full selves into our lives. What do you think of welcoming? What parts are easy, what aspects of welcoming are difficult. Who is easy to welcome? Who is not?

To help us explore our themes each month I will provide you with a few resources and exercises. Take a look as you have time and see what sparks inside you. To give us time to explore these themes more deeply the first Sunday of each month has been rebranded as "Meaning Matters Sundays". This will be a time to explore the monthly topic in small groups after a shortened service.

I hope you enjoy the resources below and that I get to welcome you to First Parish often.

Rev. Deborah Bennett

## ***Word Roots & Definitions***

***Welcome*** dates back to Anglo-Saxon days, from *Beowulf*. The word was originally *wilcuma* in Old English, a combination of *wil* (pleasure) plus *cuma* (guest).

The verb form, *wilcumian*, meant to receive someone or something with pleasure.

## **Inspirations**

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other. Call it my Muslim eyes on the American project. "We made you different nations and tribes that you may come to know one another," says the Qur'an. [Eboo Patel](#)

Hospitality is simply love on the loose.

*Joan D. Chittister*

Hospitality is a form of worship.

*Babylonian Talmud*

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. *Hebrews 13.1 - Christianity*

A real conversation always contains an invitation. You are inviting another person to reveal herself or himself to you, to tell you who they are or what they want... A year or so ago, I found myself in exactly this dynamic, my daughter's bedroom door slammed shut just as I was about to say a last, deeply satisfying unhelpful thing. But I caught myself... I gave it the old 10-minute cooldown time, made tea and a plate of cookies... Then I knocked on her door and said in a very different, more invitational voice, "Come on, Charlotte, I've made tea. Let's go and have a talk." As soon as I put the tray down and we sat next to each other, almost by accident I happened to say exactly the right thing—I said, "Charlotte, tell me one thing you'd like me to stop doing as a father. And tell me one thing you'd like me to do more of." She suddenly gazed up at me with a lovely look in her eyes, one I knew from her very early infancy. She was engaged again because at last I was really inviting her to tell me who she had become—not who she had been or who I wanted her to be—but who she was now. *David Whyte*

## Music, Videos and Articles

These playlists are organized as a journey of sorts, so consider listening from beginning to end and using the playlists as musical meditations.

Click [here](#) for the Spotify playlist on Welcome

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist on Welcome

### Love Reaches Out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvIPa28cVfA> A visual and musical meditation asking us, "How is love calling you to reach out and welcome others in?"

### The Black Thought Project

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Bj7GpwA0Vw> On welcoming and centering Blackness

Related [podcast](#)

### Welcoming Stories

[http://www.firstpersonamerican.org/stories\\_welcoming.html](http://www.firstpersonamerican.org/stories_welcoming.html)

A video series encouraging Americans to become more welcoming by inviting immigrants to share their story about someone who made a big difference in their lives when they first arrived.

### Welcome to the Brink of Everything, Parker J. Palmer

<https://onbeing.org/blog/parker-palmer-welcome-to-the-brink-of-everything/>

On welcoming the gifts of age.

### On the Article II Study Commission's Invitation to Welcome New Values

Introduction and context:

[https://www.questformeaning.org/quest\\_article/embracing-the-living-tradition/](https://www.questformeaning.org/quest_article/embracing-the-living-tradition/)

The proposal: <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-06/Article%20%20Package.pdf>

## **Exercise: Asking Yourself some Questions**

*This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. They are meant not so much to be answered as to take you somewhere.*

*Read through the list 2-3 times until one question sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions “shimmers.”*

*Then reflect on with questions such as:*

- *What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?*
- *How might my inner voice be trying to speak to me through it?*
- *What memory is the question inviting me to revisit? And why?*
- *How might Life be speaking through the question to offer me a word of comfort or challenge?*

*Often writing out your thoughts enables you to go deeper. Sometimes it helps to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the question you need to wrestle with.*

1. Who welcomed you in when you needed it most? How has that gift changed you? What would you say to the person if you had the chance?
2. What do you know now about welcoming in the present moment that you didn't know when you were younger?
3. What would you tell someone younger than yourself about welcoming in grief?
4. What part of you do you wish your family of origin would have welcomed more enthusiastically?
5. Has welcoming change gotten easier or harder as you've grown older?
6. What part of yourself is hardest to welcome in and embrace with compassion:
7. What new ideas have you welcomed in since you've been a UU?
8. If you were asked to name 2 ways you could help make your congregation more welcoming, what would they be?