

Unitarian
Universalist
Church of Davis
Theme Journal
November
Grace

Author John O'Donohue wrote a dinner grace in poetic verse. I love how he imagines memory, carried inside food. He describes the quiver of a seed as it awakens in the earth. The trust of roots. Stems of growth. A kiss of rain. The pull of the sun. All this magic never speaks a word, and begs for appreciation sometimes spoken by us.

I lived in Dekalb, Illinois a graduate student, and outside of being a Midwest university town, its only claim was symbolized by the image of an ear of corn sprouting red wings. As far as the eye could see, there were miles of corn. The local Illinois residents teased those of us who were out-of-state imports, telling us that we could hear the corn grow if we sat among the rows in a field.

They probably never expected me to do it, but I went into the fields one summer night when the fireflies were shining, and humidity hung in the air. I was afraid a farmer would send me running for trespassing. There were no farmers walking the perimeter of their fields, but I was found by mosquitoes as large as hummingbirds.

Whether the locals were pulling my leg or not, when I stood very still, I heard something shifting around me. Under the sound of the high-pitched squeal of mosquito song, was a squeak of tight leaves pushing against the stem. I'm sure I witnessed the quivering and pushing of plant life.

This is one of the memories I carry as a faithful (faith filled) Unitarian Universalist who loves this earth. Our congregation has joined the international Meatless Monday movement, and every Monday I join a large community of others who eat a plant based diet. Look to the flier for Meatless Mondays to learn all the ways Meatless Mondays is pastoral care for ourselves and a justice issue for the earth.

– Rev. Beth Banks



❖ www.uudavis.org → Events/Publications → 2015-16, November, Grace ❖

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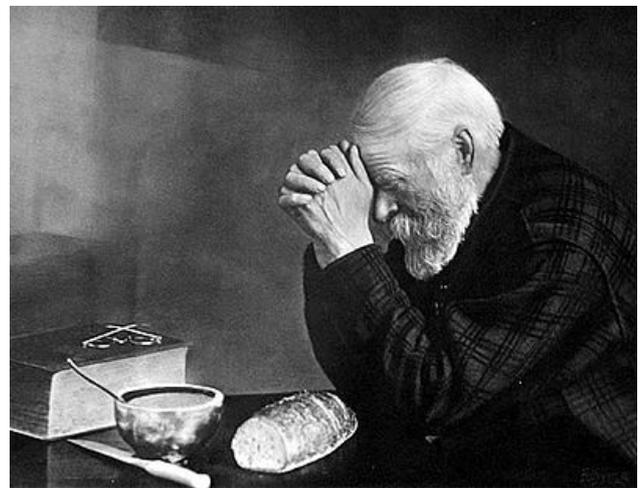
Grace as an 'undeserved blessing' which is sometimes a tough concept. Don't we all deserve blessings? And who gets to offer that blessing—can it only come from God or someone in authority? As we consider Grace this month, think about the phrase "to grace us with your presence." What a wonderful phrase for UUs! After all, our First Principle is acknowledging the worth and dignity of each person!

November is the kickoff for so many holidays and family get-togethers. This is such a perfect time to make a habit of considering how we grace each other with our presence. Before Thanksgiving feasts we can be collecting 'thank-yous' for all the wonderful ways we are blessed by others. Even if we anticipate tense conversations, we can spend some time pondering the blessings that come from people with whom we don't see eye-to-eye and the challenging times in our relationships.

Equally worthy of consideration, of course, is how you grace the lives of others. What kind of fingerprints do you leave on the hearts and minds of those around you? Do you reach beyond your immediate circle of family, friends, and colleagues? Are your grace-full fingerprints as prolific as a toddler eating spaghetti? Or are you more reserved?

For my part, this Thanksgiving I am promising myself to overcome my habit of 'not making a big deal' out of things and to explicitly thank the people in my life for the ways they have graced me. I challenge you to be grace in action this month! And to talk about it with your family and friends!

– Adrean Dills, *Interim Director of Lifespan Learning*



In 1918, a peddler entered Eric Enstrom's photography studio in Bovey,

Minnesota. Light streamed through the window onto a table where a family book, a bowl of gruel and a loaf of bread were placed. The man sat down and bowed his head in prayerful thanks. It captured a moment of gratitude during a lean time of war. The photograph, "Grace", is now recognized all over the world. It has an air of reverence about it...the big book on the table, the observant and obedient servant, the light coming in through the window.

Truth be told, the book was dictionary and the man in the photo was known more for his drinking and loafing around than his piety. He was paid \$5 to pose for the picture and little is known about what happened to him after it was taken. He simply melted back into the obscurity that he came from...or did he, sense we all seem to know him?

This man and this photograph show us two sides of grace. First, we see the table side version in a bowed head of gratitude. But if we look further into the story behind the picture, we can understand the concept of grace on a deeper level, whereas grace is defined as the unmerited favor of God's blessing being bestowed upon us. The man in the photo is not as pious as we might ascribe him to be and yet he has become an icon which evokes in us a sense of humility and gratitude that we ourselves can never fully achieve because of our own failings. But no matter how many times we fail or fall short, the opportunity to be a more grateful, a more humble, a more compassionate, a more loving human being is always still there. It is an open invitation of grace.

– Laura Thompson, *Intern & Campus Minister*

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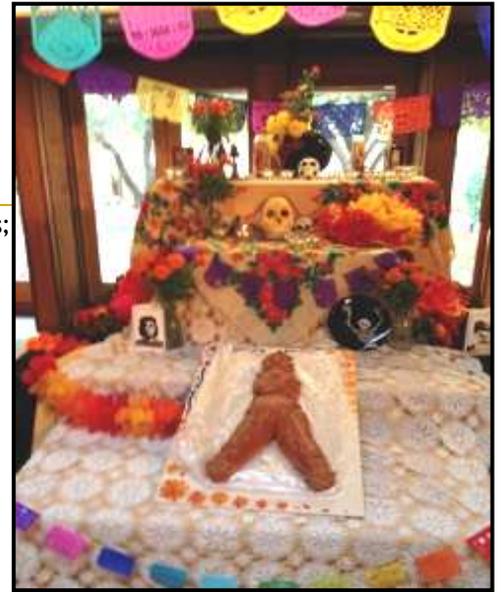
Sunday Worship

Hymn of the Month, *All Shall Be Well* by Angela Salvaggione

November 1, 9:30 & 11:15am, *The Good Life: Day of the Dead*, Rev. Beth Banks; Donna Sachs, Worship Associate. Craig Thompson & Doug Kauffman, Musicians.

The most common viewpoint about life and death among Unitarian Universalists is that we have one life to live. Each individual life is a journey that eventually meets the horizon and vanishes. Can we find the courage to accept that the day will come when our specific, individual life will near that vanishing point? Can we accept that those we love are also on that journey? One of the sources for the sermon is *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande.

You're invited to bring mementos to represent those you love, who have died. We will have pan de muerte for a bread communion as a part of the service. **FIRST SUNDAY:** Children & Youth participate first 30 minutes.



November 8, 9:30 & 11:15am, *Lost & Found*, Rev. Laura Thompson; Amethyst McKay, Worship Associate. Grace is said to be something that is neither earned nor deserved. It is not something we can seek because it is always there, yet it often a difficult concept to grasp. The hymn "Amazing Grace" symbolizes this both in its lyrics and its back story. We'll examine the hymn and the concept of grace in our own lives by asking, "Where have we gotten lost?"

New Member Ceremony. Distribute UUSC Guest at Your Table Boxes: faces and stories of grass roots human rights workers join your table for a month (via your Guest Box). Put enough money in your Guest Box to add one more person to your meal. Dec 24, bring a check for the total and donate it to support UUSC's human rights work. <http://www.uusc.org/welcome-to-guest-at-your-table>

November 15, 9:30 & 11:15am, *Who Did You Say You Are? Transgender Awareness*; Rev. Beth Banks; Ben Bazor, Worship Associate. This year, people who are transgender have been in the news more than ever before. I listen to every transgender person's story of self-discovery with admiration for their courage as they explore and discover their identity, and I know I have so much more to learn. In the months leading up to this sermon, I've been learning more, speaking with my trans friends, and asking for help from those who are queer and questioning. Come learn with me. *Transgender Awareness Day is November 20.*

Special Collection: Yolo Center for Families, <http://www.yolofrc.org/> To provide prevention and intervention services that empower individuals and families to achieve their goals and be active stewards of their community. Play groups for young children, support groups for women, parent education and assistance in applying for Medical, health insurance, and CalFresh (food stamps). We provide help with income tax returns, immigration questions and DACHA applications and services for homeless prevention and rehousing. Our after school programs serve over 1500 students at Woodland and Pioneer High Schools. Make checks out to UUCD, memo Families.

At this service you'll also learn about this year's Interfaith Winter Rotating Shelter. UUCD hosts Jan 31-Feb 7, 2016.

November 22, 9:30 & 11:15am, *Expressing our Care for Each Other*, Jill Pickett; Alex Lee-Jobe, Worship Associate. In belonging to our church community we can take the opportunity to learn, listen, and to share matters of the heart, accepting and extending support for each other.

November 29, 9:30am ONLY, *When I Breathe In*; Laura Thompson, Intern Minister & Adrean Dills, Interim Lifespan Learning Director. A service of readings, meditations and chants.

11:15am ONLY, *We the People*, Rev. Beth Banks. "Is it worship, or is it theater? Yes." Our dramatically different format features Vatreana King singing selections from *Zuccotti Park*, as well as portions of the script. The play, written by Catherine Hurd (music by Vatreana King), is a dramatization of a wide cross-section of Americans who struggle with economic injustices in our country and describes "the human side of economics." *Zuccotti Park* opened in New York in 2014.

Child Naming & Parent Dedication: Annie Fraser & Mikayla Fraser



Listen

Download or listen online to edited Sunday services at www.uudavispodcast.org

Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the spaces between the notes and curl my back to loneliness. – Maya Angelou

A good song is a blessing, a grace bestowed from the larger human community. The words and melody may have been written a thousand years ago or last week, in a faraway land or right down the street. But when that music from outside yourself resonates with the heart inside, it is magic. It is grace.

Amazing Grace is a song that has done that for many, a song with a history to be explored in depth by Laura Thompson at our Nov. 8 services. And, of course, sung by the choir and congregation.

My own most memorable experience with the song was at a 2007 Alaska Folk Festival workshop. At the end of an hour of singing together, Rhiannon Giddens of the Carolina Chocolate Drops led a roomful of relative strangers into a shoulder to shoulder clump and instructed us to sing *Amazing Grace* with no leader. We were to sing it so slowly that we matched each other as we went, one syllable at a time. It was a halting beginning as people hesitated and listened to each other. It was excruciatingly intimate. We gained momentum as voices began to trust each other, as we began to see that it could indeed be done this way: organically, spontaneously, strongly together. It was like no group singing I had ever done in all my years of choir. It may be the seed that sprouted and flowered into my current work with the Free Range Singers and the Sparks Choir. It was grace in action.

– Laura Sandage, UUCD Sparks Choir Director



Act 🍏 **Meatless Mondays:** “Join us in doing One Simple Thing. Simply...one day a week, cut out the meat.”

When you come to worship (any age group), each person may place a bean in the jar for each meatless day the previous week as a visual reminder for forming a new habit. Each bean can be roughly translated into CO2 emissions spared into the atmosphere, water saved, or hungry people fed. That’s worth stopping by the jar. But placing one bean (or more) in the Meatless Monday jar can become an elegant weekly ritual, providing you a moment to pause and consider a basic element of your life – the food that sustains you – and your daily conscious choice to lower your impact on both the planet and other lives by what you eat. Each bean is a gift of grace to our collective well-being.

Attend



Meatless Monday Event: Hearty Winter Dishes, Nov 14, 3-5pm, St. James Catholic Church, Asmundson Room. Cooking demonstration with Chef Debra Chase, foods to warm our families and our Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter guests.

Read

Being Mortal by Atul Gawande; When those who have read *Being Mortal* are asked to describe the contents of the book, they almost always begin by being quiet for the duration of a heart-beat or they sigh. Both are a sign of how moved they are by the way surgeon Atul Gawande describes the limitations of today’s medicine, and remembering what is important when facing the end of life.

Watch

Orlando, film based on Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*. The story begins in the Elizabethan era, with the Queen promising an androgynous man of noble birth a life of wealth if he agrees to not "fade, wither, or grow old." He and his heirs will have wealth and land forever.

Give

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