

# Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax

Themed Church Magazine - June 2016

## Revelry



### Definition

revelry n.

- reveling; boisterous festivity
- noisy partying or merrymaking

Synonyms: celebration, carousel, conviviality, rejoicing, fun, jollity

This is the tenth in a series of monthly “magazines” on the topic of the theme for the month. Each magazine will contain inspiring words, questions to ponder, articles to read and further resources to explore.

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## What does revelry mean to you?

### The Last Rites of the Bokononist Faith (an excerpt)

#### Kurt Vonnegut

Lucky us! As the inimitable writer and UU friend, Kurt Vonnegut, has written,

"God made mud.

God got lonesome.

So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!"

"See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around.

Lucky me, lucky mud."



Indeed. And given this, how can we not revel in this precious, fragile, ridiculously lucky life of ours?! How can we be anything other than a people of revelry?!

Of course, that's not to say life is easy or without pain. That's a given. But if the spiritual life is about anything, it's about the task of stepping back and seeing it all as a gift, even with the trials and terrors.

And we are so good at looking squarely at those trials and terrors. Even taking responsibility for fixing them. Our faith rightly reminds us we have a duty and responsibility to ease the burdens of others, to bend the arc toward justice. But it also reminds us that we have a duty to joy, even a duty to plain old "useless" fun! Which, of course, is not really useless. Joy, celebration, play and revelry are a means of replenishment. We will have nothing to give, if we don't make room for getting filled up.

Even more than that, revelry is also about perspective. This too is the message of our faith. This life of ours is ultimately the equivalent of being invited to the best party in town. Our challenge is to stay awake to that, to continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It's all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done. We are also called to look around and see all that has been given.

So, this month, let us make room for the gift. Let's let the dogged focus on responsibility go, at least for a little while. Let's lay it down, and as Vonnegut says, sit up and look around! And notice all there is to revel in!

Lucky mud. Lucky us!

## June Events and Traditions

*UUCH Year End Picnic (June 19)*

*Father's Day (June 21): <http://www.uua.org/worship/holidays/fathers-day>*

*Summer Solstice (June 21): <http://www.uua.org/occasions/summer-solstice>*



## Our Spiritual Exercise

### Option A: Bring It To Others!

Revelry is not just something we are called to do but something we are called to share! And all of us have the ability to do it! This month figure out what special gift you have that invites others into revelry, and then share that gift. It might be something gregarious, like this:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_bX0T76X8U#t=92](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd\\_xw20#t=65](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65)

Or your gift may be of a subtler kind: joke-telling, story-telling, appreciation of nature. Simply put: take someone by the hand and lead them toward revelry!



### Option B: Revel in Diversity

June is the month when many UU congregations celebrate Flower Communion. At its core, this ritual is a celebration of diversity. There is something in the human spirit that hungers to live in the midst of diversity, to be surrounded by the sacred joy of otherness.

To honour this, do something this month that immerses you in diversity or increases the amount of diversity in the world. If your congregation celebrates Flower Communion, make sure your flower symbolizes your adventure.

### Option C: Dads Deserve a Bit of Revelry

Father's Day is this month! Why not find a way to revel in your dad by watching him revel in something he loves? Surprise him. Make him laugh. Spoil him in a way that echoes the gratitude you feel for the gifts he's given you!



### Option D: Promise to Play This Summer

Summer is a time of letting go of responsibility. This release from duty is no small thing. Many argue that it is a sacred calling, a needed gift we need to give to ourselves. Make a plan to play this summer, a plan to truly let go of "work" and make room for **a new level** of play, fun and immersion in "uselessness."

## Books

*Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life*  
By James Martin

*Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul* By Stuart Brown

*The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun* by Gretchen Rubin

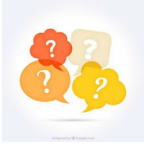
*How to Live in the World and Still Be Happy* By Hugh Prather

*Jesus the Holy Fool* By Elizabeth-Anne Stewart

*I Hear God Laughing* By Hafiz (trans. Daniel Ladinsky)

*The Happiness Makeover: Teach Yourself to Enjoy Every Day* By M.J. Ryan

## Your Question



*No need to treat these questions like “homework.” You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply find the one that “hooks” you most and let it lead you where you need to go.*

1. Can you honestly say you have recently been guilty of “revelry”? Think of the synonyms: boisterous, rejoicing, fun. If not, do you WANT to be able to be accused of it? What source of revelry is tempting you right now?
2. What did you learn as a child about giving into revelry? About letting go and giving into joyful abandon? Are those lessons feeding your life right now or holding it back?
3. How is restraint calling you to revelry? Sometimes connecting to joyful abandon requires not just letting go, but a bit of holding back. For instance, when life is too full of responsibility, there’s not much room for anything else. What do you need to get control of in order to make room for revelry?
4. When was the last time you did something “useless”?
5. Has revelry increased or decreased as you’ve aged? Grown deeper? Changed in form?
6. Do you wish your life felt more like being invited to a party?
7. Is too much revelry your challenge? There is a dark side to revelry. Is that something your life is asking you to look at?
8. What ritual or tradition regularly calls you back to revelry? How are you passing that on to or sharing it with those you love?
9. When was the last time you experienced revelry in church?
10. Did a child recently call you to revelry? Did you listen and accept the invitation?
11. Who is currently your best “teacher” when it comes to revelry?
12. What’s your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

## Navrati: Festival of Dance and Revelry



## Recommended Resources

As always, this is not required reading. These pieces are simply meant to get your thinking started, and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to “be a people of revelry”.

### Wise Words

At This Party by Hafiz

I don't want to be the only one here  
Telling all the secrets -  
Filling up all the bowls at this party,  
Taking all the laughs.  
I would like you  
To start putting things on the table  
That can also feed the soul  
The way I do.  
That way  
We can invite  
A hell of a lot more  
Friends.

A busy executive was speaking to her six-year-old niece at the end of a particularly frustrating day. She had spent the better part of the day trying to get a new printer installed. Nothing had worked, and she was exhausted and very frustrated. On the phone with her young niece, she described in general terms how frustrated she was. Her niece asked, Did you try hard? Yes, she replied. Did you try really, really hard? Yes I did. Well then, said the six-year-old, now it's time to go out and play!”

Margaret Wheatley in *Perseverance*

Revelry prepares you for surrender. Increases trust in life. Puts you in a state of openness. Reminds you that it's worth letting go, that there's something more out there beyond the stiffness of self protection.

Soul Matters participant

Laughter is a holy thing. It is as sacred as music and silence and solemnity, maybe more sacred.  
Laughter is like a prayer, like a bridge over which

creatures tiptoe to meet each other. Laughter is like mercy; it heals. When you can laugh at yourself, you are free. Ted Loder

Play exists for its own sake. Play is for the moment; it is not hurried, even when the pace is fast and timing seems important. When we play, we also celebrate holy uselessness. Like the calf frolicking in the meadow, we need no pretense or excuses. Work is productive; play, in its disinterestedness and self-forgetting, can be fruitful.

Margaret Guenther in *Toward Holy Ground*

Peace is wonderful,  
but ecstatic dance is more fun, and less narcissistic;  
gregarious He makes our lips.

On a day when the wind is perfect,  
the sail just needs to open  
and the love starts.  
Today is such a day.

Rumi

Once in a while joy throws little stones at my window, it wants to let me know that it's waiting for me.

Mario Benedetti

We all grow up with messages that being an adult is about being serious, that being silly or goofy or playful are childish. But what if that's just not true? The antidote: find a way to play, everyday. Go flap your wings in the park, or find a patch of grass to roll around on, and just give a big grin to anyone who gives you a strange look. Interrupt a normal conversation to talk like Elmer Fudd for a bit, and see if you can get your friends to join in. Twust me, it's hiwarwious.

Soul Matters minister

*House of Light* By Mary Oliver

This collection of poems by Mary Oliver (From our UUA's Beacon Press) once again invites the reader to step across the threshold of ordinary life into a world of natural and spiritual luminosity.

## Articles

### When Pigs Fly Meg Barnhouse

The last time my wife Kiya and I saw the pig figures was Valentine's Day, months ago. There are three of them, made of plastic I suppose, and they are displayed in the front yard of a neighbor a couple of blocks over.

A red, egg-shaped cage with an open front holds a shiny yellow bench. It looks like it might have come from a carnival ride or a ski lift in a cartoon town. You can see the black handle on the top of the egg by which it must have been attached to some machinery. The cage and bench are big enough for a person to sit in, but we've only ever seen the three pigs there.

Last summer they sat in a row in goggles on and snorkels sticking wore blue, one yellow, and the third, themselves, insouciant. It made us time we stopped in front of the and took a picture.



striped 1920s bathing suits, with jauntily up past their little ears. One pink. They looked pleased with smile every time we drove past. One house, feeling a little self-conscious,

When the seasons change, the pigs disappear for a week or two, and we drive past, anticipating their next appearance.

Last Christmas the pigs were not on their bench. Dressed in sumptuous robes, crowned in splendor, they walked in a rapt row on top of their red egg-shaped ski lift, carrying gold, frankincense, and myrrh, focused on the enormous tin foil star which was held far ahead of them at the end of a fishing pole. The display was lit beautifully. We rejoiced.

We tried to imagine what the artist was like. We never saw anyone in the yard or the driveway. The house is a small ranch, ordinary in most ways except for its front door, which looks like beaten copper with a soft verdigris finish. We felt the artist's joy, though, through the three pigs.

On Valentine's Day, the pigs worried us. Two of them lay on the floor of the egg. Each eye was a big black X. They were splashed with blood red paint. One had an arrow protruding from its chest. The third pig was standing on the back of the bench wearing white wings, holding a bow, gazing at the two dead ones.

Since that display came down, the yellow bench has been bare for months. We've stopped driving past with anticipation or delight. Now we drive past and look at each other sadly. Something is wrong. Something took the artist's joy. It looks to have been Cupid. It feels like a broken heart.

Three weeks ago I saw a man in the driveway. He was moving some things, a tarp, a few metal poles. I hit the brakes and backed up the street, rolling down the car window. Austin has a deep tolerance for eccentricity, so his face was welcoming when I said hello. "I just wanted to tell you how much we enjoy the pigs," I said. "I don't know if you knew that people wait for what you're going to do next." He smiled.

"I guess I need to get going on them, then," he said.

"I wanted you to know that you're making a difference for us in the neighborhood."



He was grinning and shaking his head as I waved goodbye. I heard him say, "That's great," in a happy voice.

It's been three weeks since then, though, and still no pigs. Two coffee travel mugs sit on the bench now. Bland and sad.

Can strangers plead with an artist for his art? Can strangers give an artist back his joy? We talk about inviting him over, but that feels too forward. We talk about blowing up the picture we took of the pigs in their happy bathing suits and taping it onto the bench. We fear that would be putting too much pressure on him. We can't stand in his yard with candles, singing a pig song. That's just over the top.

William Blake wrote:

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sun rise.

I guess we've been trying to bind to ourselves the joy of the pigs. Maybe we should just let them go. Some people would say, "Just make your own art, express your own joy." Well, yeah, we both do that. It's not the same as being surprised by someone else's artistic expression, delighted by someone else being brave enough to just throw it out there.

Art isn't even controllable when it's your own, much less when it's someone else's. I'll just kiss the joy as it flies. Kiss those pig memories as they fly by. Live in eternity's sunrise.

Oh, who am I kidding? I'll drive by there tomorrow to see if they're there. I'll kiss the joy as it flies, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to drive around looking for it to fly by again.

PHOTO (ABOVE) "Three little pigs, salvaged carnival ride seat" © 2010 Daniel Feeser

The Rev. Meg Barnhouse, a UU World online columnist, is senior minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas, and the author of several books, including *Broken Buddha*. She is also a humorist and singer-songwriter.

## A few more articles

### **Play Doesn't End With Childhood: Why Adults Need Recess Too**

Sami Yenigun

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/08/06/336360521/play-doesnt-end-with-childhood-why-adults-need-recess-too>

### **On Revelry**

A parent's take on learning from their kids about how to revel

<http://juneandbear.com/2014/03/31/on-revelry/>

### **Disco Ball and Candlelight**

Kimberly French

The importance of a congregation that knows how to revel!

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/280833.shtml>

## Videos & On-line

### The Liberators: Funky Friday

<https://www.facebook.com/theliberatorsinternational> & <http://www.theliberators.com.au>

### Play, Spirit and Character

Krista Tippett's interview of Stuart Brown

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/stuart-brown-play-spirit-and-character/transcript/6359>

### Play is More than Just Fun

A TED talk of Stuart Brown and his enlightening research on play

[http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart\\_brown\\_says\\_play\\_is\\_more\\_than\\_fun\\_it\\_s\\_vital?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than_fun_it_s_vital?language=en)

## Movies

### Waking Ned Devine

Best in Show

Bruce Almighty

The Bucket List

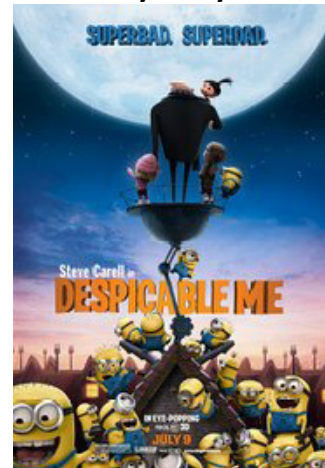


### Despicable Me

Life is Beautiful

Patch Adams

Toy Story



## Planning Themes for 2016 – 2017

We have now completed our first full year of “themes” both in our services and in these monthly magazines.

Now and over the summer, your Worship Committee is working on our themes for the coming year. If you have suggestions for a theme to be included in next year’s program speak to Rev. Norm or any member of the Worship Committee.

We are taking a break from Themes over the summer so that you can do your homework on Revelry...

Enjoy a play-filled summer!