



Slip Sliding Away

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

In an era when many of us are frequently considering whether we really need to wear pants during an important Zoom meeting, it isn't surprising to know a lot of principles have been relaxed. Who isn't getting up a little later, or allowing mealtimes to fluctuate, or increasing screen hours? No biggie. But as the pandemic shutdown continues, what more substantial rules or values will we be tempted to let slide? Do I really need to keep the house clean when literally no one but these messy slob I live with has been inside of it for a year? Maybe online shopping isn't really killing local retail and if it is what can I do? I need these awesome leggings and coordinated facemasks! Do I really need to interact with people in this neighborhood? Maybe everyone is fine, I mean they all have Netflix, right?

The past month's Tower Club (Unity's high school youth group) discussions have, as I think back on them now, come from the recognition that a lot feels like it has "slipped" during our pandemic isolation. We spent a Sunday afternoon admitting to each other some of the hypocrisies we have allowed ourselves, from wasting water to being overly competitive, continually bullying each other for sport to letting ourselves buy in to gender bias. Letting ourselves freely act as capitalist pawns.

No one felt great about those admissions, so the next time we met we considered what we really wish was the right response to these ills. Ray and I asked everyone to say "What if?" How would we conduct ourselves ideally? What if we and everyone else acted with the guidance of our highest principles? At first, the high school-ers gave simplistic answers, like "we'd be better about using resources" or "we'd all try to be nicer." We pushed them to really visualize how things could be, ideally. One high school youth asked, "What, are we talking utopian visions here?" "Yes."

"Well then I guess people would actually care about the people they meet and even don't meet. We'd think about the effect of all our words and actions on everyone else."

"We would never put women in objectified positions, we just wouldn't allow half the population to wake up every day feeling like they have to market themselves to men," said two more.

"We would be compassionate in everything we do," added another.

They blow me away every time they do this, and I gotta tell you they do it consistently. They start reciting Unitarian Universalist Principles, not because they figured out that was what they were being asked, but because they realize those are the values they hold to be true and dear. I really should not have been surprised that the youth brought our discussions back around to a fervent hope for more and deeper compassion. That their answer to watching and even allowing themselves and others to let so many principles slide in our isolation, was to come together and emphasize a shared goal. That they named compassion a guiding value a week before I even knew it was the next month's theme, well, that was scary. And quite reassuring.

Gun Sense Team Update

Sue Conner, Gun Sense Team

The Gun Sense Ministry Team works to facilitate Unity Church members in becoming more active in the process of dialogue and creation of policies aimed at mitigating gun violence and the resulting fear in Minnesota. The congregation was very active during the last legislative biennium but, unfortunately, the two bills that we were supporting did not pass. The issues of gun violence and inadequate policies to mitigate it are still with us, and the November Minnesota election results will make our work more challenging.

Unity's Gun Sense Team, along with Protect Minnesota, Moms Demand Action, and Everytown for Gun Safety, is keeping our focus on passing sensible gun laws. In Minnesota there are two bills that we are working to pass. The House Extreme Risk Protection Order and the Senate Criminal Background Check for Firearms Transfer have both been introduced at the legislature. At the same time, there have been 13 pro-gun bills introduced including Stand Your Ground and Right to Carry without a Permit. You can read all the bills at www.revisor.mn.gov/bills.

Jim Davnie, Unity Church member and Representative from MN House District 63A, predicts that there will probably not be hearings on any of the bills this spring. Please continue to lobby your legislators by communicating your thoughts on the need for sensible gun laws. Send an email, make a phone call, or drop a postcard in the mail. You can also lobby anyone you know who lives in an area represented by legislators who are currently unsupportive of these bills.

Stay informed by following and supporting Protect Minnesota at <https://protectmn.org>.

Coming of Age Ceremony and Service

Saturday, April 24, and Sunday, April 25, 2021

You're invited! Watch for details!