

# Chunks of Time

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

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You've seen hints of copper on the trees, the air feels colder this weekend, and – come Tuesday, the day will be more dark than light. The fall season is upon us.

We've also had another... longer season to contend with... Pandemic Season. It has both been longer, and likely will be longer, than many of us had either expected or hoped.

This week, it will be six months since we last gathered in the sanctuary in our church building. And in this extended season, we have shifted the larger theme of church – from being *in* church, to *being* church, wherever we might be.

This adaptability of themes is what YouTube creator CGP Grey outlines as one approach to making sense of chunks of time, like seasons and years, in a video called "*Your Theme*", in which he proposes replacing the traditional New Year's resolutions with broad *themes* that resonate with the life we want to build for ourselves. He even goes further, suggesting we can set themes for ourselves in the manageable chunks of time that are the seasons.

This approach seeks to take advantage of the broad nature of themes, to identify *and* manage expectations over longer periods of time, especially when facing the fog of the future. Rather than set up – and fail – at completing rigid resolutions that might not reflect who we want to be in the present, he suggests that adaptable themes allow for flexibility to meet our needs as circumstances change in our lives.

That doesn't mean that more specific and structured systems don't have a place – in fact, he has an entire separate video that describes the need for more detailed action plans in *other* circumstances. But, as he remarks, not every problem needs a sharp tool.

And I think he's on to something. Especially since a broad theme, with flexible goals that can adapt to the specific situations in the *now*, are the kind of life guidance that can help in making the more specific decisions of our day-to-day lives.

Speaking of themes, you may be aware that some other Unitarian Universalist congregations do monthly themes as part of their liturgical year. We don't do that here – at least not in that way – and there are many reasons for that, including some practical considerations, as well as elements of our church's culture, and personal styles. And I usually appreciate the flexibility that this affords me – and that it affords to our lay and guest speakers. But, some of the keener observers among you might have noticed that many of the topics I touch upon tend to cluster in groups of three or four, which allows us to explore certain themes beyond a single Sunday morning. And of course, our liturgical year has chunks of time with different flavours, as we move our attention to different priorities.

Be it weekly, monthly, seasonally, or yearly, thinking about the themes for different chunks of time, might help us get a better and clearer sense of the direction our lives are taking, or the direction that we would like them to take. Because, to paraphrase CGP Grey: “thinking about our thinking, changes our thinking”.

Over this coming program year, we have a major theme that has been brought upon us, by mere virtue of the calendar – it happens to be the year 2020, and that is 140 years from when our church was founded. We will be paying special attention to that anniversary on November 8, which will be close to the date when the count for those 140 years began. And much like our church ancestors did 140 years ago, we will be gathering in *building* our spiritual community, even without access to a dedicated building for it.

But that's just the beginning, because in September of 2021, it will be 140 years since the cornerstone for our church building was laid, so just less than one year from today, we will be recognizing that milestone of the cornerstone. And who knows – we might even be able to celebrate the anniversary of our building, *in* the building. I can't make any promises... there's always the fog of the future, but it *is* within the realm of possibility.

In any case, these two anniversary Sundays – November 8, 2020, for the founding of our church, and September 19, 2021, for the construction of our church building – will bookend nearly a year-long season when we can honour our history and our heritage, allowing us to explore where we have been, where we are, and where we want to be. The leadership in our congregation has already taken steps in visioning what the future of our church may look like, as we navigate the current fog of Pandemic Season, and into the further fog of the future.

And in the coming year, we will all have the opportunity to be part of that conversation and think about what this all means – because “thinking about our thinking, changes our thinking.” Adaptation will be part of it – the specific goals and actions will shift, and wherever we happen to be on September 19, 2021, we will have had a whole extended *Anniversary Season* to contemplate, celebrate, and commemorate our history, at the same time as we get to delve deeper into our emerging vision.

Now over the past Pandemic Season, other themes have emerged. For me, most of the spring season – right around the time of our last in-person worship service – was dedicated to incorporating the use of audio-visual technology to complement and enhance our worship experience. It just so happens that I was already moving toward that theme before we closed down the church building’s doors.

If you attended that last in-person service on March 15, you will remember that we watched a YouTube video as a kind of “video reading”, very similar to what we do on our live services and our web services, and as we have done several times over the past months. So, the theme of more audio-visual elements in worship was already there, and as circumstances shifted, the focus of that theme also changed, as we needed to look to more expansive uses of audio-visual tech, to accommodate the need for online and web services.

For other members of our church leadership, Pandemic Season also had a certain theme, partly due to circumstance. In the spring, a few of our Board members, concentrated their efforts to regularizing parts of our incorporation process, and over the summer, a devoted group dedicated a great chunk of time to fleshing out many details of what will be our revised by-laws, to conform to the Federal not-for-profit standards.

My friends, this fall season, *we* will be participating in looking at those new by-laws, getting to know them and understand them better, and hopefully approve them, by December. *That* will be one of our seasonal themes.

My friends, your own personal and family seasons, or cycles, might look different. Perhaps you divide your time between personal, and social – or family – seasons. Maybe you think of your year or your seasons in terms of chunks of time to spend indoors, and chunks of time to spend outside in nature. There may be times for work, or times for school, and times for leisure. When it makes sense to do so, you might have dedicated chunks of time for staying locally, and chunks of time for travel. However it is that you divide your time, spending a bit of

those chunks of time considering what it means to have – and to be part of – that time, can help in finding a deeper meaning in it.

My friends, as we head out into the next several chunks of time, facing the fog of the future, and navigating through it as we think about our thinking, may we take this time, to be in time.

So may it be,  
In Solidarity,  
Amen.

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## **Opening Hymn #52 In Sweet Fields of Autumn**

Words: Elizabeth Madison, b. 1883, used by perm. of Hodgin Press

Music: William James Kirkpatrick, 1838-1921, harmony by Ralph Vaughn Williams, 1872-1958, © 1931  
Oxford University Press

CRADLE SONG

## **Hymn #54 Now Light Is Less**

Words: Theodore Roethke 1908-1963 © 1939 Used by permission

Music: Alfred Morton Smith, 1879-1971 © Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City NJ

SURSUM CORDA

## **Closing Hymn #288 All Are Architects**

~)-| Words: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807-1882

~)-| Music: Thomas Benjamin, 1940- , © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association

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