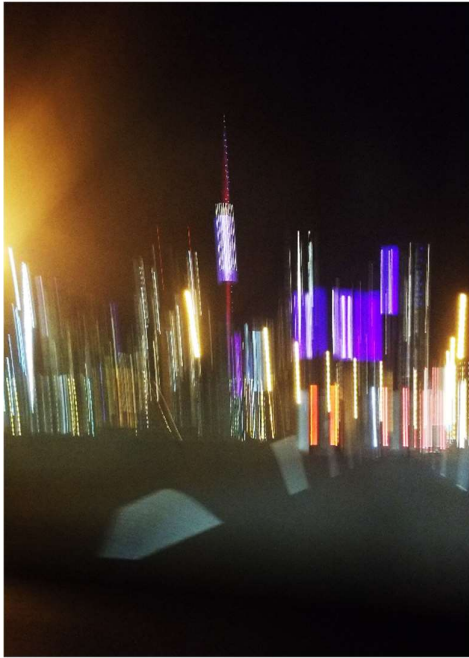


# *Circle of Light*

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

*Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel*

21 March, 2021



*City Lights © 2021 Sarah Wert*

Spring can feel like a new year – a time of renewed daylight and renewed warmth. A time of renewed growth from the ground, and an opportunity for our personal worlds to expand, as the outdoors become more inviting (with proper precautions, of course).

And indeed, many cultures and people groups, here and around the world, mindfully mark spring *as* the new year. In Iran and other parts of central Asia, *Nowruz* is the traditional Persian new year, and its celebration began yesterday, alongside the spring equinox, to mark new beginnings.

The celebrations actually last for several days... new beginnings can have fuzzy boundaries.

This, of course, has been a year of unexpected “new year’s-es”. Starting in late December, we began seeing that a lot of small anniversaries, which weren’t there before, started to accumulate: one year since a new virus was identified; one year since we saw it in our country; one year since the Pandemic was officially declared... last week, we recognized one year of being away from our church building – or conversely, one year since we started seeking alternative ways of connecting as a church.

Even our church’s more typical calendar has a few “shifting” new year’s-es. Our program year, of course begins the week after Labour Day (very close to when many schools ordinarily begin *their* year). A bit later in September we recognize the beginning of our church’s physical home, but remain mindful that perhaps a more significant

anniversary (or “new year”) is in November, when we celebrate the founding of our church as a spiritual community.

Sometimes, it’s hard to know when one year ends and a new one begins. And the colours of the soon-to-be-emerging flowers have a lesson to teach us about blurry boundaries.

Now, if we think of colour strictly as the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum, we know that the range begins with red and then spans through to violet. But painters and photographers know that, in the experience of the human eye, colour behaves more like a wheel, with the ends of red and violet melding into each other, as a never-ending cycle where the rainbow is in perpetual flux of colours chasing each other. You don’t have to be a professional either – I suspect most, if not all of you, have had some experience from school, with watercolours or tempera paints.

Not only are the boundaries between colours blurry, but so is our perception of them. Some of you might remember a brief internet fad a few years ago, in which the picture of *a certain dress* was seen by some folks as blue and black, while others were certain that it was white and gold.

How you perceive this particular dress, and how you experience other colours, can depend on a number of factors, including the device on which you see the picture, the lighting conditions in the room, the time of day when you see it, or possibly even whether you’re a morning or an evening person – which can affect your expectation of the kind of light you *think* is illuminating the dress. For some people the dress even seems to change colour between viewings!

Now, if you’re like me, you probably have either, a favourite season, or at least some kind of ranking for the seasons you look forward to the

most, versus the ones that you don't particularly care for... or might even actively dread.

And I *know* that each of your individual rankings don't all line up – if for no other reason that I've seen mild disputes during Joys and Sorrows, as some of you might sometimes be celebrating a fresh snowfall, while others among you might bemoan that very same development.

I won't go into my own ranking, because it actually shifts from time to time, *and* because there is, after all, room in our congregation for team snowfall and team clear sky – and everything else that comes in between.

And even if you have favourite – or a ranking of – seasons, it doesn't have to stop you from nurturing an openness toward seeking some of the gifts that each one of the seasons can bring.

At the beginning of winter, we explored some ways in which Norwegians manage to cope, and even thrive, in an extreme winter lifestyle, partly in espousing the concept of *koselig*, related to the Danish notion of *hygge* – and each roughly translating to a warm sense of coziness, and closeness, that comes with huddling at home under a blanket with a warm drink, be it alone with a book, or by a fire – or with good company. And aside from it being a great excuse to stay indoors, it's also not exclusive to finding great excuses to get outside, and enjoying the winter landscapes, or taking up sports and activities that can *only* happen in winter.

And, despite the popularity of spring in the popular imagination, this season is not without its downsides, with wild swings in weather, often-unpredictable driving conditions, slush and mud, months-old trash being ungracefully revealed from shrinking snowbanks... not to mention the time-switch to daylight saving hours. But we also know that spring brings great excuses to get outside – there are sights to see... or there

will be soon enough. (And of course, this spring – and last – are a bit different than usual...)

But just as the colours of the flowers that come with spring offer a clue to how we can appreciate our current season, so can we nurture a practice when we may shift some of our perceptions, so that we can appreciate our time in different ways.

And if all else fails, my friends, the seasons last but three months. Soon, it will be a different season. And if your season ends *too* soon, the starwheel will soon bring it back.

But, I ask, my friends, why wait? With some openness to shifting perspectives, we may just find ways to recognize the gifts – however rare and fleeting – that our current place in time and space have to offer.

So may it be,  
In Solidarity and Love,  
Amen

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*Suggested Hymns:*

**Opening Hymn #63 Spring Has Now Unwrapped the Flowers**

Words: Piae Cantiones, 1582

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

**Hymn #73 Chant for the Seasons**

~)| Words: Mark L. Belletini, 1949- , © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association

Music: Czech folk song harmony © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association

~)| Arranged by Grace Lewis-McLaren, 1939-  
PRAHA

**Closing Hymn #76 For Flowers That Bloom about Our Feet**

~)| Words: Minot Judson Savage, 1841-1918

Music: Cyril V. Taylor, b. 1907, © Hope Publishing Co.  
COOLINGE