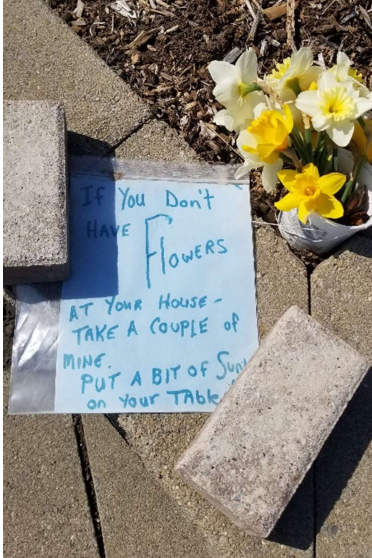


BRB (Be Right Back)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel

20 June, 2021



Take Me! © 2021 Sarah Wert

The starwheel has turned again and, starting tomorrow, we can be right back to summer. To *Be Right Back* is something you might quickly type in an online chat with the abbreviation *BRB*, when you need to step away from your device for a moment, assuring your long-distance companion that you will *Be Right Back*. At summer time, as many programs are winding down, including much of our own church planning, we may find ourselves saying to each other that we'll *Be Right Back*, more often than usual.

I'll be right back, to that in a few minutes. But first, I want to share a “cheesy story” to give more perspective to a ritual that has become tradition among our communities of faith.

It has been an open secret in the marketing industry that essentially-identical products can be marketed to different genders with some mere repackaging.

Often these products can be more expensive when targeted to women, even if they're functionally the same, but decorated in a way that society might consider more “feminine” such as by presenting it in pink or lighter shades. Because of that, this practice is often called the “pink tax”, even though it's not a government tax, but it can effectively be a surcharge that many companies place on women.

Conversely, the repackaging of products with gender-specific designs can also be used to target men for products that have traditionally been regarded as only suited for a female demographic.

Soft drink companies, for instance, have found that diet sodas are primarily consumed by women, due to lopsided (and often oppressive) societal expectations on women's looks, shape, and weight. To expand this market, newer diet pop varieties have come out with slight name re-brandings and designs intended to appeal to the male demographic... whereas "diet" pop might come in more delicate, lighter-coloured cans, "low-calorie" sodas might come in cans with dark, bold, "manlier" designs.

This practice can sneak up in unexpected ways. We enjoy a good portion of cheese in our household, so we often buy several bricks at the grocery store. We get a few kinds, for variety – cheddar (white and marble), Havarti, gouda, pepper jack, and so on. At one point, I saw a couple of options that caught my eye...

I have always been suspicious of the "low-fat" versions of food, especially since the fat in these foods is often an essential nutrient in them, so I don't usually pay attention to the low-fat cheese in the dairy aisle. But then, I found a "high protein" option, which I thought might complement my health regimen, especially after a workout.

It took me a couple double-takes, but it eventually occurred to me that cheese is primarily protein and fat. Sure, there is some water moisture, salt, and milk sugars (lactose), but the main event in cheese is fat and protein. Therefore, a low-fat cheese would have a higher proportion of protein, and a high-protein cheese, would automatically necessitate a lower amount of fat.

Surely enough, when I checked the nutritional information on the packaging, I found that the two products are *identical* – except for the packaging. The low-fat version has a lighter, "daintier" design that is presumably marketed to women, while the high-protein version has more solid, bolder colours, in a "manlier" design that is presumably marketed to men, who might not be as interested in "diet" products, but who wouldn't mind a food that helps them bulk up in their workouts.

These gender constructs permeate throughout our society, sometimes affecting what kinds of things we're supposed to like, what colours we're expected to enjoy, what occupation we should have, or what company we're supposed to keep.

Tradition has directed mothers to receive flowers on Mothers' Day, though some of you may be well aware of what other things your mother might be partial to. And, in the popular imagination, fathers are expected to get other things, like ties, wallets, or cigar-flavoured cologne... but flowers are not usually on the list.

Today, we affirm that fathers – and all parents... all individuals, in fact – are equally entitled to enjoy the beauty of flowers.

Rev. Norbert Čapek, from the Liberal Religious Fellowship (Unitarian) in Prague, did not find any social barrier to suggesting flowers as something that everyone can enjoy – in fact, he intentionally used them as a tool for inclusion, when he created the *Flower Celebration* in 1923.

And today, we follow this tradition by receiving your offerings of flowers – your blessings from the community to the community – and sharing them with all of you.

These flower photos were offered via e-mail by many among you, including men, and they are meant for all of you, without regard to any gender you might – or might not – claim.

The images of these flowers will be posted on our website, with permission from those who offered them [link in the description, and on the web edition of this service]. You may come back to them, whenever you need your community's blessing with a "flower fix" throughout the summer.

And we *will* be right back (BRB) my friends. In fact, we're not quite going away, just shifting pace for the summer, taking a bit of a break, and having a... lighter, though still solidly-identifiable presence.

Many of us, my friends, will be right back, next week, with a guest speaker for the Howard Pawley memorial lecture, and *during* the summer, with two live online services, as well as a few web-based recorded services during August. Our church will not quite go away, my friends. Some among us, may take a longer break than others, but we *will* Be Right Back.

Enjoy the flowers, my friends.

So may it be,
In Solidarity, in Love, and in Peace
We'll Be Right Back
Amen

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Opening Hymn #78 Color and Fragrance

~)-| Words: Norbert F. Čapek, 1870-1942
~)-| trans. by Paul and Anita Munk, © 1992 Unitarian Universalist Association
~)-| English version by Grace Ulp, 1926-
~)-| Music: Norbert F. Čapek, 1870-1942
O BARVY VUNE

Meditation 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 #66 When the Summer Sun Is Shining

~)-| Words: Sydney Henry Knight, 1923-
Music: From *The Southern Harmony*, 1855,
arr. by Margaret W. Mealy, b. 1922, © 1984 Margaret W. Mealy
HOLY MANNA