



TOUCHSTONES

Renewal

January 2022

Renewal, our January theme, shares its prefix, “re-” with religion. Religion means, literally, to “connect again.” Renewal is “to make new again.” The “again” part of renewal is an invitation to find what has worked for us, or what needs to be freshened up, and to make it new again. To start again, to begin again, to commit again.

As we begin '22, a year of such uncertainty – will the treatments for the virus be enough to end this, or will it get worse again and again; how will our democracy, our institutions, our lives get through this year; etc – I wonder what you might want to make new again.

Making something new again, or beginning again, isn't about pretending that we haven't learned the lessons of life, or been changed by what has happened. It is not naiveté. In fact, real renewal takes seriously what didn't work before and seeks to build something that will this time around.

Is there something in your life that isn't the way you'd like it to be? Maybe your personal finances. Maybe it is your health, or your relationships with particular people. Maybe your faith, trust, or sense of hope is struggling.

First, know that you are not alone in any of that. Lots of folks are having a hard time with something, or a few somethings. It's normal.

If you want to renew that part of your life, my suggestion is to name the seed of joy, purpose, or desire that lives there. Get clear about your “why.” Why do you want to feel better? Why do you want that relationship to change? Name it out loud to yourself. Name why it has been hard, and what it would take to begin again – confident that you can do it, because of all you have learned.

Have a beginners mind when you seek to renew. When we learn something for the first time, it takes a while. Lots of practice, questions, and discovery are required. When we renew something, it is the same story – approach with a sense that you have to learn something, even if you've done it before.

And celebrate! Celebrate your longing for health, and celebrate every small victory or motion along the way. Be proud of yourself for beginning anew.

It is my hope and prayer that each of us will, by renewing some part of ourselves, contribute to the renewal of our shared world. Because that's how it works, isn't it? When lots of people are renewing themselves, it spreads and inspires others to do the same.

Happy New Year!

In faith,
Rev. Matthew

Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1: "The possibility of renewal exists so long as life exists. How to support that possibility in others and in ourselves is the ultimate question." Gabor Maté



Day 2: "The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope." Wendell Berry

Day 3: "Renewal of the mind is good for the soul because it allows you to be focused and gain understanding of your life choices. It allows you to renew your spirit and become uplifted, filled with hope." Amaka Imani Nkosazana

Day 4: "Each harvest renews promises made in the spring. We live with the continuing cycle. This gives us a taste of eternity." Don Kladstrup

Day 5: "Every individual needs revolution, inner division, overthrow of the existing order, and renewal...." C.G. Jung

Day 6: "With every breath, the old moment is lost; a new moment arrives. This is meditation. This is renewal. This is life." Lama Surya Das

Day 7: "We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Day 8: "Inside myself is a place where I live all alone and that's where you renew your springs that never dry up." Pearl S. Buck

Day 9: "I can hardly wait for tomorrow; it means a new life for me each and every day." Stanley Kunitz

Day 10: "Renew thyself completely each day." Henry David Thoreau

Day 11: "He found that worry was a completely renewable resource. The more he had, the more he got." Alex London

Day 12: "It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon ...[our] hearts, as for that subtle something, that

quality of air, that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully ...renews a weary spirit." Robert Louis Stevenson

Day 13: "The mountain has left me feeling renewed, more content and positive than I've been for weeks, ...as if my eyes have opened once again." Richard Nelson

Day 14: "Amazingly, even in midst of trauma, people continue to smile, to love, to celebrate, to create, and to renew." David B. Feldman

Day 15: "Renewal requires opening yourself up to new ways of thinking and feeling." Deborah Day



Day 16: "Every breath is a sacrament, an affirmation of our connection with all other living things, a renewal of our link with our ancestors and a contribution to generations yet to come." David Suzuki

Day 17: "When it seems humanly impossible to do more in a difficult situation, surrender yourself to the inner silence and ... wait ...for a renewal of inner strength." Paul Brunton

Day 18: "She imagined herself as some sort of vessel to be filled up with love. But it wasn't like that. The love was within her all the time, and its only renewal came from giving it away." Kim Edwards

Day 19: "The obstacles in our path are ...redirecting us. Their purpose ...is to point us toward new routes to our happiness, new possibilities, new doorways." Barbara De Angelis

Day 20: "It is through beauty, poetry and visionary power that the world will be renewed." Maria Tatar

Day 21: "You're spending your life without renewing it. ...You're spending

your vitality without making any. Can't go on you know." D.H. Lawrence

Day 22: "People even more than things have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed and redeemed and redeemed and redeemed. Never throw out anybody." Sam Levenson

Day 23: "Taking time to rest, renew, and refresh yourself isn't wasted time. Recharge. Choose what energizes you." Melody Beattie

Day 24: "Genius is the ability to renew one's emotions in daily experience." Paul Cézanne

Day 25: "Life lived amidst ...busyness needs leisure. Leisure that ...renews. Leisure should be a time to think new thoughts, not ponder old ills." C. Neil Strait

Day 26: "There is nothing like a newborn baby to renew your spirit—and to buttress your resolve to make the world a better place." Virginia Kelley

Day 27: "Let go of your disappointments, mistakes and failures. May you find complete healing, renewed spiritual strength, and courage to begin again." Lailah Gifty Akita

Day 28: "I do think you have to change with the times in a way that renews your core essence, not abandons it. To change for the sake of change—without an anchor—that is mere faddishness. It will only lead you further astray." Richard Morais

Day 29: "It is so important that we renew our minds constantly 'coz by doing so we'll be able to see things as they are, not as they might seem. If we renew our minds, we have a better chance at seeing the opportunities hidden within each storm...." Rafael Garcia

Day 30: "Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born." Dale Turner

Day 31: "With each breathe we take, we renew our commitment to stay in life. With each thought we think. ...we decide what kind of life we will live." L.G. Space

Family Matters

The Teaching Bean

Rev. Elizabeth Tarbox



When I was a child, my step-mother gave me and my sister each a lima bean. She showed us how to dampen some blotting paper and line a jam jar with it, and how to place the bean carefully between the

blotting paper and the jar. She told us to stand the jars on the windowsill in our bedroom and keep the blotting paper wet, and watch to see what would happen.

A little later I took my bean out and polished it with a bit of furniture polish. It was all shiny now and smelled much better than my sister's bean.

In a few days my sister's bean swelled and a strong white root pushed out of the bottom of the bean. My bean just sat there. A week later my sister's



bean sprouted a green shoot that forced its way up and out of the top of the jar. My bean did nothing, but began to look wrinkly. In another week my sister's jar was full of roots and shoots and the bean was ready to be planted. My bean shriveled up and fell to the bottom of the jar and I threw it away.

...But spirits are not like beans.... They may shrivel with neglect, but as long as life persists there is the chance to wash off the polish and redeem the growing thing inside.

Source: *Evening Tide*, Elizabeth Tarbox, Skinner House Books, Boston, 1998.

Family Activity:

Take What You Need

Invite your children to list and discuss those things that they need to feel good, to be strong, to be happy, to have confidence, to care for others, etc. These might include

- ◆ Love
- ◆ Peace
- ◆ Kindness
- ◆ Help
- ◆ Hope



Then create posters with tear-off tabs with these things and post them in your home and in public places, so people can be reminded of what they need for renewal. Visit the posters and see what tabs people have taken.



Source: <http://carlabirnberg.com/2016/02/15/teaching-self-care-to-children/>

The 5th Element

A Journey through Trees

Roger Deakin



To enter a wood is to pass into a different world in which we ourselves are transformed. It is no accident that in the comedies of Shakespeare, people go into the greenwood to grow, learn and change. It is where you travel to find yourself, often, paradoxically, by getting lost. Merlin sends the future King Arthur as a boy into the greenwood to fend for himself in *The Sword and the Stone*. There, he falls asleep and dreams himself, like a chameleon, into the lives of the animals and trees.

...The Chinese count wood as the fifth element, and Jung considers trees an archetype. Nothing can compete with these larger-than-life organisms for signaling the changes in the natural world. They are our barometers of the weather and of the changing seasons. We tell the time of year by them. Trees have the capacity to rise to the heavens and connect us to the sky, to endure, to renew, to bear fruit...

...When Auden wrote, "A culture is no better than its woods," he knew that, having carelessly lost more of their woods than any other country in Europe, the British take a correspondingly greater interest in what trees and woods they still have left. Woods... have become the guardians of our dreams of greenwood liberty, of our wildwood, feral, childhood selves.... They ...are repositories of the ancient stories, of Icelandic myths of *Yggdrasil*, the Tree of Life, Robert Graves's *The Battle of the Trees* and the myths of Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*. The enemies of the woods are always enemies of culture and humanity.

Source: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/640461.Roger_Deakin



The Unitarian Universalist Church
4848 Turner St.
Rockford, IL 61107

- Members and friends of the church who live at Wesley Willows are invited to join others and Rev. Matthew on the 4th Tuesday of most months at 9am. We will meet in the fellowship hall at Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

Want to have a group – a book group, a parent group, a “circle supper”, or whatever you like?

– just email Autumn at office@uurockford.org and she can give you the Zoom login and password

Renewal & Repairing the World

Renewal is the way of the Earth: through seeds that burst, grow, bloom; through fallen leaves that become compost enriching the soil; through heavy snows pruning trees by breaking weaker branches and conserving soil moisture; through periodic fires renewing diverse ecosystems; through small floods cleansing rivers; and other natural processes. We would do well to understand that we need renewal, individually and collectively. Renewal can come through rest, a walk in the woods, by observing the Sabbath and keeping it holy, by time spent with family or friends conversing, sharing a meal, or both. We are not the Energizer Bunny. We cannot go on endlessly. Renewal is a process of repair of body, mind, and soul. Only through self-care will we have the motivation and capacity to work to repair the world.