

change & stability



How do we practice adapting to change, especially when change is unexpected or challenging? How do we practice ways of creating stability for ourselves and others in times of profound change?

welcome

More than two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed that one can never step in the same river twice. Change is constant. A central task of any human life is to adapt to change on the personal, societal and global level. The human species is currently living through a profound time of change--one that some say is unparalleled in history. Are the changes facing us more challenging than those that have gone before? It's hard to say. Yet it's clear that the rapid acceleration of technology (especially the advent of artificial intelligence), the degradation of the planetary ecosystem and the rise of global authoritarianism are creating changes our ancestors could never have imagined.

Meanwhile, we're growing and changing as individuals and as communities and congregations. Our bodies transform, our needs evolve, our relationships shift in countless ways over the course of a lifetime. Maintaining stability amidst all the changes we experience can be a daunting task.

To be sure, there will be many times when we lose our bearings in the storms of life. In Unitarian Universalism, we can find loving community, grounding principles and guiding wisdom to help us navigate well.

This month, we offer readings and practices chosen to support you and your congregation as you respond to change. They come from a diverse range of sources, from a variety of time periods. It's interesting to reflect on how some of the older readings (such as the ones from ancient faith traditions) still apply in our contemporary context and how they can, at times, provide a sense of stability and grounding. At the same time, you'll find resources in this packet that spring fully from the here-and-now. In today's rapid period of change, we enjoy extraordinary access to emerging wisdom from a wide range of voices that would have gone unheard in previous eras. That is a change worth celebrating.

The enduring quality of spiritual wisdom is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and a reminder that in the Interdependent Web of All Existence we are deeply connected to all others, including those who have gone before and those who will come after us. Holding this mindful awareness in our hearts, may we respond to all the changes we face with courage, kindness and compassion.

Love and blessings,
Lynn

God is change, and in the end, God prevails. But meanwhile...kindness eases change. Love quiets fear. And a sweet and powerful positive obsession blunts pain, diverts rage, and engages each of us in the greatest, the most intense Of our chosen struggles.
— Octavia E. Butler,
Parable of the Talents



photo: Peggy Sue Zinn/Unsplash

Reflection

QUESTIONS

- What is your immediate response to unexpected change?
- What did you learn about change and stability from your family of origin?
- What is most supportive to you, as you adapt to new experiences?
- What images or metaphors speak to you about finding stability during change?
- What do you need in your life when unexpected change arises?
- What inner resources or spiritual sources of strength assist you in times of transition?
- What have you learned from times of transition?
- Thinking about a change that you are anticipating . . .
 - What feelings arise for you?
 - How are you preparing?
 - What (or who) might support you?
 - How might this change fit into a larger story?
- Thinking about a change you're struggling with . . .
 - What arises in your body when you think about this change?
 - What are its most difficult aspects?
 - What opportunities does this change present to you?
 - What (or who) could be the stabilizing forces during this change?
 - Where are you encountering doors that are open and doors that are closed?
How are you responding to them? (Thanks to Karen Hering for this question).
- What is it like for you when your community (family, friend-group, workspace) is going through change?
- When did this community or congregation go through change and in what ways did it find or regain stability?

QUOTES

In the midst of winter, I found there was,
within myself, an invincible summer.

Albert Camus, *Return to Tipasa* (1954)

Describing the slowness of change is often
confused with acceptance of the status
quo. It's really the opposite: an argument
that the status quo must be changed, and it
will take steadfast commitment to see the
job through.

Rebecca Solnit

Nothing is so painful to the human mind as
a great and sudden change.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

For all we go through, for all the heartache
and loss, for all the messy ways we're
dropped into the depth of life, for all the
ways we're pried open by great love and
great suffering, I feel certain there is
something unbreakable and regenerative
about the force of life we carry.

Mark Nepo

What supports you when nothing supports
you?

Carl Jung

Change will happen if the citizens of this
country believe and make it happen.

Murray Sinclair

Let us linger on the wisdom of rocks—not
as inert masses but as carriers of time,
witnesses to cycles far beyond human
comprehension. The rocks are not “wise” in
the human sense of decision-making or
judgment; their wisdom lies in their
capacity to hold the paradox of
permanence and change, of silence and
endurance.

Vanessa Machado de Oliveira

Transformation demands recognition that
change and continuity are not opposite
poles but conditions that sustain each
other. Leaders who cultivate this
perspective are better prepared to guide
organizations through uncertainty,
preserving coherence while creating space
for renewal. This orientation, often
described as ambidexterity, is not a
compromise but a distinct capability.

Adolfo M. Carreño

The goal in life should never be to win, but
to change. To evolve. Winning can be fun.

Change can be uncomfortable. - Angela
Sterritt

“The only way to make sense out of change
is to plunge into it, move with it, and join
the dance.

Alan W. Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*

MORE QUOTES

Two people in the world can travel a distance together, and that time together can be deeply rewarding and then it's not. For me, a great indication that I am spending my time in a friendship that no longer fits is that I feel drained after I spend time with that person. That drop of energy is a sign for me that the friendship is no longer feeding my spirit, expanding my thinking, or deepening my heart.

It's ok to say goodbye.

Silken Laumann

it is not who or what we pray to but what we pray for that reveals and redeems our lives; that what we pray for, not on our knees but in our choices and the stories we tell about them, conjures up the world we yearn to live in and it is our yearning that we act upon to make the world. Every choice we make in our political and personal lives is a prayer. All change is prayerful action toward a different kind of world — an act of faith toward the future and an act of heresy toward the status quo.

Maria Popova

So anything in nature is basically conservative and fish didn't learn to walk because they wanted to walk, they learned to walk because the big puddles were drying up. So you don't change usually unless you have to.

Margaret Atwood

A conversation's ephemerality suggests to me that it is forgiving. The words come and go; they are present, then they disappear. One can hold on to them in memory but at that point we're dealing with fragments.

The actual conversation in real time disappears. You can change your mind about what you said and inscribe a new conversation over the old one. If conversations are so temporal, merciful, even ethereal, then perhaps we should grant each other a similar lightness to be.

Ian Williams, from *What I Mean To Say*:

Remaking Conversation In Our Time

(Massey lecture)

When I am considering my own spiritual maturity or lack thereof, I ask myself: How much am I bothered by outward events? How easy is it for me to lose my centre, my sense of grounding? To what extent am I able to embrace the contradictions of life and my own nature?

Karen Fraser Gitlitz

**LOVE IS BETTER THAN ANGER.
HOPE IS BETTER THAN FEAR.
OPTIMISM IS BETTER THAN
DESPAIR. SO LET US BE
LOVING, HOPEFUL AND
OPTIMISTIC. AND WE'LL
CHANGE THE WORLD.**

JACK LAYTON



Spiritual

Practices

Grounding Techniques

Mindfulness practices such as quickly naming three things we can see, hear, or touch can help us return to the present moment, which helps reduce anxiety. Reconnecting with our physical senses can assist us in feeling stable and grounded in an ever-changing world. Here is a helpful collection of grounding techniques to try: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/grounding-techniques>

Feeling Tone Meditation (Buddhist)

After grounding with a few deep breaths, notice the sensations around and within you, and label them "pleasant", "unpleasant" or "neutral" without judgment and for a period of several minutes if possible. This practice (called *vedanā* in Pali and Sanskrit) can assist us to regain a sense of stability during times of stress.

Finding and naming your inner resource

In the brain injury community, we often talk about our inner resource. Our inner resource is both our gifts, strengths and capabilities AND an image of a place – real or imagined – where we fully step into those capacities. Imagine a place where you feel most relaxed, most at ease. Perhaps it is indoors, somewhere cozy. Perhaps it is in nature. Take a moment and write a description of the place. What do you smell, what do you see? What is the temperature? The lighting? Make it as concrete as possible. Does the place need anything else – perhaps a comfortable chair or a pillow? This is your inner resource, your sanctuary. You get to decide what is in it. Pick a time of day when you can take a moment to be in your inner resource. It works best if you find another activity as the cue. Maybe when you walk out or in your front door, or when you run the tap to wash dinner dishes. It doesn't have to be a long time – even 3 breaths in your inner resource can make a difference. - Rev Karen

Practices

Laughter yoga

In my years with the Mississauga congregation laughter yoga was a beloved activity whenever it was part of a service. “Very good, very good, yay!” became a short hand reminder to embrace life whatever it sends our way. Laughter yoga calls us back to the joy that exists alongside the struggle, and never fails to restore energy and bring smiles.

To offer this in a group, ask one or two people to watch this video or another, and then lead the group in a short round of laughter yoga. This can be a good way to begin a gathering or as an energy break.

Fiona Heath

Montreal based Linda Leclerc, founder of École du yoga du rire, offers three simple exercises to encourage laughter:

https://youtu.be/B_xp6B0fdFc?si=6Qwgt-j6eYXrmkBj

A Collage of Change and Stability

Using found images from magazines and other materials, create personal collages (or one community collage) that expresses change and stability with images, symbols, patterns, colours and more. Notice how the expression changes with each added image and how the completed collage represents a new form of stability. Every form of creative expression provides opportunities to meditate on change and stability.

Lynn Harrison

Symbol or object

What images, symbols, phrases become especially meaningful to you in the midst of a transition? Is there a symbol that resonates, an image that recurs in your mind, an animal that guides you? Make or bring an object or picture that reflects this visual metaphor, and tell your experience. In the group. After each person shares, invite them to place their object or symbol on a shared altar.

(Adapted from *Trusting Change* by Karen Hering)

CHALICE LIGHTINGS



photo: JoshuaMirandda/Pexels

Come into the warmth of this chalice community.

Come with your dreams and hopes.

Share your vision with one another.

Bring your worries and sorrows.

Let your tender hearts rest here awhile.

Bring your beautiful bodies just as they are.

Come and offer us the gift of your presence.

Whatever else we have,
whatever we have lost,
we have this moment together.

Let us cherish this experience,
let us cherish one another.

Let us celebrate all that is.

Let us light this chalice.

Fiona Heath

Excerpt from "New Day's Lyric"

May this be the day we come together.

Mourning, we come to mend,

Withered, we come to weather.

Torn, we come to tend,

Battered, we come to better.

Tethered by this year of yearning

We are learning

That though we weren't ready for this

We have been readied by it.

We steadily vow that no matter

How we are weighed down,

We must always pave a way forward.

Amanda Gorman - *read the full [poem](#)*.

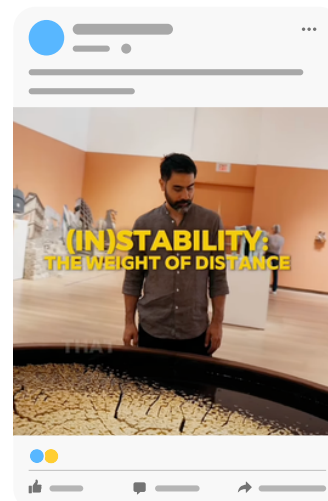
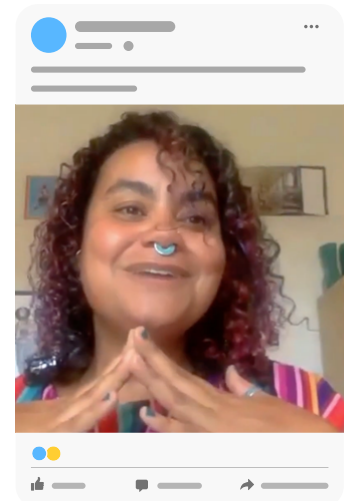
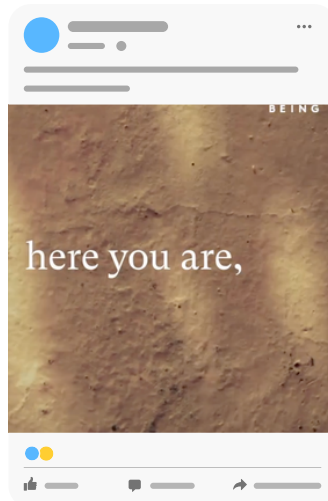
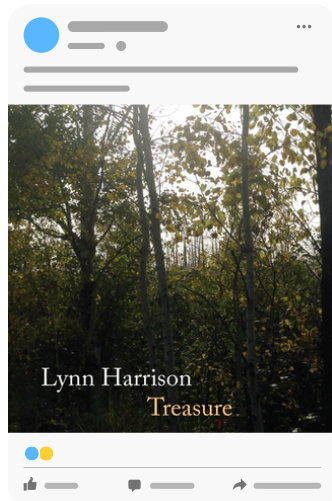
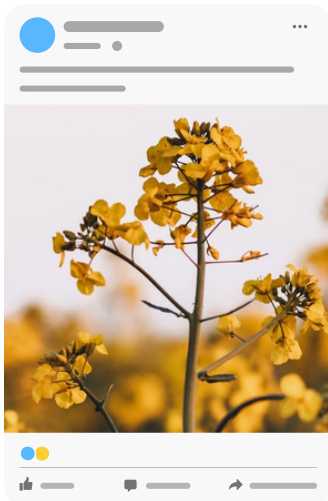
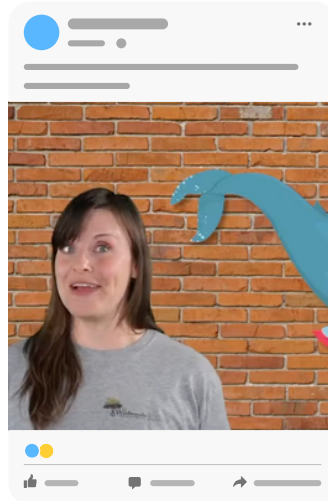
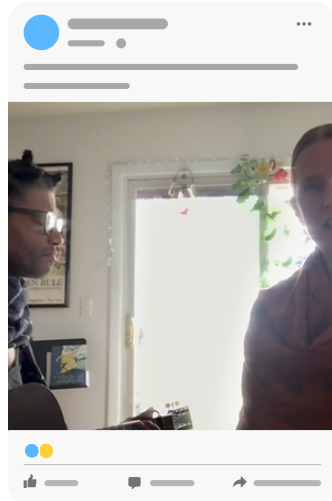
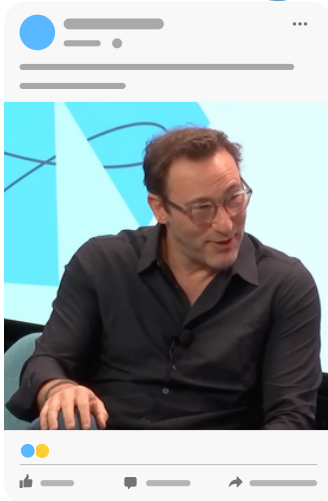
Use all your power to free the senses from
attachment and aversion alike, and live in the full
wisdom of the Self.

—Bhagavad Gita, 2.68

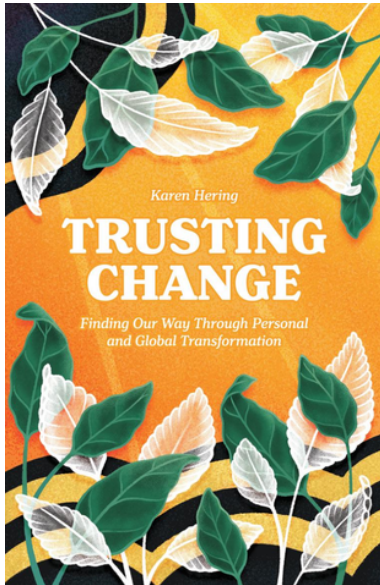
For everything there is a season, and a time for
every matter under heaven... a time to plant, and a
time to pluck up what is planted." *Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

When all you have is a few minutes

QUICK CLIPS



LONG FORM



Trusting Change: Finding Our Way Through Personal and Global Transformation by Karen Hering (2022). Karen Hering is a Unitarian minister in Minnesota with a writing and spiritual support ministry.

Holding Change: The Way Of Emergent Strategy Facilitation And Mediation adrienne maree brown 2021 AK Press

The Change Guidebook: How to Align Your Heart, Truths, and Energy to Find Success in All Areas of Your Life by Elizabeth Hamilton-Guarino (2022) This book offers ten points for making a change or adapting to unforeseen circumstances. From the Chicken Soup folks.

WITH CHILDREN

Scaredy Squirrel by Mélanie Watt – this is the first in the much-loved series!



NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED CAN BE CHANGED, BUT NOTHING CAN BE CHANGED UNTIL IT IS FACED. - JAMES BALDWIN



**“And the day
came when
the risk to
remain tight
in a bud was
more painful
than the risk
it took to
blossom.”**

Anais Nin

photo: Casnafu/Pexels

Meaning Making Project

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