



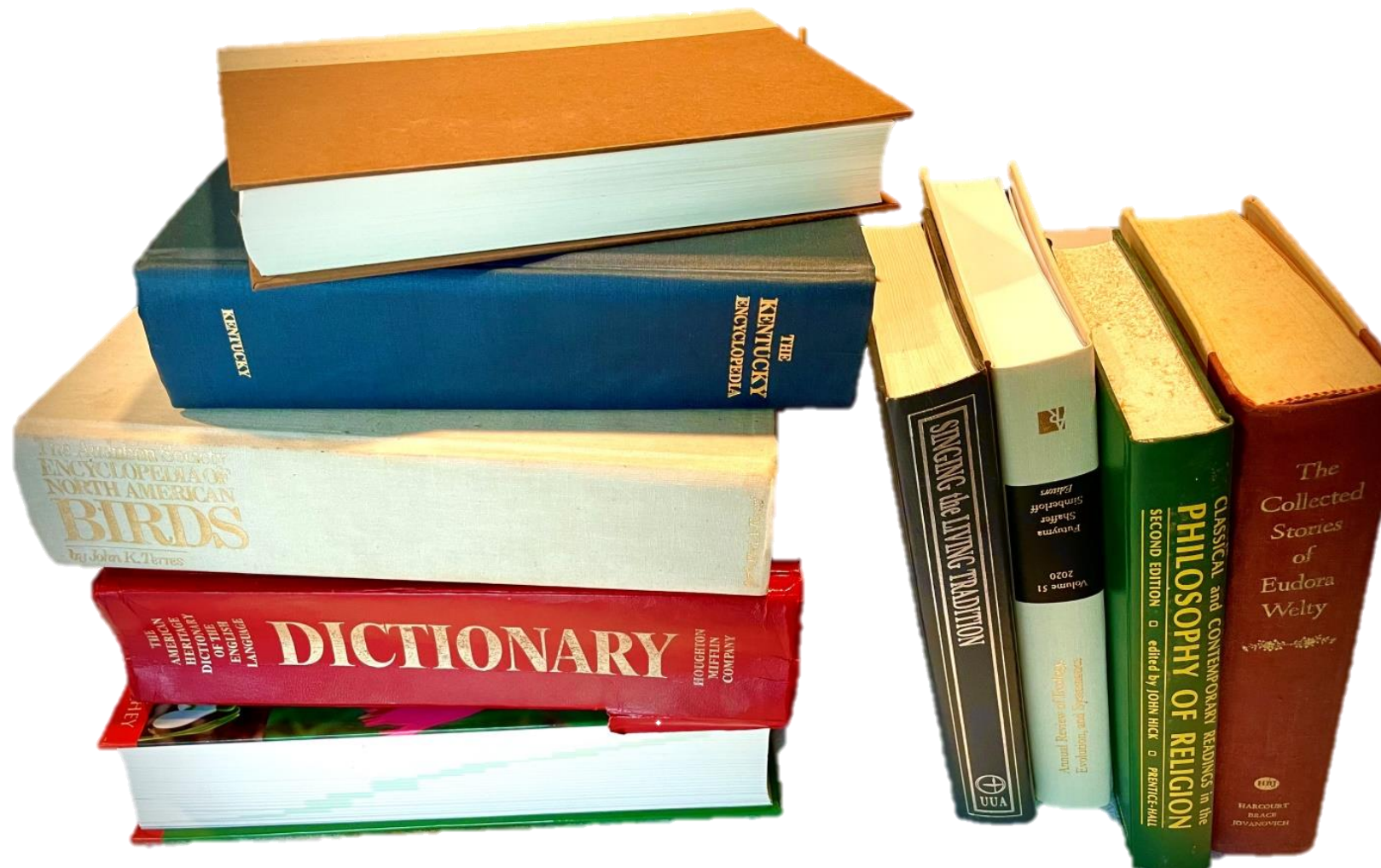
TAPESTRY

A Magazine for All Peoples UU

September 2023



ALL
PEOPLES



"Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations." --Henry David Thoreau

Editor's Note

A hallmark of UUism is the "free and responsible search for truth and meaning." That search leads us to many inspirational sources: our peers, gurus, teachers, ministers, travelers, scientists, and artists of every description. To span space and time, though,

it is hard to beat a book as a window into this awesome world we live in. Knowledge and insights gathered centuries before our own time and in exotic places we may never get to visit are only as far away as the local bookstore or public library.

For one of the features in this issue, I asked our congregants to tell about a book that had been influential in their own growth as a person. I think you will be impressed with the variety of authors and subjects listed in "The Book that Changed My Life."

My own life-changing read came as a random encounter with an amazing author when I was in middle school. My dad, known in our small town as an avid bookworm, was given a set of classic works left over from an estate sale. He set the big cardboard box down on our kitchen table and began pulling out volume after volume of "The Harvard Five-Foot Shelf of Books." I was fascinated by their maroon binding, and the antique gold lettering on their spines. I lined them all up on an empty bookshelf in our living room, and verified with a yardstick that we had gotten the whole five feet worth of Ivy League literature.

Where to begin? Pulling out the writings of Kierkegaard, I couldn't make heads or tails out of his dense philosophical prose. My luck with Plato and with Dostoevsky wasn't much better. Then I spotted a book titled *The Voyage of the Beagle* written by some fellow named Charles Darwin. "Great!" I thought, "My granddad hunts with beagles, and I have always liked dog stories." I was well into the great naturalist's account of his 1830s expedition around the world when I realized that the "Beagle" in this book was the name of a ship, not a dog. No matter. By then I was hooked on the tale of a young British explorer trying to make sense of the biological wonders he observed on his 5-year voyage.

Darwin's Victorian language posed a significant challenge for a sixth grader, but the tale was so compelling that I plowed through the whole story, a few pages every night, over the rest of that winter. In the end, I came away with the belief that biological investigation was the most exciting adventure a kid like me could ever have. I am pretty sure I owe my career as an ecologist to that dusty old book I encountered by accident in my dad's salvaged box of castoff wisdom.

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Together on the Journey

by Rev. Bruce Beisner
Minister, All Peoples UU Congregation

In the popular 1980s stage play “Steel Magnolias,” the character of Wheezer famously declares: “I don’t have anything against the arts, they’re just not for me. I don’t read books because if they are any good they will be made into a mini-series. I don’t go to movies because they are full of naked people. And I don’t go the theater because I can sleep at home for free.” Wheezer is a classic curmudgeon who is both hilarious and kind of tragic. At one point in the play, she defends her outlook on life by saying: “I’m not depressed, I’ve just been in a really bad mood for 45 years.”

Last week, I attended one of my monthly Zoom meetings with other Unitarian Universalist ministers in our region. We each began sharing a little about how we had spent our vacation and study leave time this summer and what we were looking forward to with our congregations in the coming church year. Many, if not most, of my ministerial colleagues spoke about all the books they had been reading and the workshop classes they had attended. When it got to be my time to share, I was asked “What books have you been reading, Bruce?” I had to sheepishly say, “Well, none to be honest.”

This past summer, rather than traveling to some distant destination for rest and relaxation or spending hours on the couch reading a good book, I chose to make 2023



the year of the “stay-cation.” My husband and I spent much of July and early August exploring all that metro Louisville has to offer. This included attending outdoor films at the Iroquois Park Amphitheater, seeing a Shakespeare play at Central Park, taking an evening cruise on the Belle of Louisville, enjoying concerts along the Ohio River in West Point, and going for hikes in Jefferson Memorial Forest.

During my years in seminary, I was a voracious reader. The lists of books required for courses at Meadville Lombard Theological School and for the Ministerial Fellowship Committee were extensive, comprehensive, and incredibly diverse. I remember at one point counting the readings in the syllabus for a single course and it totaled over 23 separate books and about 7,000 pages. So I spent much of my time reading works about Unitarian Universalist history, polity, theology, ethics, and philosophy. Large volumes on the teachings of Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism and Religious Naturalism still crowd the shelves of my office today.

All this reading was quite fulfilling. Yet I have found that since being ordained and called into serving congregations, I seem to

have less and less time for reading church-related books. And I seem to have less and less interest in them. These days, I still do a lot of reading, but it is not books about Unitarian Universalism or books about religion. I am much more drawn to fictional narratives which tell emotional stories than I am to academic explorations of topical material. With the demands of ministry and the stresses of all that is happening in our world these days, I want my reading to be more as an escape than I do a learning experience.

Tapestry editor Rob Kingsolver recently asked us all to share how reading a particular book had an impact on our lives. For me, the book that immediately came to mind was *Called to Selma--Eighteen Days of Witness* by Richard Leonard. I first read this book right after it was published in 2002 and I have gone back and read it several times since. Unlike most of the books I enjoy, *Called to Selma* is not escapist fiction. It is a re-telling of the real-life events that happened in Alabama during the spring of 1965. The author presents daily journal entrees about what he observed at the rallies, marches, violence, and picket lines that took place. It is all related in vivid and dramatic detail and brings to life the courage, desperation, compassion, and deep love of the Black people of that town and of the many clergy who came to be present in solidarity with them.

Although those events in Selma happened over two years before I was born, reading this book gives me a sense of being there myself. I can almost feel the drops of rain hitting me as I read about those standing on a picket line for hours as a storm came through. This is one of those books that always makes me weep and smile, breaks my heart, and gives me hope, all at the same time. The reason this book was (and still is) transforming for me is that it insists that I

see racism and white supremacist culture not as “issues” to be educated about and discussed, but as impacting the lives of real people -- people with names, faces, families and dreams. *Called to Selma* makes me ask those hard questions about what I am doing now and what I am willing to risk when faced with hatred and violence towards me and towards those who are my neighbors.

Reading and partaking in any or all forms of artistic expression has the power to transform us. Whenever I watch the film version of “Steel Magnolias” I can’t help but wonder if that character Wheeler’s sour demeanor and her rejection of reading and movies and theater just might be related. Reading or hearing or seeing the stories of others can help us feel less alone and it can expand our horizons to better connect with those around us.

I look forward to finding out what books you’ve experienced that have changed you.

Blessings,

Bruce



A LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

--by Larry E. Farr

MAY 25-26

Police officers respond to a call.
A possible counterfeit bill, that's all.
At a grocery, George Floyd is forced to fall.

He scorns Floyd's "I Can't Breathe"-- no mercy found.
Handcuffed, struggles, and face in the ground.
Chauvin knees his neck till there's no sound.

Nine minutes of Hell, people yelling "Stop!".
Video goes viral, shot outside shop.
Floyd's hospital death is "over the top".

Police insist medical incident and distress.
Police affirm FBI will assist and assess.
All four police fired and protests process.

MAY 27

Mayor Frey has criminal charges against Chauvin.
Minneapolis in turmoil for this racial "sin".
BLM protests in other cities to begin.

MAY 28

Governor Tim Walz activates the National Guard.
Arsonists and looters hold police in ill regard.
They take over Third Precinct Station, leaving it charred.

MAY 29

Chauvin arrested for third degree murder and manslaughter.
Trump tweets "When the looting starts, the shooting starts." to be clever
Across nation, peaceful protesters want assets as they were.

MAY 30-31, JUNE 1

As protests continue with some roughness, Trump tries to walk back his tweet.
Attorney General Keith Ellison leads the prosecution seat.
Doctor stated his heart stopped when restrained and neck compressed on the street.

JUNE 1-2

Medical doctor stated he had underlying health issues.
He listed fentanyl and meth as other significant clues.
Minnesota Department of Human Rights studies civil views.

JUNE 2-3

Department of Civil Rights files a civil rights probe for the police department.
Ellison files a Chauvin second-degree murder charge with a tougher content.
Ellison files charges against the other three during an abetting event.

JUNE 4-5

In Minneapolis, for Floyd, they had a funeral service.
Minneapolis bans chokeholds by police, horror we won't miss.
Police use-force-policy overhauled to profit with this.

June 6-7

Massive peaceful protests happen nationwide for police reform.
Funeral services held near birthplace to weather out the storm.
Police department dismantling sparks national debate norm.



POET'S
CORNER

June 8

Floyd spent his childhood in Houston.
Thousands pay praise for Houston's son.
Buried next day under the sun.

June 10, 16

Floyd's brother testifies to House Judiciary Committee.
Boldly expresses to them on police accountability.
Trump ratifies an executive order as an endorsee.

June 16

Trump's order encourages better police practices.
A main tracking officer database establishes
Excessive use-of-force complaints causing public stresses.

July 15, 21

Family sues Minneapolis and four former officers.
The Legislature passes broad accountability measures.
These encompass chokeholds and warrior style training
not to occur

October 7, November 5, January 12

Chauvin posts \$1 million bond, sparking more protests.
Judge Peter Cahill shuns defense to move trials' requests.
Chauvin will be tried alone due to court rowdy interests.

January 12, February 12

During August, the other four former police officers
will appear in court.
The George Floyd Square intersection, since his death,
has had a barricaded support.
After Chauvin's trial, the George Floyd Square intersection
will, to traffic, abort.

March 9, 12

For Chauvin's trial, first day deals with pretrial motions.
On the second day, jurors deal with answering questions.
City agrees to \$27 million for police actions.

March 19, 23

Judge declines to delay or move trial due to settlement.
He does not feel this would befoul the jury's predicament.
Jury done with 12 jurors, 3 alternates for event.

March 29, April 11

On March 29th, beginning trial opening statements are given.
A 20-year-old Black man, Daunte Wright, is killed by a White policeman.
This transpired at a suburban Center traffic stop in Brooklyn.

April 11, 12, 15, 19, 20.

Successive days of protests were caused by the fatal shooting of Duante Wright.
Judge declined to sequester jury at once to keep this news out of their sight.

On April 15th, testimony is done.
On April 19th, the closing arguments won.
On April 19th, jury deliberations begin.
On April 20th, the guilty verdict comes in.
When justice comes slowly it weighs on my heart,
But justice must come for the healing to start.

Rules

by Joan Miller

Football has two halves
Hockey has three periods
Baseball: nine innings

Boxing has twelve rounds
Volleyball's two of three games
Soccer? Back to two

Cars racing in miles
Derby horses go 'round once
And it's in furlongs

Ping-pong's twenty-one
Golf could be nine or eighteen
Help me! I'm confused!

Now...add some others:
Cricket, jai ailai, and futbol
I know there are more.....

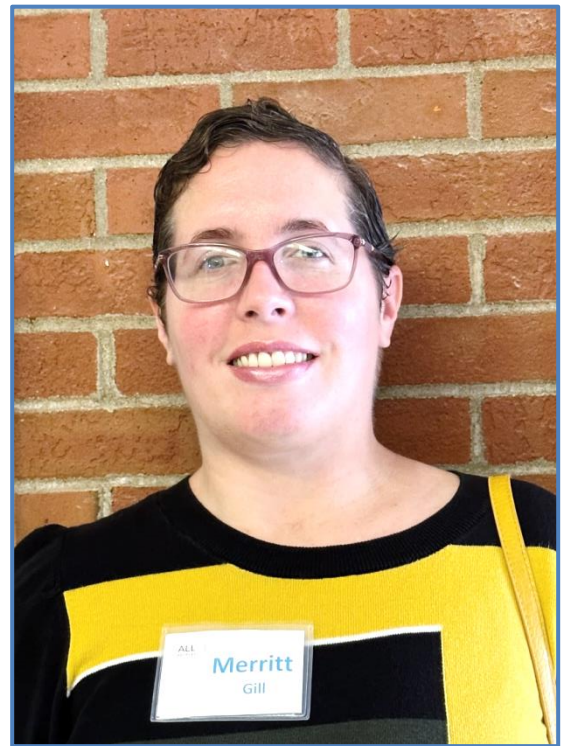
Who made up the rules?
How can we understand them...
Or even keep track?

New Member Focus

by Janet Taylor

Merritt Gill

Merritt grew up in the Lutheran Church and graduated from the University of Louisville. Her hobbies include podcasts, yoga and being outdoors in nice weather.



Walking the Walk

Social Justice in Action at All Peoples

Gun Violence in My Life --by Lisa Austin

When I was about four, I remember my mother and father and grandparents going somewhere special that did not allow little girls. Since I always went places with my grandparents, I didn't understand it. I remember sitting between my parents in the front seat of our 1950 Ford and being dropped off at a little friend's house while they went to do adult things. I realized recently that they were going to my cousin's funeral.

Corporal John Head had enlisted in the Marines when World War II broke out. He had spent his entire time in the Pacific theater and had survived horrendous battles: Guadalcanal, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Tarawa, Okinawa. He battled tropic diseases, malnutrition as well as the Japanese military and civilians. Peleliu was considered the bitterest battle of the war for the Marines with a casualty rate of 70%. My cousin was not one of them. He won the purple heart and silver star for combat service at Okinawa and Peleliu. Our family was very proud of his service.

Lisa Austin is a member of All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation and has been active in social justice issues since the Vietnam War. She is a visual artist, writer, and editor who hopes to make a difference in this world.

When he came home, he joined his bride in setting up a home and began working at the local Ford factory. In 1950, he was called back to duty with his activated Marine Corps Reserve infantry company. Marines are required to be in reserve for ten years after discharge and he was called up for the Korean war. Everyone in our family gathered to wish him good-bye at the L & N train station in downtown Louisville and they began the long train trip to California where they would be sent to Korea for combat duty. There wasn't much to do on the train so guys played cards, gambled, drank and generally acted like a rowdy group of kids terrified about going back to combat after they had just thought they had seen the last of it. John was grateful to be joined by his best friend and they had bunks together with John getting the top bunk and his friend on the bottom.

One night, as they traveled to darkness, with cigarette smoke filling the air and men yelling and screaming when they threw seven and eleven, John's friend got drunk. He was waving around his service revolver and John leaned over his bunk and said to his friend, "...put that down you are going to hurt someone." His friend pointed the gun at John and said, "it's not loaded." He pulled the trigger and killed John instantly with a gunshot to his head. My hero cousin had died. His friend was arrested but it was too late for my cousin.

My mother used to say, "...and he survived all of that just to die like this."

I don't remember John but his life and death hung over our family like a malevolent miasma. He was my aunt and uncle's only child and they were too old to have more. They would never have grandchildren to spoil or a daughter-in-law to love. His future, and their future, died with him. Every holiday they would come to my grandparent's house and there was this long silence at the dinner table. One aunt would be exceedingly drunk and try to talk while trying not to fall out of her chair and smoking her cigarette in a long holder. She reminded me of Tallulah Bankhead. My aunt picked at her food and my uncle just sat there. No one else said a thing and I was a quiet kid so I just took it all in. I knew it was

tense and depressing. There was no joy during those holiday gatherings. They didn't even stick around for the after dinner Christmas party where everyone gathered in the kitchen and played cards, and drank in a cloud of cigar smoke and got louder as the night wore on. They just left quietly.

My uncle never spoke to me. Even though I would say, "Hi". He would just ignore me. I knew it wasn't personal. My aunt would smile and talk to me; sometimes we would visit during the year. She made an effort, and gave me some Xmas money. I think my uncle just never recovered. He was a sporting goods salesman and a referee for the NCAA. The only time he would talk is when some man at dinner finally asked him how UK looked this year and then he would have a conversation, but that was it.

John's ghost hovered all around. People never think about how gun violence--a murder, no less--reverberates through the family and even subsequent generations. I felt a closeness to him and I am not sure why. Maybe because such tragedy allowed me to see that things you could not control happened. When my uncle died, my aunt threw herself on the coffin and wailed and screamed. I was alarmed and shocked. I had never seen this woman out of control before but there was no one left but her in her family now and I was not of the age where I understood her loneliness.

I began working against gun violence then and have ever since. In the past ten years more than ever. I know what murder by gun does to the periphery of the victim's life and the people in it.

In 2009 I picked up the Sunday paper one morning and there was a big article about John. The day before, he had been honored at the Patriot's Peace Memorial on River Road. The article said he had no family left. Well, that was not true. I called up the reporter and said I was family and I would have really liked to have been there. She called the man who submitted John's name and he called and apologized. The next year, I went as his guest to the annual Memorial Day service. It was not John's service but at least I was there

even though I was not able to put a flag inside of his space or put up his plaque.

The man who shot John was court-martialed and spent five years in military prison. Last I heard he worked at a convenient store as a clerk. I often wonder how his life changed when he killed his best friend. Did he become a shell of his former self? Did he ever marry

and have a family? Did he become an alcoholic? How did he cope with what he did? At least John had a place of honor, but all he had was guilt.

In the end I think everyone had wished he had just put down that gun and said. Okay. Okay. Hold your horses. How different everyone's life would have been.

*The Social Justice Committee is concentrating on gun violence this year as a focus topic in addition to our other work. This is a personal story illustrating how gun violence affected me and my family. If you wish to know more about gun violence you can start reading *The Second Amendment: A Biography* by Michael Waldman that explains what it means, how it has been interpreted and the impact it has made in our society.*

--Lisa Austin



Photo by Rob Kingsolver

The Book that Changed My Life

The meeting of minds that takes place between author and reader, for the length of time it takes to absorb the content and meaning of a book, can significantly influence a person's interests, sensitivities, insights, and priorities. Many of us would not be the people we are today without the transformation that a particular book provided at some critical juncture in our past.

We asked members of the All Peoples congregation to identify a personally influential book, and to explain why they had found it meaningful. Here are their responses:

Handbook to Higher Consciousness, by Ken Keyes, Jr.

This book introduced me to a lot of introspective concepts, like meditation. My favorite quote from it (paraphrased): *Those who take offense add as much to the misery of the world as those who make offense.*

--Steve Koeler

The Poisonwood Bible, by Barbara Kingsolver

I loved the fictional depiction of missionaries who so wanted to help the native people but were clueless about survival & the reality of life in the Belgian Congo. It was so well written through the voices of the children & wife. This book made me much more discerning & observant as I have traveled in other cultures.

--Penelope Morton

The Hero With a Thousand Faces, by Joseph Campbell

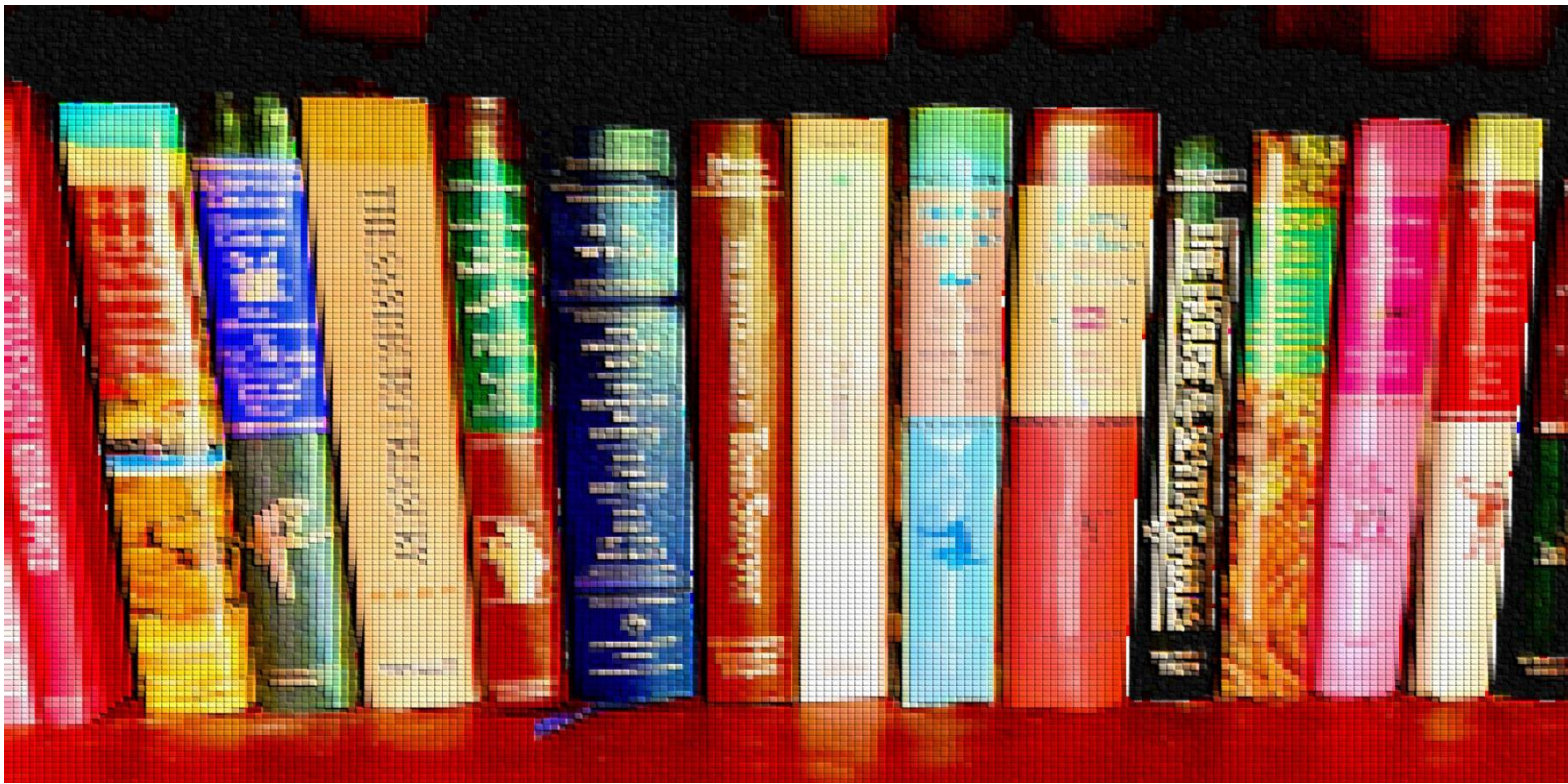
I was curious about Campbell, the monomyth, and The Hero's Journey ever since I learned that George Lucas was influenced by Campbell's work when he created Star Wars. When I finally read Campbell's seminal book, I realized I had found my spiritual shaman. In my fascination of other religions, mythologies, and cultures, here was a way to consider the underpinnings that connected all of us throughout history. In a sense, Campbell led me to UU, as I am a seeker of religious Truths that may wear many masks; to me, Unitarian Universalism sees the holy in a thousand faces.

--Adam Watson

Clan of the Cave Bear, by Jean M. Auel

The theme of survival of a young woman who was ostracized by her "clan" was meaningful to me at a time in my life when I needed encouragement as a newly single parent.

--Margaret Constan



The Pickwick Papers, by Charles Dickens

Sometimes, I read a sentence, a paragraph, a book, and I have to stop, pause a while, close it, and just absorb the wonder of words and feelings. How did that person know exactly the way I feel? the way I see things? what will make me laugh? what will make me cry? I learned in the early 60s, while commuting 45 minutes to and 45 minutes from work, that laughing out loud is contagious and makes others ask what it is that's causing that to happen. It was Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*. The best thing that reading has taught me: how to laugh and make others smile.

--Joan Miller

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, by Richard Bach

This book taught me personal reflection, freedom, self-realization, and not to be put in a box because of what, who, or where you are from.

--Kevin Karsner

Jonathan Livingston Seagull was written for children, but worth gold to adults.

--John E. Elliott

The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein

Silverstein illustrates giving without expecting anything in return.

--Kathy Karsner

Walden, by Henry David Thoreau

I read *Walden* in high school. I found the concept of simplicity to be so liberating and peaceful. I also deeply valued the idea of bucking conventional aspirations and instead prioritizing gratitude and inner development.

--Julie Johnson

The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho

The Alchemist is about trusting in the circle of life.

--Rhonda Goodall

Being Immortal, by Atul Gawande

Being Immortal is a medical novel about what it would be like never to die. There are pros and cons. It changed my opinion about end-of-life procedures.

--Janet Taylor

Guide to the Old and New Testaments, by Isaac Asimov

This book changed my opinion of Christianity and moved me toward UU and pagan spirituality. This happened during my junior year at NC State University.

--Robert Barker

A Book on Cherokee Herbal Medicine made me aware of alternatives to standard medicine.

--Sonya Goff

Beyond Ourselves, by Catherine Marshall

Written in 1976 by Catherine Marshall (1914-1983), wife of Peter Marshall (1902-1949). He was a well known minister, and she a well known writer. I read this book as a young adult, and it was one of the books that began my journey of healing, freedom, and peace. It presented me with a relaxed and loving atmosphere to let go of some of my evangelical fears and guilt.

--Patria Fielding

The Magus, by John Fowles

I read *The Magus* in my early twenties. Fowles is a master story teller; this book about a confused twenty-something man searching for himself resonated with me. The character mistakes illusion for reality and comes to reject his non-belief in ordinary love. This only occurs after lessons learned through the machinations of an older wisdom figure. Set on a Greek island about 15 years after WWII, there are mock replays of both war scenes as well as mystical and mythical events. Intriguing reading!

--Kathi Peterson

Meditations, by Marcus Aurelius

This book introduced me to Stoicism, which has had a good deal of influence in how I'm able to handle stress, criticism, and my outlook on the world. It generally has affected my anxiety level in positive ways. I find it a pretty powerful for a book that was never intended to be read except by its author.

--Gary Guss

Kingsblood_Royal, by Sinclair Lewis

Kingsblood Royal is a 1947 novel about a man who has been raised as white, but who discovers that he has a black ancestor, and the consequences of discovering he was 1/32nd black. I don't recall my exact age when I read it, but it would have been as a young teen in the mid-1960's. The confluence of reading that story, the civil rights movement in the news at that time, some particular circumstances in the church my family attended, and most importantly, a family story, my life was changed.

The family story was that my grandmother's grandmother had been an orphaned Native American adopted into my family. Inspired by the story, I did some calculations and found that I had a greater percentage of so-called "Indian blood" than the novel's protagonist had of "black blood." Then, as the protagonist had done, I looked up American race laws and discovered how confused the whole idea of race was. I saw people in the news regularly talking about how important it was "to keep the races separate" as God had supposedly intended, while there was no objective scientific way for determining racial identity, and that the supposed rules varied widely from state to state and country to country.

Later I learned that Lewis had written *Kingsblood Royal* after consultation with Walter White, the NAACP president who identified as black but who has passed as white while doing investigations. I moved from feeling that black people had a problem that needed to be dealt with to understanding that that the problem was that so-called white people were trying to impose categories that did not make sense. It was at about this time I also learned that the Methodist Church I was attending had some members who were suggesting to people who appeared to be black that they, the black-appearing people, would be more comfortable if they attended a different church, probably a black Methodist church. That discovery led to my leaving that church and to discovering that Unitarian Universalism existed.

--Elwood Sturtevant

The Christian Bible

The Bible is the book that has influenced my life the most. Many of its stories that I was taught or read throughout my upbringing helped me solidify my adult beliefs about religion—a core part of my identity now. I learned how the many contradictions, cruel actions by God and God's followers, and unbelievable myths in Bible stories have been terribly harmful to people who take them literally. While the Bible contains many good lessons, people have also taken Biblical passages out of context and have used them to control and guilt people. The most obvious example is when televangelists convince people to give them money in exchange for a guaranteed position in Heaven. As a psychotherapist I heard first-hand stories of how these Biblical passages sowed the seeds of mental illness and irrational ways of looking at the world. Hopefully my understanding of the Bible and how it harmed people made me a more effective therapist. But most importantly, my knowledge of the Bible informed not only what religious beliefs I rejected but also how to develop a healthier, more reasonable, and more nonjudgmental morality. You could credit my experience with the Bible and its interpretations for my pivot from the Christian religion of my upbringing to my current adoption of Unitarian Universalist principles, based on justice and love in the present.

--Jean Koeler



On School Libraries

by Laura Robinson

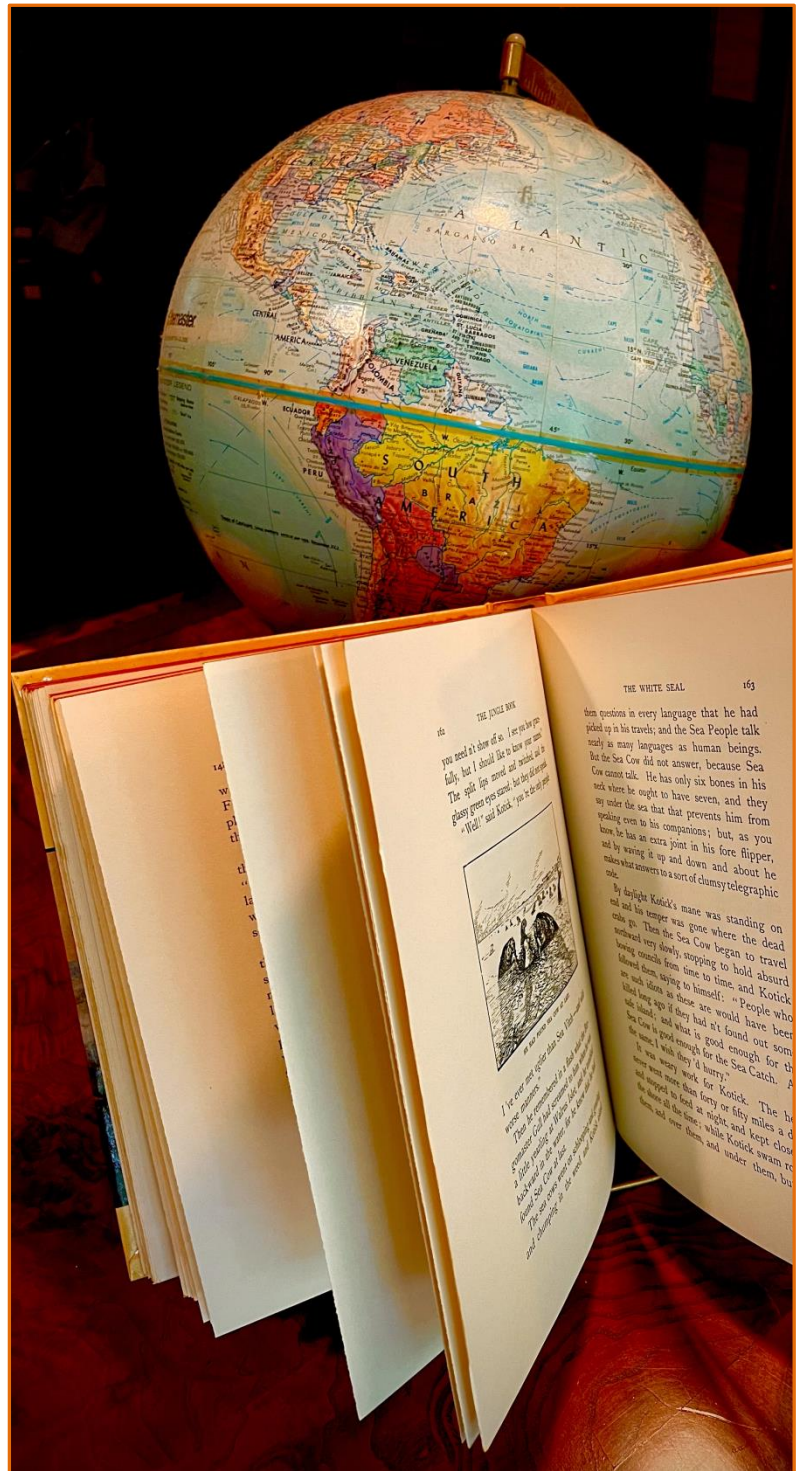
Why are school libraries important?

As a Unitarian Universalist, I can safely say that we value reading and books. We frequently take our children to the library for *Story Hour*, participate in the summer reading program, and make sure they all have library cards. Heck, some of us read to our children before they're born. But as a former reading teacher, I can tell you not all students have that advantage. Because of disparities in library locations, transportation, and family resources, many children don't have the free access to public libraries we would wish for them.

For many students, school libraries are their first exposure to books of any kind. Access to books can provide a gateway to the greater world. Children can find characters with whom they identify. They can discover new interests in science or geography or history. For others, reading can also be a therapeutic escape from troubling life circumstances.

In today's political environment, school libraries are facing defunding and wide-ranging book bans. Our support for libraries and librarians is more important than ever. As Unitarian Universalists, we need to support public libraries, and also our public school libraries.

The religious liberty proclaimed in our US Constitution, as well as the intellectual development promoted by our schools, begins with the freedom to access ideas conveyed in a wide variety of written sources--just the thing libraries were founded to provide for all.



All Peoples' People

Adam Watson

interview by Paula Kingsolver

All Peoples member Adam Watson came to the congregation at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when we were meeting only online. As he describes it:

Around the time of the pandemic, like so many people I was feeling a little isolated. I felt like, "There has to be a greater good, a greater purpose." And there was something I wanted or needed out of what religiosity could do for me – with the struggle being, what's the religion? And it just so happened that, as I was reading around, I had read some things about Unitarian Universalism, and it just so happened that I found a church that's relatively close to me in driving distance, and that church was All Peoples!

That was when All Peoples began doing their services online by Zoom. And, you can say a lot of good and bad things about technology, but here's a great example: because of Zoom, because of that technology, it was a great taste testing of not only what is Unitarian Universalism, but in a specific and personal way, what is All Peoples? What's the community like, what is the minister like, and so on. It was a great opportunity for me to experience the church service and what UU would be like before committing, so to speak.



Adam had been searching for a spiritual home for most of his life but didn't know if he would ever find one that met his unique combination of questions and interests.

I often say that I was born out of a pact; my mother was Baptist and my father was Catholic. In 1968 they were both 18 and looking to get married. My mom was more easygoing – "whatever church we go to is fine," while my father really wanted to have a Catholic wedding.

The priest at the church they attended required that any children they had be raised Catholic. Adam's parents honored that pact, although they also had a fairly liberal orientation toward religious education. The Catholic tradition resonated with Adam in many ways, while he also felt called to explore his own path.

I did appreciate the majesty, beauty, and pageantry of the Catholic Church and its ceremonies - a beautiful sense of connection and transcendence. As I got older though, I began asking a lot

more “why” questions, more exploration. I had always been fascinated by history and culture, so I was always looking at and reading about different religions alongside of that.

Though Adam found much to like and admire about many religious traditions, there was always a sense that he couldn't be completely loyal or faithful to the requirements of a particular religion. Somewhere along the way, he encountered the writings of the scholar Joseph Campbell.

I loved mythology as a historical perspective, but I also loved Campbell's idea that there's a universal story to be had, that a lot of the mythologies and hero's journeys – all these tales tell the one tale. The idea of that really clicked with me. And I loved the idea of exploring and seeing value in all the different *stories*. I'm a person who loves stories and I'm a storyteller, so that leads up to...

By the time the pandemic faded back and we were starting to meet in person again, I think maybe the first service that there was an in-person opportunity I said, “Okay, I'd like to join.” And I have been here ever since!

Rev. Kathy Hurt was the interim minister at the time, and I have really enjoyed and appreciated the transition to [settled minister] Rev. Bruce [Beisner]. And not only being part of the beloved community, but also I'm very humbled and flattered to have been asked to participate in a few committees and help as a worship associate; even leading a few services. So it's a great opportunity for me to see how I can contribute and be not just a bystander, but really a part of the church.

Raised in a military family in his early years (his father was in the Air Force), Adam was born in Kokomo, Indiana and moved to locations including Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Greek island of Crete. His parents were both from Louisville so when they divorced (when Adam was six years old) Adam returned with his mother to Louisville, and has remained in the area virtually ever since. His family includes his wife and two daughters.

My wife's name is April and her maiden name was Wathen, so when we married she said, “You know, everyone always thinks I'm a Watson anyway, so that was easy; I only had to change a few letters!” We both have the initials A.W., so in that tradition, as we had our two daughters we also gave them “A” names. Our first is Ayla Watson and our youngest is Aria Watson. So we are the “A team”! Ayla just graduated from high school last year; she is 19. Aria is a seventh grader; she's 12.

Adam is a career public school educator, working in the field for almost two decades in roles including classroom teacher and district digital learning coordinator. He has worked in Bullitt, Oldham, and Shelby counties, and now supports the educators of fourteen districts in the region as part of the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative. In some ways Adam felt his career calling almost all his life.

As far as education, really early on when I was even in elementary school, I was fortunate that a lot of things about school came easier for me. In particular I felt like I was always a strong writer and reader. So, it just naturally happened that in second and third grade, say, there would be a student that was struggling a little bit and I would say, “Hey, how about this?” Or “Try this way,” and they would say, “Oh, thanks!” And I felt that energy and appreciated that feeling of being of

service. So even at that young age the seed was planted.

Fast forward lots of years. I'd pretty much kept solid to that plan of being a teacher, but when I first graduated from high school I had what I might call "the wilderness years" before I settled down to go back to college. Eventually I said, "Okay, I want to do this;" I still felt the calling for being a teacher. So I started going to school part time while I worked full time. I was 31 when I was finally in front of a group of high school students and had my first classroom.

This year is my nineteenth year in education. I'm about to turn 50 years old next year, so it's been a great journey. Currently my job is with the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative. So it's like scaling up. I started as a classroom teacher, next I was a district support person. Now as part of my work I support, alongside my team, fourteen different districts in Kentucky, one of them being JCPS [Jefferson County Public Schools], and kind of a horseshoe of districts ringing around Jefferson County. It's an opportunity to help a lot of people and also learn from a lot of people. There are a lot of great stories out there as far as educators doing some awesome stuff.

While Adam has participated on the Sunday Service committee and as a worship associate, he also enjoys the opportunity simply to celebrate being a member of the congregation.

I have been so pleased to find a spiritual home that encompasses so much diversity – of opinion, of thought, of people – that welcomes the searchers. Because that was definitely my story. I have been and continue to be a searcher of experience, of knowledge, of spiritual uplift; and the really wonderful thing about All Peoples

is to take all of these questers and allow us all to be pilgrims together in that journey. I really feel thankful to find a place like that.

From when I was younger until just recently, UU has been that place that I was always looking for in my search. And to think that I walked in the door interested in Catholicism, and Judaism, and Buddhism, and so many other different traditions. There's a "Yes, and" quality to UU. It's like you don't have to leave those things at the door. In fact, bring them in. And it becomes part of the entire spiritual journey, an ability and opportunity you have to explore that part of yourself and explore that with fellow community members.



For more on Adam's work and published writing on education, please visit adamwatson.org



"Bookmarks"

Book reviews by our congregants

Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Kimmerer

Review by Roxanne Sturtevant

Robin Kimmerer is a mother, scientist, Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology at the State University of New York (SUNY) and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her bestselling compendium of essays, *Braiding Sweetgrass* weaves together scientific knowledge, an indigenous world view and the ability of plants themselves to restore the land. This might sound to some like a conglomeration of the foreign: science, Native Americans and plants, oh my! Amazingly, Kimmerer's writing was so clear and poetic that it often brought me to tears of recognition as I read. Her ideas formed an alternate understanding and a hopeful way forward in terms of how we treat our planet and how we treat each other.

Here is a sample of Kimmerer's evocative and instructive prose.

In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold.

Through storytelling, Kimmerer leads us to view our world through the lens of the totality of mind, body, emotion and spirit. She calls us to notice the many contributions of the natural world to our survival, comfort and contentment. For example, she says, plants speak to us in the language of food. Our eyes are opened as we learn to appreciate our planet, and its abundant life, as the origin of all that is useful in our own lives. In one sense the Earth, as our UU hymn says, is the Source of All. The natural world is a gift to living beings. The gift economy as described is based on mutual obligation, reciprocity (giving back), and responsibility. Kimmerer advocates for practicing awareness, gratitude, land stewardship, science, art and reverence.

Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and dance for the renewal of the world...In return for the privilege of breath.



Photo by Rob Kingsolver



The Climate Book, by Greta Thunberg Review by Wallace McMullen

This is a wonderful book. It is an amazing intellectual achievement by a heroic young woman who had not begun collegiate studies when she created it.

Greta actually didn't write most of the book. She solicited approximately 85 short essays from the world's foremost experts, covering virtually all the climate-related topics we know of, and organized them into five major chapters. Each expert essay is two to four pages long. Ms. Thunberg herself wrote about 10 connecting commentaries, which I found very insightful. She is brilliant, and I read one comment by a contributor that he was working with her because he considered it a worthwhile use of his professional skills.

The book contains contributions from the well-known leaders of climate action, such as Katharine Hayhoe, Michael Oppenheimer, Bill McKibben, and Naomi Klein. And many other contributors I had never heard of. But they all were clearly very expert in their topics. It is a credit to her that she knew of them.

The big headings for the chapters are perhaps as one would expect:

- *How Climate Works*
- *How Our Planet is Changing*
- *What We've Done About It*
- *What We Must Do Now*

With the elaboration provided by roughly 20 briefs in each chapter, this is a very comprehensive book, encompassing 428 pages of information and commentary. I read it with the LCAN (Louisville Climate Action Network) book club, and we found we could not get through it in our usual allotted time of two months. We doubled our allotted time period after everyone admitted that they had only read about half of it at the two month meeting.

I compare this book to the highly acclaimed book *Drawdown*, edited by Paul Hawkins. If one wishes to do a comprehensive review of expert climate mitigation literature available to lay people, I think these two books pretty much cover it. I would read *Drawdown* first, to learn about all the technologies that have been evaluated by experts for climate change mitigation and minimization. Then I would read *The Climate Book* to add an activist's advocacy perspective. Admittedly, you would have to have a lot of intellectual focus or 4 -5 months to wrap your mind around the extensive content of both works.

Or if you want to just focus on enhancing your advocacy knowledge, simply read *The Climate Book*. You'll get knowledge, and Greta Thunberg's intensity to boot. I think this summer's weather, with the heat dome boiling Arizona, Vermont flooding, and the Canadian wildfires polluting the air over all of North America with smoke has been strong evidence that we really need intense climate advocacy right now.

I'll close with a quote from Greta's final commentary page:

"Our leaders have failed to take action, and that has turned the changing climate into a crisis which can no longer be avoided. ...but that doesn't mean we can give up. Far from it. As [Secretary General] Guterres said, 'now is the time to turn rage into action. Every fraction of a degree matters. Every voice can make a difference. And every second counts.' I am not telling anyone what to do but, based on the information given by the scientists and experts in this book, here is a list of actions that some of us can take, if we want to." (Page 428)

The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg is available at Carmichael's Bookstore.



Nature in Our Neighborhood

by Rob Kingsolver

Snapping Turtles and the Fountain of Youth

Although we tend to think of our city as a construction of human design, it sits atop an alluvial landscape. The water we drink, the soil beneath our feet, and the shape of our surroundings are all provided by the Ohio River. Oxbow lakes, river bluffs, feeder streams, floodplains, and backwater sloughs dominate the geography of Louisville and sustain the non-human creatures we encounter in this special place.

No living creature better represents our riverine ecosystem than *Chelydra serpentina*, the common snapping turtle. Because they are so well adapted to our silt-bottomed waterways, you can find snapping turtles in local streams, golf course water hazards, swampy bottomlands, and suburban drainage ditches throughout our city. On a rainy day several years ago, I saw a dinner-plate sized snapper plodding its way along the breakdown lane of the Watterson Expressway.

Snapping turtles have a long history in North America, having persisted nearly unchanged on this continent for more than 90 million years. Their evolutionary success is largely due to their broad and flexible niche. Snapping turtles eat aquatic vegetation and scavenge dead animals, but also catch amphibians, fish, and invertebrates when they can.



Photo by Rob Kingsolver

With lungs full of air, snapping turtles can float just below the surface, but they more often walk along the bottom in water shallow enough to stick their nose up for air now and then. They burrow in the mud, and are mostly sedentary. Their carapace (upper shell) shields the top of the body, but

the plastron (lower shell) is much smaller, functioning more like a tactical vest. The reduced lower shell allows their legs more freedom of movement than in most other turtles.

In winter, snappers seek deeper water, burrow into the bottom, slow down their metabolism to a whisper, and sleep the winter away. The incredibly small amount of oxygen they need during hibernation is absorbed through the body surface. I wonder if turtles have epic dreams during those months-long winter naps?

On land, snapping turtles can walk with their shell elevated off the ground. Migration may take snappers to deeper bodies of water for winter hibernation, to better feeding sites, or to females' terrestrial egg laying sites. Although this species rarely bites when in the water, it is very aggressive on land. If you should meet a wandering snapper, I highly recommend yielding it the right-of-way. Do not try to pick up large individuals by their shells; the long neck can reach back surprisingly far, and the strong jaws can inflict serious injury.

A female may travel up to a mile from the water to find just the right kind of soft soil for nesting. In a shallow pit dug into the earth, she deposits 20-40 eggs, about the color and size of ping-pong balls. Since the snapping turtle lineage predates the evolutionary development of sex chromosomes, sex in this animal is determined by a more primitive mechanism. A baby turtle's sex depends on the egg's temperature during the early weeks of its incubation in the soil. According to *Sci News* (5/6/2016), eggs incubated at temperatures near 88° F become female hatchlings, and cooler temperatures near 80° F produce males. Soil temperature varies depending on the depth that an egg is buried, so snapping turtle nests usually yield turtle hatchlings of both sexes.

I envy the snapping turtle's swimming ability, and its defensive prowess, but most of all, I'm impressed by its ability to age gracefully. Longevity is comparable to ours--60 to 100 year old snappers have been documented. What's more, these turtles do not seem to experience any loss of health or vitality as they get older. A snapper's survival rate at age 90 is as good as it is at age 9. A turtle's organs do not wear out or decline in function as they age. No bad knees, failing eyesight, or bone density loss? Maybe we can learn a thing or two from our crotchety turtle neighbors!



June Puuzzle Answers

Crossword--"Be Well!"

S	T	A	T	E		P	R	E	S	S	I	O	N	S	
A	H	E	A	L	T	H	Y	O	U	T	L	O	O	K	
S	U	R	G	E	R	Y		S	R		A	C	R	I	
H	M	O	S		A	S	B	I	G			Y	T		
A	P	B		A	L	I	E	N	E	A	R	T	H	S	
			I	N	N	A	C	L			H	E	E	H	O
		E	C	O	N		I	F	F	Y			A	O	L
		V	E	G	E	T	A	R	I	A	N	I	S	M	
N	I	X				O	N	Y	X		E	A	S	E	
S	L	E	P	T			J	A	S	O	N	I			
C	A	R	G	O	S	H	O	R	T	S		S	D	S	
	C	C				P	O	B	O	Y		A	T	E	A
A	T	I	P			A	U		A	E	R	I	A	L	S
R	O	S	Y	A	S	S	E	S	S	M	E	N	T	S	
T	R	E	A	T	M	E	N	T		S	A	T	A	Y	

Acrostic

"I have an almost complete disregard of precedent and a faith in the possibility of something better. It irritates me to be told how things have always been done. I go for anything new that might improve the past."

Clara Barton

-- *Changing Old Ways*

ACROSTIC PUZZLE

by Rob Kingsolver

Follow the clues and fill in the blanks to complete each word. Then copy letters into the matching numbered squares to complete a quotation from a well-known UU author. The first letters of each of the words, read from top to bottom, spell out the author's name and topic.

1 J	2 I	3 C		4 X	5 E	6 B	7 X	8 P	9 Y	10 D	11 M	12 I		13 M	14 Q	15 N		16 Y
17 F	18 K	19 A	20 Q	21 V	22 K		23 B	24 D	25 K	26 U		27 L	28 A		29 S	30 D	31 B	32 X
33 S	34 S		35 K	36 M		37 U	38 H	39 R	40 G	41 R	42 T	43 K		44 N	45 U	46 H		47 H
48 F	49 T	50 O		51 Z	52 G		53 G	54 U	55 C	56 L	57 K		58 N	59 J	60 M	61 E	62 F	63 V
64 T	65 H		66 I	67 K	68 Y	69 I	70 A	71 Z	72 E		73 Y		74 O	75 J	76 T	77 S	78 Z	
79 X	80 F	81 Z		82 J	83 Q	84 P		85 W	86 A	87 E	88 Q		89 P	90 O	91 X	92 M		93 U
94 O		95 I	96 E	97 O		98 B	99 X	100 Q	101 G		102 G	103 B	104 G	105 C	106 V	107 Z	108 Q	109 C
110 J	111 L		112 H	113 W		114 T	115 D	116 B		117 T	118 Z	119 S	120 E	121 R	122 W	123 A	124 D	125 W
126 X		127 K	128 R	129 N	130 V	131 G	132 G		133 F	134 C	135 W		136 C	137 J	138 N	139 K	140 B	141 P

A. Cool weather crop

19 86 28 123 70

B. Nevertheless

6 103 23 140 98 31 116

C. Dream up

109 134 136 3 105 55

D. Journalist's pursuit

124 30 115 10 24

E. Cheesy snack

5 87 61 96 120 72

F. Humanity's home

17 133 80 62 48

G. "Help _____"

101 53 104 40 132 52 131 102

H. Cut grass

38 112 47 65 46

I. Racing craft

12 69 66 2 95

J. One with Cicero's gift

75 82 137 1 110 59

K. Joseph Priestley's faith

139 22 127 18 43 67 35 25 57

L. Unprecedented

111 56 27

M. Grind one's teeth

13 36 60 92 11

N. Tech giant

44 15 58 138 129

O. Kind of finish

74 90 50 94 97

P. IL to IN direction

89 8 141 84

Q. Turn around

100 83 108 14 88 20

R. Type of tea

41 121 39 128

S. Undefeated contestant

33 34 77 119 29

T. Agreement

49 64 42 114 76 117

U. Clinton-era trade deal

45 93 54 26 37

V. Conception

63 106 21 130

W. Go with the flow

135 122 125 113 85

X. Inform

7 79 4 126 32 91 99

Y. Capable

73 16 9 68

Z. Elbow room

78 71 118 51 107 81

PEOPLES PUZZLE

"Book-em!"

by Rob Kingsolver

Across

1. Preserved in spirits
9. Prime Minister Gandhi
15. French girlfriend? (2 wds)
16. "As _____ possible." (2 wds)
17. Conrad classic
19. Hawkeye st.
20. Exam or cosmetic
21. Last words to the boss (2 wds)
22. Lou. to Indy direction
24. Recyclable element (abbr)
25. List of choices
27. Record player
30. KY state bird
34. Feline proclamation
35. Yoga center gear
36. Choreographer Neliswe
37. Woolf classic
40. "Shortly," old-school
41. Small bills
42. Southern phone company (init.)
43. Updo or skep
45. County Cork stone circle
47. Cabinet-level Dept.
48. In other words (abbr)
49. Consumed
50. Set out
53. Poughkeepsie College
57. Half a laugh
58. Hemingway classic
61. Playwright O'Neill
62. Mechanic's need
63. Implored
64. Leftovers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13	14
15									16					
17								18						
19			20							21				
22		23			24			25	26					
27			28	29			30					31	32	33
	34					35				36				
37					38					39				
40					41				42					
43				44					45					46
			47					48			49			
50	51	52				53	54			55	56		57	
58					59							60		
61							62							
63							64							

Down

1. Trailing
2. Woodland wildflower
3. S. Hemisphere constellation
4. Standard
5. Research pursuit
6. Said after falling down (2 wds)
7. W. German Natl. Park
8. Guy or fellow, scrambled
9. State in the Middle East (abbr)
10. Trouble you look for (2 wds)
11. Cervantes classic
12. Romanian castle
13. Hindu zodiac sign
14. Aide (abbr.)
18. Calc. & Stats (2 wds)
23. Last "little piggie" (2 wds)
26. Old word for old times
28. Wrote *A Bell for Adano* (2 wds)
29. Dumfound
30. Zoo infrastructure
31. Seasickness
32. Roll call options (2 wds)
33. Papua New Guinea city
35. Goddess of wisdom
37. Generous folk pick it up.
38. It makes the world go 'round.
39. Heston played him.
44. Ready to play (2 wds)
45. Inebriates
46. Single-celled fungi
48. Debatable topic
50. Footfall
51. A day of the week (abbr)
52. Moon goddess
54. Resembling wings
55. Thai word for "delicious"
56. 2013 Jeff Bridges movie
59. Actor Beatty
60. School in Magnolia, AK

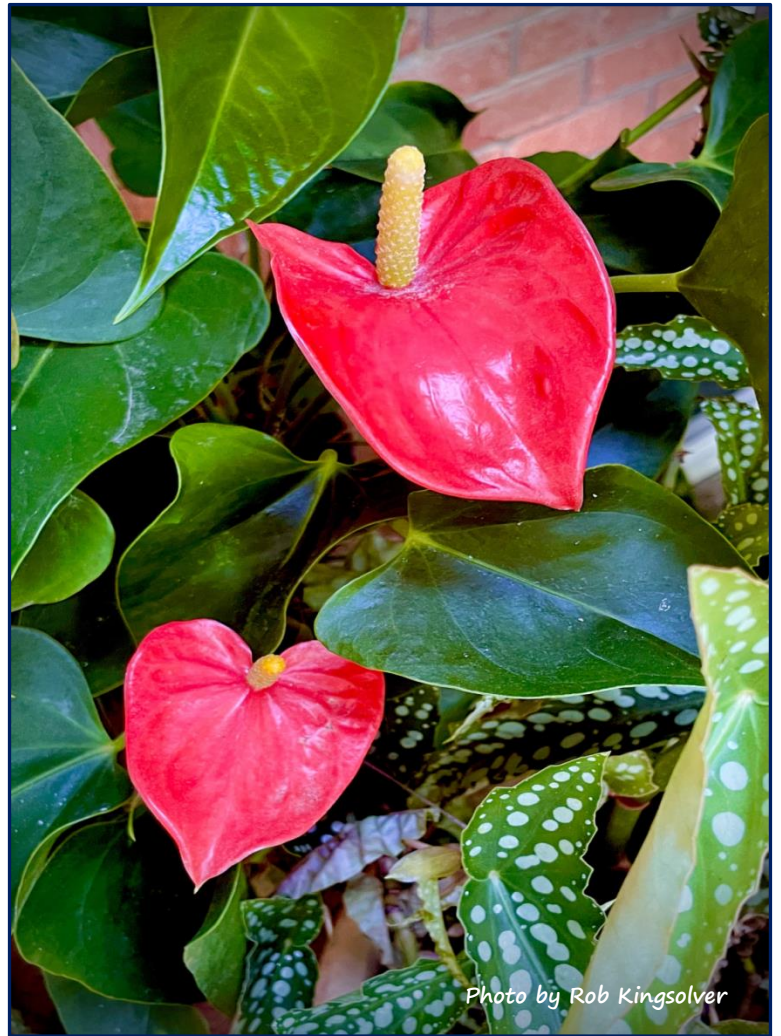
A Winter Wonderland

In popular culture, winter is considered a time of dormancy, of sleep, of withdrawing from the world to "hunker down" and bide our time until spring brings us back into the sunlight.

In Kentucky, the truth is that January is usually better than August as a time to be outside. With no insufferable heat, no mosquitoes, and no crowds in our favorite parks, winter can be a great time to be out and about. Given adequate footwear and warm clothing, winter hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, and stargazing can provide the best outdoor experiences of the year.

What are your favorite winter pursuits? Aside from the holidays, what do you like best about the cooler months?

Send us your winter poems, stories, photos, and observations to share winter joys with the congregation.



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