



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

The Sea of Moral Injury

By Karen G. Johnston

Here I am again, stopped at a traffic light, a sea of cars surrounding me, a handful of vehicles ahead of me. Stationed on the median strip, someone visibly in need, likely unhoused, walks the line of momentarily-stopped cars, cardboard sign in hand, asking for money.

I find myself praying. Not for their wellbeing. Not for solutions to our broken housing system. Instead, I perversely pray that the light will change before they arrive at my rolled-up window.

Perhaps you follow the dictum of the 19th century poet Walt Whitman, “give alms to everyone who asks,” and this frees you to know you have done your part. Perhaps, because you intentionally support community organizations that provide direct service or address systemic issues, you pass by and experience no unease. Perhaps. Personally, I swim clumsily between these two approaches. I find myself struggling to keep my head above these ethical waters.

Because any liberation must be collective liberation, I know it’s critically important to keep at the center of our attentions those most directly, most direly impacted. That being true, I have also come to believe that, no matter one’s privilege status, at this point in late-stage capitalism with its rot of the social safety net, we are all constantly swimming in a sea of moral injury.

No matter our social location, we regularly witness—or fail to prevent—harm caused by systems not of our making. This causes us to grapple with not only our place in the shadow sides of the interdependent web of all existence, but also the harm we experience.

In response, I sometimes turn away, scroll on-and-on, numb out. Sometimes I pray for the wrong things. Yet my faith, values, and principles tell me that there is a different option: to turn towards. And when I turn towards that sense of complicity—that pain of moral injury—it becomes a message from the interdependent web of all existence: harm of one is harm of all.

When I can pause, even for just a moment, I can recognize my unease for what it is: not a reason for disconnection or seed of resentment, but a niggling hello from the interdependent web of all existence, reminding me of a deep connection with my fellow earthling; a dogged attempt to stir me from the illusion of separation; an abiding call to save me from the false promise of safety by materialistic individualism.

When I can position myself to hear this universal and universalist message, I am better able to know which direction to swim.

This article is reprinted from the UUA weekly inspiration, Braver/Wiser. Rev. Karen G. Johnston (she/her/hers) is the Senior Minister at First Unitarian Universalist Society Burlington in Vermont.

A Message from the Newsletter Editor

By Florence Ferguson

This newsletter issue marks the beginning of year eight for *The CommUUnicator*. During the past seven years, the newsletter format has been a weekly one or two-page issue with a feature article followed by news items about Fellowship activities, ministry team activities, upcoming community events and news about members (except for some weeks when no content was received).

I personally value the feature article, which is meant to give UUFW members an opportunity to share their views, perspectives and values in a way that will inform or inspire. Our Fellowship is blessed to have a number of thoughtful members who are also great writers. Over the years the newsletter has published dozens of interesting feature articles, including Rev. Paul’s monthly column.

But, producing three feature articles by members each month has not always been easy. The feature article in this issue is from a source I have used occasionally when I could not come up with a piece written by one of our members. The UUA’s weekly inspiration archive almost always has something to fill this void. This year I hope to submit one or more of our feature articles for publication in [Braver/Wiser](#).

I encourage anyone with a unique perspective, personal truth or challenging situation they’ve dealt with—which could offer new knowledge, comfort or insight—to consider writing a feature article of 500-600 words. If you don’t think of yourself as a writer, it’s OK. The newsletter reviewers and I

can provide editing help. It is my goal this year to bring more voices into the newsletter.

I also urge team leaders to provide regular input to the newsletter to keep the congregation informed about what their teams have been doing and what additional support they may need. Photos always add to the impact of a ministry team announcement. In fact, if a photo tells the story, just send it in with a caption.

Finally, I hope everyone who knows about events and activities in the community that would be of interest to us, and are in accord with our values, will forward them to the newsletter. Any input you have, as well as questions or suggestions for the newsletter, can be sent to newsletter@uufw.org.

There are many people to thank for making the newsletter as successful as it has been, but I especially appreciate Theresa Curry, Sylvia Woodworth and Marilyn Nash for reviewing and editing each issue for the past seven years.

Community News

Waynesboro will be offering its first Pride Festival Saturday, September 14 from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. The [Prism Pride Festival](#) will be in the 500 block of West Main Street and is sponsored by Destination Downtown Waynesboro with the goal of promoting pride, representation, inclusivity, solidarity and more. Shagwuf will be performing, and there will be food vendors and activities.

a haiku:
 Crepe myrtle lined streets,
 Our sweet, domestic sylvan,
 Sherbert, lollipops.
Joe Good

