

The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Embracing Acceptance When Dealing with Suboptimal Conditions

By Melissa Hays

One evening, my daughter and I were coming home from a short walk. We were looking up at the sky and just happened to stop in the alleyway behind our neighbor's home. We heard, from inside, screams for help. As we listened, they started to sound desperate. Alarmed, my daughter and I ran up to the back door to see what we could do to help.

As we approached the door, we were overcome with a stench that was close to impossible to bear. I decided to yell through the door, in fear that the smell could be hazardous to my daughter.

It turned out my neighbor had fallen into a hole created during a rehab job in her bathroom, and had become stuck. She was panicking and needed help.

My husband and I returned with a handsaw, upon my neighbor's request to bring one, and we had to take a moment together outside to prepare ourselves. The smell was nauseating, even from the back stoop, and we somehow began to realize that the situation at hand was much worse than it seemed.

That evening, my husband was able to free my neighbor's trapped leg with a handsaw. After her panic subsided upon release from the hole, I saw my neighbor's shame start to unravel. She began explaining why her house was such a mess and about the smell and all

the things she realized we were exposed to while coming into her home without preparation.

I focused on a concept of forgiveness that I've come to refer to as acceptance, which is one of the reasons I was drawn to this Unitarian Universalist congregation five years ago.

While my neighbor apologized for her accident and hazardous home, I softened my eyes and allowed her to be heard. I stay focused on her, not the house or the mess, but just her. I saw her for the human she *truly* was, and not the human who had neglected her home. I had listened to her many stories of being a fighter jet pilot, and special education teacher and her stories of her father's military background and how it influenced her as a young child.

Acceptance, as a Unitarian Universalist, allows me to see people for whom they *really* are, not just what they look like or act like. Acceptance is a gateway for forgiveness, it's my responsibility to carry this with me wherever I go, with whomever I interact with.

Today I am grateful that I can choose forgiveness, or acceptance, with a complete stranger who flips me off in a rage of fury during high volume traffic on the interstate, or with a child who's screaming at the library because their nervous system just can't handle any more stimuli, or with my partner who

forgets to ask me how my day was because his was overwhelming and exhausting and he's struggling.

So, when my daughters ask me why our neighbor smells so badly, I respond calmly, without judgement, accepting their natural curiosity, but always demonstrating that acceptance is our moral obligation to one another. It's not our job to judge, or blame, but just to accept what is because, after all, we are all human, flaws and all.

News from the Board of Directors

By Margot Kephart, President

The UUFW Board has been working on a number of long-range goals. At the November Board meeting, we finalized the approval of a quartz countertop for the Fellowship Hall kitchen. It will be installed in January.

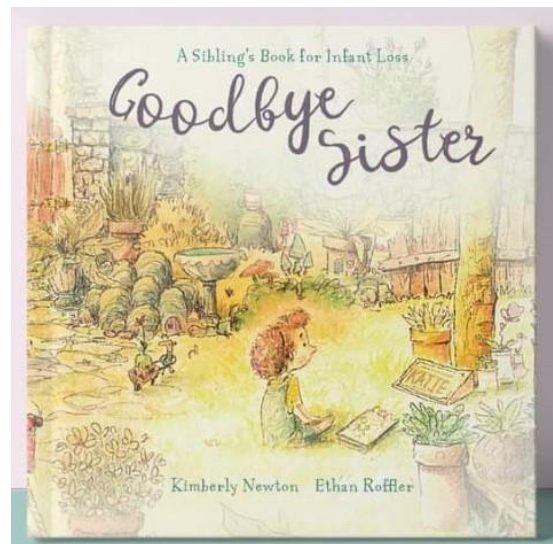
Wayne Nolde is taking a leadership role on a project to have two accessible parking spaces behind the Fellowship Hall. This would include extending the sidewalk to the Chalice House. Also, we are looking at having a new sidewalk poured in front to connect our sidewalk to the 14th street sidewalk. If the board acts quickly, we will get a substantial reduction in cost working with Greenstreet contractors.

For Election Watch on November 5, we will have an Open House from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Drop in and watch with us, and bring your favorite games, snacks and crafts.

Member News

Former UUFW member, Kim Newton, is a published book author. Her children's book,

Goodbye Sister is described on Amazon as "a story for children who have experienced the loss of an infant sibling due to stillbirth or miscarriage. *Goodbye Sister* promotes healthy grief recovery for children and families, including affirmation of negative and positive feelings, grieving as a family, recognition of the loss of hopes and expectations associated with the arrival of a new baby, and a conclusion that reinforces the healing nature of love and memory."



Kim's book is based on her own experiences when, as a child, her sister was stillborn. Her motivation to write about childhood loss came after her adopted brother was the victim of homicide in Staunton in 2020. *Goodbye Sister* has received many outstanding reviews and has gained popularity among counseling professionals who work with grieving children. It is available from the major online book sellers.

Kim and Geoff celebrate their 13th wedding anniversary this week. They live in Harrisonburg with their children, Hazel (7) and Harlow (2).

