



The CommUUnicator

**Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro**

Symbols of Blessing and Protection

A few days ago, I hung a cut-metal blessing plaque just inside my front door. It consists of eleven gathered words in Hebrew — no sentences to give context, just a pile of words that translate as blessing, happiness, abundance, luck, pride, peace, livelihood, health, wealth, success and love. It is not the traditional home blessing, which wishes that no sadness, trouble, fear, or conflict enter the home and that it be filled with joy and peace. This is a great wish for a home and is often written in beautiful calligraphy surrounded by printed or painted art. I would gladly hang such a blessing on my wall, but in the end, it is not what I decided on. I'd found this eleven-word plaque online back during the pandemic and had it waiting for an inspiration to strike for where to place it. For now at least, it has a location where I can see it every day.



Of course, every blessing needs to be seen in the clear light of day — as a wish or set of wishes, not as a literal expectation. No blessing fixes everything. I mean, right now, I've got a leak dripping through the ceiling into a bucket in my front bathroom. That's not what the blessing is for. It expresses hopes and things to work toward, inspiration to do better the things I've done less well. It's not about changing the universe into my perfect playground. It's my job to find the right repair person to fix the leak. And I'm grateful that tonight's forecast for tomorrow is warm and sunny.

On an end table in my living room, there is something I first thought of as a mistake then decided to find in it what I had hoped for. When I lived in Japan at the beginning of the 1990s, I often spent my weekends walking or biking out into the countryside. Along many of the less traveled roads, as well as busier ones, there were small Shinto shrines but also statues of Jizō, a Bodhisattva. I was told that Jizō was a protector of children and also of travelers. Later I would visit large temples with hundreds of Jizō statues, each wearing a red bib. I inquired and was told that those statues memorialized aborted fetuses. They were not left in political protest against those who found that step necessary in their life, nor against those who provided the needed service, but were paid for by the family, marking something serious without judgment, and symbolizing that the protector of children

would also watch over those who never lived. Such a multivalent divinity!

To honor my time in Japan and my exposure there to different questions about life challenges than many people here typically ask, I ordered a Jizō figurine. A token. A memory. It was inexpensive, and it was a long time arriving on a proverbial slow boat from China. When it arrived, the figurine was completely different from the one I ordered. At first I was upset. But *caveat emptor*, as the saying goes. I couldn't see it on a shelf or hold it in my hand, so I'm lucky it was even a Jizō. And after I thought about it, I decided, so much the better for it not be quite what I expected. I put it between pictures of me and Walter and next to a small stone dog and toy doghouse labeled REX, Walter's boyhood pet.



It is a symbol of care and protection, much as the eleven words in my entry only symbolize hopes and things to work toward. I don't pray to Jizō. I do, though, appreciate what the visual reminder signifies: a broader vision of how to honor our human challenges.

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul



UUs in the Community



At Gypsy Hill Park on Saturday, October 10th, Bob Norvell, Otis Huston and Kristin & Stephen

Maxwell (Team Captain) walked as UFW representatives in the annual fundraiser for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: "Out of the Darkness Community Walk." With additional support from Peggy Anders and Kay Yost, we raised \$205. Donations can still be made to this year's fundraiser by going to <https://afspwalks.donordrive.com/OOTDWalks> by the end of December. On that website, click on "Fundraiser Search" and type in "Stephen Maxwell." Then you can make your donation!

Blues for Democracy

Last Sunday's Social Action Team event focused on the intersection of Blues and Democracy. Rev. Edward Scott fired us up to fight to save democracy while Dave Sherman



and Andy Burdetsky shared their toe-tapping music. Rev. Scott said afterwards, "I can't think of a warmer reception than the one we received. Those who gathered to hear us play and speak were clearly on our side from the start! We

were just a little relieved to be unburdened of the task to persuade anyone; they were with us from the first note and the first word."

