

Imagination as Spiritual Tool



KATHARINE HOFFMAN
Learning Fellow

Our dreams and imagination fuel childhood. The world encourages children to use their imagination through words and actions. We often hear an adult tell a child to use their imagination. This behaviour is encouraged through educational shows, playground structures (rocket ships anyone?), and toys. But then adults are told to “put away your childish things (C.S. Lewis),” as if becoming grownup precludes any need to use our imaginations.

Yet, if we want to experience life fully, we have to be able to imagine what we want our life to look like. How can anyone figure out their ultimate desires if they can’t imagine them? All the goal-setting gurus tell us to envision our futures and act as if it is already true. In other words, to use our imaginations to create our reality. I believe that our spiritual reality is drawn from imagination as well.

Our Unitarian Universalist faith encourages us to explore our own beliefs and to draw from a wide range of spiritual traditions and experiences. Because being a UU is about openness and freedom in spiritual practice, imagination plays an important role in how individuals connect with their faith. Rather than seeing imagination as something

separate from spiritual life, UUs embrace it as a tool for deepening our spiritual journeys, building connections, and inspiring positive change. Using our imagination to develop our spiritual practice empowers us to envision new possibilities for ourselves, others, and even the world.

One of the core beliefs of Unitarian Universalism is the idea that everyone has worth and dignity and that everyone’s spiritual path is unique. This makes it a perfect place for imagination to thrive. Using your imagination allows you to engage with your beliefs in creative, personal ways. Whether through prayer, meditation, or everyday life, imagination helps open new doors to explore the divine, connect with the world, and grow spiritually.

Perhaps the most important way imagination is currently used in Unitarian Universalism is in the area of social justice. As UUs, we are committed to making the world a better place, and imagination helps fuel that work. By imagining a world where people are treated fairly, where the environment is cared for, and where peace prevails, we are inspired to take action and create positive change.

Ultimately, within our Unitarian Universalist congregations,

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Quest

Vol. LXXIV, No 3

2025

“Without
imagination,
how will we
know where
we’re going?”

REV. LEAH ONGIRI

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Katharine Hoffman

IMAGINATION
Multiple authors

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STEWARDS TOGETHER

IMAGINATION

*How do you relate to imagination as a spiritual tool?
How has imagination been meaningful in your life?*

JACOB

Worthy Now Member, AZ

Imagination plays a major role in many people's lives. It can provide succor from traumas, daily problems, and horrible situations. It also is the medium through which meditation, spellwork, and most religious ceremonies actually work to some extent. Imagination is how we visualize. We create the mental image of something and fill it with our beliefs, intents, goals, and then we make it happen or let go of the problem.

Personally, I use imagination to create my plans, and to help me continue to strive for my goals, especially during my meditation practices and

religious services. I also use imagination to fuel my creative impulses while writing, sewing, reading, crafting, and even planning out the projects I take on. It is a major tool that I utilize daily, and I do not know how I would cope without it! Especially when I started to utilize it as a child as a way to cope with bullying. ■

MICHAEL

Worthy Now Member, TX

I've always had a vivid imagination. When I was a little boy I'd use my GI Joe vs. Cobra action figures as my actors as I created a storyline/movie for them to play in. My imagination has helped me create stories, songs,

poems, screenplays, games and new ways of romance/ intimacy with the partners I've been with.

My imagination has also helped me to get away from prison for about an hour a day. I'll lay in my bunk, close my eyes and daydream/imagine me in a new life, new world even. I can be in the Wizarding world, or I could be in the new Marvel/DC Universe world. Or I'd use it to see how I'd like life to go for me once I'm released from prison.

Being able to use my imagination has really helped me get through 11 years, thus far, of incarceration. Every day is a new day to dream and imagine, and possibly make those dreams become a reality. ■



PHOTO BY LOUIS MAMQUET ON UNSPLASH

Imagination

can open doors without any keys...

Without it, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Anything that people have built have been from thinking of it and imagining it.

Dreams come from within, we turn them into reality.

I believe nowadays we live imagining how life should be.

I never really asked myself, what imagination might do or be!

Where does all the imagination really come from...

Is it from a past life?

I feel like reality isn't real for us these days.

Sometimes I imagine having everyday as colorful.

I imagine how life would be without any sorrows.

I imagine...

Imagination for us is our way of escaping Life.

Reality hurts.

LUIS

Worthy Now Member, RI



PHOTO BY INGMAR H ON UNSPLASH

How to Use a Labyrinth



REV. DR. MICHAEL TINO
Lead Ministry Team

The practice of moving through a labyrinth is very much a process of opening ourselves to feeling whatever is present for us, learning from them, and then releasing those things. You begin the process with an open mind—sometimes with a question, sometimes with an ache in your heart, sometimes with uncertainty, but always with an open mind.

As you make your way through the winding pathway towards the center, you must pay attention. To the lines. To the twists and turns. To lose that attention is to get lost in the labyrinth—it is the only way you can

get lost, actually, since it's just one pathway.

And keeping that attention with an open mind allows in the guests. Some of them—like the guests of joy and companionship and community—are ones we want. Some of them—grief, sadness, despair—are ones we didn't invite but have to learn from anyway.

And then you get to the center.

In the center of the labyrinth is a chance to pause. A chance to sit with the guests that have come into your soul during your journey. A chance to listen to what they have to tell you. And a chance to make peace with the fact that they're visiting you.

After whatever time you need to do this, you make your way out, following the same, solitary, serpentine path. The way out requires the same focus as the way in. And that focus signals to our guests that it is time for some of them to move on. I have found that moving through a labyrinth on a regular basis is a clearing, cleansing, and balancing ritual for my spirit.

The finger labyrinth included in this issue of Quest can be a spiritual practice you use anywhere you can have a piece of paper. Rather than walk or roll through a large labyrinth set on the ground, trace the line with your finger. The intention is the same. The practice is the same. I hope our Quest labyrinth allows you some measure of balance in your spiritual life. ■



PHOTO BY ASHLEY BATZ ON UNSPLASH

This first appeared in 2021 and we are republishing this invitation to utilize a labyrinth into your spiritual practice. It is one way that we are offering a resource for grounding in these unsettling times. We hope you find this feeds your spirit.



On Days Like These

On days like these, I imagine I am a tree.
My roots stretched deep into the earth and intertwined
with the roots of others.

On days like these, I imagine I am a tree.
My branches spread high toward the heavens and wide,
touching others.

On days like these, I imagine I am a tree.
The high winds cause me to lean and threaten to break
me in half.

On days like these, I remember I am like a tree.
My roots are my community. Our roots created at our
first meeting and intertwine as time passes.

On days like these, I remember I am like a tree.
My branches are my community, near and far. The
people most impacted by the oppressive high winds.

On days like these, I remember I am grounded, like a tree.

I remember my community near and far and know
that we will hold each other, lean into each other and
we will withstand the oppressive high winds that
will subside and make way for the warm sun and
nourishing rains. ■



AISHA HAUSER, *msw, cre-ml*
Lead Ministry Team, Church of the Larger
Fellowship

Imagination, continued from page 1

imagination is a creative gift
and a profoundly spiritual tool.
It encourages personal growth,
enhances communal worship, and
inspires justice-driven action, making
it an essential part of the UU spiritual
experience. Unitarian Universalists
can use imagination to connect to the
divine, engage with each other, and
work toward a better world. And
that's a dream that I hope we can all
imagine.

Authentically and with a heart full of
love, grace and a determination to do
what I can to bring about liberation
in all I do. ■



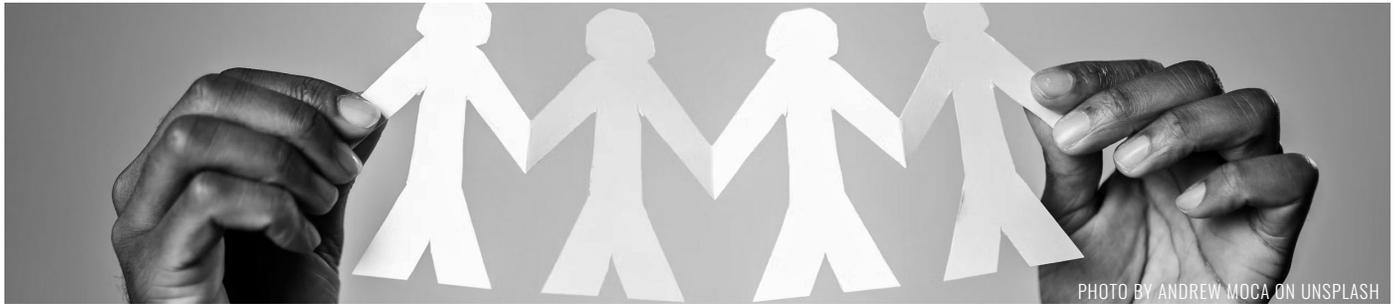


PHOTO BY ANDREW MOCA ON UNSPLASH

Stewards Together!

We have been asking members to renew their membership and financial stewardship every year at their “renewal month” (loosely based on month joined CLF), which varies by member. This meant that everyone was renewing sometime during the year, but at different times.

We are now excited to bring the congregation together no matter what month you joined, to make an annual stewardship renewal commitment together, at the same time every year - in the spring. To celebrate all that we are together and all that we can do together, as a community rooted in the faith and values of Unitarian Universalism.

Look for future communication from us as to how you can join in this annual celebration of our stewardship of CLF. ■

SHARE YOUR SUPPORT STORY

To share your thoughts, tear off your answer and mail it back to us using the envelope included in the middle of this issue, or mail a separate piece of paper with your writing.

We would love to hear from you and the ways you support that which you love!

Tell us how you have supported something in a way that felt good to you. How have you been a steward?



Angus MacLean
Church of the Larger Fellowship, UU
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210-1409 USA

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Quest Monthly Editorial Team: Aisha Hauser, *lead ministry team*, Joshua Degregorio, *publications coordinator*

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Learning Fellows: Donte Hilliard, Katherine Hofmann

Websites: clfuu.org, dailycompass.org, worthynow.org

Phone: 617-948-6150 or 617-948-4267

Email: clf@clfuu.org, worthynow@clfuu.org

**CLF Unitarian Universalist, 24 Farnsworth Street,
Boston, MA 02210-1409 USA**

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