

You Meet Your Destiny

Dr. Robert Atkins, creator of the popular low-carbohydrate Atkins Diet, died on April 17, 2003, at age 72, due to complications from a severe head injury. He slipped on ice, suffered a fall, and developed a hematoma, leading to a coma and death. My first thought was, “he could have had the bread.” And there is so much delicious bread in the world.

The phrase, “You meet your destiny on the road you take to avoid it” means that we try so hard to control outcomes and the fact is, we have little control over what happens, even in our own lives. The phrase is attributed to French poet Jean de La Fontaine but I first heard it in the movie Kung Fu Panda.

I don’t believe in destiny, I think people try to control things that are not in our control. Like Dr. Atkins. As a cardiologist, he came up with a way of eating that he said would help people lose a lot of weight. Well, that was sort of true, but it wasn’t necessarily scientifically sound. There has always been controversy about what to eat and how it impacts our health.

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We so desperately want to control our worlds and sometimes we don’t question why or where that desire for control comes from.

My response, “he could have had the bread,” was humorous, but also sincere. He denied himself all sorts of delicious food because he had a hypothesis of control.

That desire to have control is in no small part rooted in violent extractive capitalism. We have been conditioned into thinking that consumption leads to a desired outcome, whether that is weight loss, happiness, a “dream job” a “dream partner” a “dream life.”

And that conditioning is ultimately violent, in addition to ableist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, elitist etc.

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Quest

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“YOU MEET
YOUR DESTINY
ON THE ROAD
YOU TAKE TO
AVOID IT.”

—JEAN DE LA FONTAINE,
FRENCH POET

in this Pluralism Issue

YOU MEET YOUR DESTINY
Aisha Hauser

REFLECTIONS
Multiple authors

**WE ARE CALLED TO SET THE TABLE FOR THOSE WHO
ARE MOST HUNGRY FOR WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER**

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

**IN THIS TIME OF CHAOS AND UNCERTAINTY,
KNOW THAT COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION
ARE WHAT WILL SUSTAIN US**

Aisha Hauser

QUEERING RESURRECTION
Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

connect. deepen. act.

REFLECTIONS

A Village of One

BY GARY F.

*The Cubans have an old saying,
'When the sun rises, it rises for all'
We are all that – equals.
In Hugo Boss or Levis,
We are all that – equals.
Praying five times daily – or not
at all,
We are all that – equals.
Riding in a limo or public transit,
We are all that – equals.
In a restaurant or a soup kitchen,
We are all that – equals.
Whether a mansion or homeless
shelter,
white, brown, olive, black,
blonde, brunette, red, gray,
gay, straight, trans, bi,
We are all that – one.*

Community

The Webster's Dictionary definition on Community is as follows: Community, A group of people with common interests living in the same area.

In many aspects the dictionary is correct in its definition of Community.

My definition is totally different from what community truly means in this world.

For Community is FAMILY to people no matter how good their suntan is whether it's dark or light, big or small. It doesn't matter to me Community is Family.

As a transperson, such as I am, the UU Community is My Family.

Look around in any UU Church that you are right now standing in, and ask this question to yourself: Are these people around me, this Community of people do I look upon them as being my true brothers and sisters no matter what??!

If you walk up to me and ask me who I am my answer will shock you for I will hug you and say "I Love you brother, sister, for I spread my arms wide to encompass the whole UU Community, old and young as FAMILY, for Community is FAMILY to me, especially the UU Community."

TAMMY F.,

a trans person



PHOTO BY EURICO CRAVEIRO ON UNSPLASH

We are called to set the table for those who are most hungry for what we have to offer

I've been thinking lately about the way we practice spirituality as a practice of hospitality and community care. Too often, just as with more tangible resources (food, shelter, money), spiritual resources are withheld from those who are most in need. Unitarian Universalism does this differently. Or at least we try to.

It would be easy if the only people at our spiritual table were people just like us. People who agreed with everything we thought. People whose beliefs matched ours. And we are called to something different, something better. We are called to pluralism.

We are called to agree on how it is we will sit down together to feast. We understand that there will be something on the table to feed everyone—but that not everything might be for everyone. We understand that those who cannot respect the others at the table might need to go eat elsewhere.

We are also called to set the table for those who are most hungry for what we have to offer. For the message that all of us are worthy of love and respect. For a community in which we can believe different things and still love one another. For a religion that does not cast people out because of their identity.

Who are the people whose spirits you feed? Who are the people who feed your spirit? Who have you invited to share your table, and who has invited you to share one?

Spencer LaJoye, in their song "Plowshare Prayer," sings:

I pray if a prayer has been used as a sword

Against you and your heart

Against you and your word

I pray that this prayer is a plowshare of sorts

That it might break you open

It might help you grow

I pray that your body gets all that it needs

And if you don't want healing

I just pray for peace

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino,
Lead Ministry Team



Have you been wounded by exclusive religion? Perhaps because of what you believe, perhaps because of who you are? Have prayers been used against you, to try to make you different rather than respecting you just as you come? If so, you are hungry for the spiritual feast at which all are welcome.

I pray you are fed. I pray you have enough left over to feed those around you searching for sustenance. I pray you know that you are loved, and that your body and your spirit get all that they need. ■



PHOTO BY ARTEM KNIAZ ON UNSPLASH

In this time of chaos and uncertainty, know that community and connection are what will sustain us

While in undergrad, I was part of a group of students who frequented the Newman Center, the Catholic Chaplain center at the school I attended. The community was made up of misfits (we called ourselves that). A group of people from many different nationalities, faiths and identities who didn't feel like we fit in with our own communities, so we created a new one.

The reason this Newman Center hosted such a diverse group of young adults, (whether or not they were Catholic) was due to the leadership of the Chaplain at the time, Brother Robert Clark.

Brother Rob, as I have called him since meeting him in the fall semester of my first year at Rutgers in 1992, has an open, inviting and generous spirit.

When I first met him, he was standing at a table with a banner advertising the Newman Center. I walked up and asked him what that was, he explained it is the Catholic campus ministry. I proceeded to tell him that Islam is the right religion (I was 17 and thought I knew it all), and he responded, "There are many paths to God."

This response blew me away and I was shocked. This was the first time I met a faith leader that didn't espouse

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one path to the Holy. I hadn't even heard of the concept of pluralism and I wondered if the Catholic church knew that one of their leaders was being so open minded and affirming of other faiths.

Over the four years I had the privilege of being a part of the Newman Center, Brother Rob would host free dinners at least once a month and we made sure to attend and hang out. Sometimes I even volunteered to help cook.

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PHOTO BY ROBERT LUKEMAN ON UNSPLASH

In this time of chaos and uncertainty . . . *continued*

Brother Rob became a support to me and many of my peers. We often sought his counsel on our personal problems. He listened with compassion and empathy and never steered us one way or another.

He gave me the best advice I have ever received when my mother was threatening to disown me because I was dating someone Jewish. My mother wanted me to leave the United States and move back to Egypt and break up with my boyfriend. I was lamenting this dilemma that would affect the trajectory of the rest of my life, at the age of 20.

Brother Rob said to me, "Either choice will bring you pain, which is the pain you can live with." It was a transformative observation.

I grieved losing my mother for a time (she did disown me, but came back into my life after 16 years). I also chose myself and felt affirmed in that choice. No one can live our lives for us and ultimately, many of the choices we make in life have the potential to bring us pain, we are faced with deciding the pain we can tolerate.

I kept in touch with Brother Rob over the years, but hadn't seen him in person for over 25 years. I was excited to reunite with him when I was in Austin, TX, where he now lives.

Brother Rob and I picked up where we left off. I talked to him about the JUs and how I am loving being a faith leader. He inspired my journey in more ways than one. I used to joke

with him that I wanted to be him when I grew up. In some ways, I feel that I have. I try to foster a sense of community no matter where I live.

Through the CLF, I have been privileged to be part of a global community that affirms love and liberation for both people living within and outside of the carceral system.

Friends, in this time of chaos and uncertainty, know that community and connection are what will sustain us. I am forever grateful to the Newman Center and the misfit community of Rutgers in Newark. ■



PHOTO BY PHONG NGUYEN ON UNSPLASH

Queering Resurrection

As Unitarian Universalists, we are often challenged to remember that Christianity is part of our pluralist faith. I have made it my own challenge that when I preach on Easter Sunday, I preach about resurrection, because that is what the story of Easter Sunday is about.

Usually, I come into an Easter service, and I talk about the meaning of resurrection as something that doesn't actually happen in nature. That the story of resurrection in the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is remarkable precisely because it is out of the realm of the natural. It is out of the realm of the normal and so we find power in it.

And I like that interpretation, but it hasn't sat right with me for many years now.

Lately, I have been asking myself, "Does resurrection really actually happen?" Not maybe in the bodily sense of a corpse of a human being that once was dead suddenly springing to life just as it was, but in other senses all around us. Can resurrection in fact be something that is part of the natural and normal world? And then those words hit me: natural and normal.

Queer theology asks us to look at the world through the lens of those of deliberately transgress what is normal.

Looking at resurrection through the lens of queerness asks us to take what is labeled normal and natural and make them automatically suspect. It

asks us to decenter "normal" in our way of witnessing the world.

On the Transgender Day of Visibility, I realized that that many of my transgender beloveds (also some of my cisgender beloveds too) have things we call "deadnames," things that they were once called and that are no longer who they are. Deadnames are things that are to be left sealed in the tomb sealed and buried.

Our beloveds whose names though, are alive. They are vibrant. They are often so much more alive than they were when they went by those deadnames, that it is impossible for me not to understand that a resurrection has happened.

I understand that queerness resurrects by making people whole who once were not. Queerness resurrects by allowing us to dispense with the category of natural and normal in favor of the categories of true, of real, of fabulous.

Queerness rolls away the stone from the tomb that is the constriction of normality.

When we use a word like "normal," we put ourselves into a tomb as surely as if we were dead. When we use that word to divide humanity into who is right and who wrong, we are killing our spirits, we are killing humanity.

The tomb is the constriction of normality. It is the constriction of heteronormativity that we all live with, whatever our sexual orientation; the constriction of patriarchy that we all live with, no matter what our

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gender identity or expression; the constriction of white supremacy culture that we all live with, no matter our racialized identity or our background or our ancestry.

These things have killed our spirits, and when we roll away the stone, when we break that tomb apart, queerness allows us, allows us to blossom. Someone that was once left for dead and has now become fabulous—they have now become a miracle.

And so, beloveds, I have come to realize that resurrection does happen, and that resurrection is always a miracle, and that miracles are not for the faint of heart, and they are not occasional things that happened in the past and were put in a book and sealed.

Miracles happen every day, and they happen because we love one another enough to make it so. We love ourselves enough to make it so. We love each other enough to roll the stone away from the tomb that is the constriction of normality.

If this has been your reality, I witness the miracle that is you, that is your fabulousness, that is your resurrection into everything that you were meant to be.

May it be celebrated. May it be so. ■

You Meet Your Destiny *continued from page 1*

It is violent to condition society to buy, buy, buy in an effort to...to what exactly?

You know what, none of us will avoid death. And that is not depressing to me, it is liberating.

If I know and can appreciate that our time here is limited I can begin to give up control of what I can't control.

We don't have control over how that happens, but we do have control

over how we learn and show up for ourselves and others.

You are not alone, we have each other as we navigate this sometimes scary, but always beautiful world. ■



PHOTO BY NAVI ON UNSPLASH

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US

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.

What does belonging mean to you? How can you create this?



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