

Calendar February 2020

Minister's Message

The spiritual life, at its core, is about relationships; relationships with life, with each other, with ourselves and with God, whatever we understand God to be. And how do relationships develop? Well through conversation, through sharing ourselves with each other, not by losing ourselves, but becoming ourselves through our conversations with the other, lower and upper case. We relate through conversation and thus we grow spiritually, through relationship.

Relationships with each other are vital. Some of the most important ones come through friendships. Friendship allow a deeper spiritual intimacy and they develop a deeper conversation over time. Such deep intimacy and true face to face friendships are as important to young people today as they have always been. They may appear that they are lost in the artificial, but they are not. People are the same as they have always been. I suspect that such friends are the first deep intimacies that any of us experience as we get to know ourselves through relationship with others. They allow us to find ourselves in life and thus connect to that which as the core of life. Perhaps the ultimate of all friendships and intimacies is the relationship we enjoy with our God. A conversation that never ends.

Life is all about relationships; the spiritual life is all about relationships. Relationships with life, with each other, with ourselves and with God, whatever we understand God to be. And how do relationships develop? Well through conversation, through sharing ourselves with each other, not by losing ourselves, but becoming ourselves through our conversations with the other, lower and upper case. We relate through conversation and thus we grow spiritually, through relationship.

Nothing much needs to be said, to form a conversation of some kind. A relationship can be formed in any situation and circumstance all you have to do is be open to it.

Diary Events

Wednesday 19th February at 11am "Common Search for Meaning: What's Love Got To Do With It?" in the schoolroom. Exploring Love and what is meant by love? What is means to live in Love? What about the idea that God is Love? We will explore the many forms of love and asking is it the greatest virtue? And much, much more.

Extra Material

"The Angel of Relationship" by Mark Nepo from "The Book of Awakening"

“The angel seeing us is watching through each other’s eyes.” Rickie Lee Jones

When we can look into each other, however briefly, without any agenda or scheme of desire or need, something indescribable and essential makes us more than we are by ourselves. This is the difference between looking in a mirror and looking into the eyes of someone you love.

It seems the angel of relationship can only appear when our hearts pump our eyes open. It is such a powerful feeling that many things can go wrong. I can feel an aliveness that I think is only in you because it has been awakened between us. So I might only want to be with you and thus abandon myself. Or you, feeling stirred way down in your depth, might be frightened by such a feeling, and thinking it is I who poked you there, you might run from the most beautiful thing to come your way.

But like the summer sun I chase to feel it set on my face, I am not it, nor is it me. Yet between us rises an unrelenting beauty that no one can have, though we can’t live without it.

“Listening to the voice” by Parker J Palmer from “A Hidden Wholeness”

Silence and laughter may seem like strange bedfellows, but experience reveals that they are not. What, for example, do we call people who can spend hours together in silence without feeling awkward or tense *and* who can use humor to help each other through hard times? We call them, of course, good friends.

It takes good friends to sustain silence and laughter because both make us vulnerable. Silence makes us vulnerable because when we stop making noise, we lose control: who knows what thoughts or feelings might arise if we turned off the television or stopped yammering for a while? Laughter makes us vulnerable because it often comes in response to our flaws and foibles: who knows how foolish we might look when the joke is on us? We can share silence

and laughter only when we trust each other — and the more often we share them, the deeper our trust grows.

The soul loves silence because it is shy, and silence helps it feel safe. The soul loves laughter because it seeks the truth, and laughter often reveals reality. But above all, the soul loves life, and both silence and laughter are life-giving. Perhaps this is why we have yet another name for people who can share silence and laughter with equal ease: we call them soulmates.

“When Someone Deeply Listens to You” by John Fox

When someone deeply listens to you
it is like holding out a dented cup
you’ve had since childhood
and watching it fill up with
cold, fresh water.
When it balances on top of the brim,
you are understood.
When it overflows and touches your skin,
You are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you,
the room where you stay
starts a new life
and the place where you wrote
your first poem
begins to glow in your mind’s eye.
It is as if gold has been discovered!

When someone deeply listens to you,
your bare feet are on the earth
and a beloved land that seemed distant
is now at home within you.

by John Fox in *Finding What You Didn't Lose*

David Whyte, on friendship.

“FRIENDSHIP is a mirror to presence and a testament to forgiveness. Friendship not only helps us see ourselves through another’s eyes, but can be sustained over the years only with someone who has repeatedly forgiven us for our trespasses as we must find it in ourselves to forgive them in turn. A friend knows our difficulties and shadows and remains in sight, a companion to our vulnerabilities more than our triumphs, when we are under the strange illusion we do not need them. An undercurrent of real friendship is a blessing exactly because its elemental form is rediscovered again and again through understanding and mercy. All friendships of any length are based on a continued, mutual forgiveness. Without tolerance and mercy all friendships die.”

“Living in Gratitude: A Journey That Will Change Your Life” by **Angeles Arrien**

"Character development is about the values we hold and the roles we assume as we move through our lives. We move toward development when we are in touch with our authentic voice, our authentic self, and when we are living with integrity and honesty. When we hold opposing qualities within our nature in responsible and balanced ways, we develop personal character and increase our relationship skills. For example, if we can stay in a committed relationship without becoming excessively dependent and remain free without being irresponsible or negligent, we stretch our capacity for developing character; we become more effective in all four aspects of life. As James Hillman wrote in his book *The Force of Character*, 'Character begins to govern life's decisions ever more pertinently, and permanently. Values come under more scrutiny, and qualities such as decency and gratitude become more precious than accuracy and efficiency.'

"Spirituality gives meaning to life, and spiritual growth is about discovering meaning. Spirituality is often expressed in religious terms, but it is the experience of recognizing states of grace, the transcendent, synchronicity, and that which is sacred or holy; it can be found in nature, silence, art, music, family, and friendship. It can bring wholeness to the emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions of life. The spirit, or life force, within us is the essence or center point of mystery and meaning that is present at the core of our essential nature. It is the force that allows us to integrate our internal and external experiences. The essence of spirituality provides a sense of intactness and wholeness in our nature. When we are in touch with this central core, we experience self-trust and unshakeable faith. Connecting to this core

brings us into alignment with what has heart and meaning, and conveys what remains mysterious and transcendent for us all. It is that which makes us unique.

"When we are conscious of our character development and spiritual growth, we begin to shift to looking at what is working in our lives and in our own nature. We become happier, healthier, and more effective in our contributions. We begin to look for the goodness in ourselves and others, demonstrating more compassion and generosity."

"Love at First Sight" by Wislawa Szymborska's

They're both convinced
that a sudden passion joined them.
Such certainty is beautiful,
but uncertainty is more beautiful still.

Since they'd never met before, they're sure
that there'd been nothing between them.
But what's the word from the streets,
staircases, hallways —
perhaps they've passed by each other a
million times?

I want to ask them
if they don't remember —
a moment face to face
in some revolving door?
perhaps a "sorry" muttered in a crowd?
a curt "wrong number" caught in the receiver? —
but I know the answer.
No, they don't remember.
They'd be amazed to hear
that Chance has been toying with them
now for years.

Not quite ready yet

to become their Destiny,
it pushed them close, drove them apart,
it barred their path,
stifling a laugh,
and then leaped aside.

There were signs and signals,
even if they couldn't read them yet.
Perhaps, three years ago
or just last Tuesday
a certain leaf fluttered
from one shoulder to another?
Something was dropped and then picked up.
Who knows, maybe the ball that vanished
into childhood's thicket?

There were doorknobs and doorbells
where one touch had covered another
beforehand.
Suitcases, checked and standing side by side.
One night, perhaps, the same dream,
grown hazy by morning.

Every beginning
is only a sequel, after all,
and the book of events
is always open halfway through.