

So, What Next?

It appears to be such a straight forward question.

It is definitely a familiar question that is often asked of us and others.

At the turn of a New Year, it is certainly a question that faces each of us.

And, this year especially, it is a more poignant question than ever.

So, what next?

It is the season for making resolutions. Frankly, my track record for keeping resolutions is abysmal. So this year, I am shifting gears and focusing on intentions.

Deepak Chopra has said, "Intention is the starting point of every dream. It is the creative power of every dream and it is the creative power that fulfills all our needs...Everything that happens in the universe begins with intention".

These words resonate with and affirm an unexpected gift that came to me in 2016.

The gift came as an outgrowth of an adult program here at the Meeting House.

The course was intended to answer the question, "what next?" for students embarking on their second act". The focus was discovering creativity and meaning in mid-life and beyond.

Think about it! How wonderful and hopeful it is to be considered a student again!---with the implication that there are lessons ahead, changes to be made and, yes, even growth ahead.

It was wholeheartedly embracing one of the course's creative tasks that ultimately became the gift.

Daily, handwritten, Morning Pages are intended to "clear the psychic debris between us and the day ahead. Done consistently, (we were told) it will change the trajectory of our lives"....and I found that it would! After initially being anxious and uncertain about the task and doing my fair share of resisting it, the benefits became clear.

These daily, morning pages have become a spiritual practice, providing an opportunity to be more reflective, more focused and more action-oriented --each day. I came to realize the consistent effort of the daily task definitely was changing some aspects of my retired life in very positive ways.

This process was unfolding during the fall of last year---a time of being acutely aware of the unsettled nature of our world and the ongoing effects of living with this uncertainty---these, too, required attention and reflection. While my search for meaning in retirement is being enriched by seeking to live with intention each day, the time has come to broaden the perspective. It is time to ask another question---not only the question "What do I need today?" but also, "How can I be a better Unitarian Universalist today?"

All I can share at this point is that the question, asked daily, is a very new addition to my life. It is truly very much a work in process. Although, it may sound a bit lofty and idealistic, it gives me hope!

Recently I have been reminded that "It is Never Too Late to Begin Again" and when starting something, whatever it may be, begin with small steps, but do begin!

I am hopeful.

As we consider new beginnings, let us open our hearts and minds to the words of Unitarian Universalist minister Kathleen McTigue...

New Year's Day

The first of January is another day dawning, the sun rising as the sun always rises, the earth moving in its rhythms.

with or without our calendars to name a certain day as the day of new beginning, separating the old from the new.

So it is: everything is the same, bound into its history as we ourselves are bound.

Yet also we stand at a threshold, the new year something truly new, still unformed, leaving a stunning power in our hands.

What shall we do with this great gift of Time, this year?

Let us begin by remembering that whatever justice, whatever peace and wholeness might bloom in our world this year,

We are the hearts and minds, the hands and feet, the embodiment of all the best visions of our people.

The new year can be new ground for the seeds of our dreams.

Let us take the step forward together, onto new ground,

Planting our dreams well, faithfully, and in joy.

Sue Smolski January 1, 2017