

INTERN MINISTER

Greetings from the Twitter-verse!

Kellie Kelly, kkelly@unitytemple.org

As a reminder, I explore each month's Soul Connections theme on my Twitter account (@kellieukelly) using a hashtag (#) and the month's theme (example: "#Identity"). For those of you who aren't interested or able to sign up for a Twitter account, I include some of my favorite tweets here in our newsletter.



This month, we explore #Hope. What does it mean to be a community of #Hope?

As a ministry student, I have been asked to reflect on hope and my theology of hope a great deal over the last 5 years. It is a popular seminary topic, hehe. I think hope is such a popular topic because it is both important AND hard.

In *A House for Hope*, Unitarian Universalist ministers Rebecca Parker and John Buehrens poignantly describe why hope is such an important and hard subject. They write:

Hope rises. It rises from the heart of life, here and now, beating with joy and sorrow. Hope longs. It longs for good to be affirmed, for justice and love to prevail, for suffering to be alleviated, and for life to flourish in peace. Hope remembers the dreams of those who have gone before and reaches for connection with them across the boundary of death. Hope acts – to bless, to protest, and to repair.

Parker and Buehrens explain that hope is filled with sorrow and joy—sorrow for the current situation, sorrow for the failed attempts at change, and anticipated joy at creating sustained improvements to our individual and shared lives. They also hint at the long timeline of hope with multiple generations laboring to achieve our greatest hopes and aspirations. Hope is shared over generations.

When I feel my own fear rise and hope drop, I remember that I am part of a long line of people who have been fighting for justice and love over hundreds of years. If our species did not lose hope after the Jewish Holocaust, I cannot lose hope now. I also remember that a long line of people will follow me to continue hope's work, including our denomination's youth.

During the year before I started seminary, I served as the director of faith development at Second Unitarian. At Second, I met a couple of young adults who had been raised UU, were active in social justice,

and were still active within the UU faith. I also met adults who had been working with UU youth for years at camp programs and area youth conferences. These young adults and youth advisors modeled a very different way of being that I had not noticed in UU adults who came from other religious traditions (like myself)—they modeled openness, leadership, unconditional love, comfort with conflict, direct communication, and commitment to living their values (at least most of the time, we all have our bad days). I began to wonder how I could bring this UU youth culture to our UU adult culture.

When I started my internship here at Unity Temple, I asked Rev. Gage and Heather Godbout (our phenomenal youth coordinator) if I could attend the congregation youth group once a month. I received a welcoming yes. In this second year of my internship, I have continued to attend youth group monthly and had the honor to attend my first youth conference last month as the chaplain.

Folks, let me tell you—our youth blew me away! They showed leadership, responsibility, and care that was beyond my already-high expectations of them. They led when required and they followed adult leadership when necessary.

Of course, such strength doesn't happen overnight—it has been building since they entered our strong religious education programs: through the trust and respect they give/receive in the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program, through participation in empowering youth camps like Marwood, through well-run youth groups like ours, and through our local youth conference program. Our youth advisors receive training that they lovingly give to our youth and our youth lovingly share it with younger youth before they bridge to our young adult community.

We UU adults have a lot to learn from our youth and I'm excited to share their teachings in my ministry. Our incredible youth give me great hope, both for our present and future.

With gratitude, Kellie

