

Reflections & REminders
re: the Religious Exploration Program
at First Parish of Sudbury UU
week of Sunday, February 10, 2008

“Beyond Sunday”—
Events and ways to bring FPS out into your world

Last week’s RE message was all about listening to your inner voice of conscience and following it. It is important to discern and articulate your beliefs, for as we believe, so we act. This week’s message is a continuation with that, with a corollary for the Mystery Group—figure out what is important to you, based on your gifts and interests, and give it to the world.

So, in your daily interactions with the young people in your life, try to be mindful of reflecting on actions. What do they say about who we are? When a decision is made, how can we use our beliefs to inform that decision?

But what do we do when we, as we inevitably will, fail to live up to our values? For children there may be a temptation to give up and say, “Well, I guess I didn’t really believe that after all.” Or to berate themselves for not being who they *want to be*. When reactions like that surface, it’s important for us adults to help the young person understand that no one is perfect, that ideals are for reaching *toward*, not necessarily reaching, and that there is always a new chance to grow toward being your best self. Every so-called “failure” is a learning opportunity, and an opportunity to reflect and make adjustments (or just get back on track.)

REminders

-  **Frances E.W. Harper is coming to First Parish on Saturday!** Be sure to invite your friends and neighbors and to bring your older children to what is sure to be an inspiring, informative and thought-provoking professional performance of the life and ideas of “The Bronze Muse of the Nineteenth Century.” Remember, it’s free! (at 8:00pm in the sanctuary)
-  **The Breakfast Club shares their “This I Believe”** on Sunday. All RE groups will be present to hear some of what inspires the lives of our middle school youth.
-  **Coming of Age Workshop this Sunday** from 3-5 p.m. in The Commons. The workshop theme is “Beliefs and Faith.” Coming of Age youth and mentors need to attend.
-  **The Youth Advisor Search Committee is forming and meeting** this Sunday, February 10 at 11:30. If you are interested in helping to choose the next Youth Advisor, please contact me at reducation@fpsudbury.org This is a very limited time-commitment, and an important one!
-  **There IS RE next Sunday, February 17th.** We will hold a special, activity-based multi-age program.

This Week in RE

The Breakfast Club will share their “This I Believe” during the worship service. Afterwards, they will have the choice of remaining to hear the rest of the service, which includes other “This I Believe” segments, or to go to the Brackett Room to chill. Coming up after vacation, *Neighboring Faiths—An evangelical Christian mega church*.

Spirit Play Flames Group: A Blue Promise Story “Theodore Parker, The Farmer’s Son” about how young Theodore learned from his father and from nature to trust his inner voice. For reflections on Theodore Parker, see REflections and REminders from January 13.

Wondering Questions

- ❖ I wonder what part of the story you liked best.
- ❖ I wonder what you dream of being when you become an adult.
- ❖ I wonder if you’ve ever not known what the right thing to do was. I wonder how that felt.
- ❖ I wonder what UU Promises are in this story.
- ❖ I wonder how the horse felt when Theodore didn’t know how to help it.
- ❖ I wonder if there’s something you’ve felt is right that other people didn’t agree with.
- ❖ I wonder what you wonder about.

Spirit Play Mystery Group: “Gyorgy Kepes—A Pioneer in Combining Art and Science”

Work will include projects that combine art and science—kinetic sculpture, spirograph, light bright and more!

Wondering Questions

- ❖ I wonder what part of the story you like best.
- ❖ I wonder how art is like science and science is like art.
- ❖ Gyorgy believed everything is connected. I wonder what things besides art and science that seem very different from each other could come together.
- ❖ Gyorgy stayed hopeful and had a positive attitude after two terrible wars. I wonder how people stay hopeful after bad things happen.
- ❖ I wonder what UU Promises you see in the story.
- ❖ I wonder how the first people who saw the new art that used science felt when they saw it and experienced it.
- ❖ I wonder what you would like to create.
- ❖ I wonder what you think could help people stop wars.
- ❖ I wonder what you wonder about.

REflections

For many years I used tarot cards as a personal reflection tool. In my favorite deck, the Voyager Tarot, the sage of crystals (swords in the traditional deck) is the Knower, whose breadth of vision enables connection and synthesis, creating new perspectives. Creativity is thus the ability to recycle and to connect things in new ways. It is not discovery of something that didn’t previously exist, but rather a reshuffling of existence to bring forth a new expression. This is exactly what Gyorgy Kepes (and Tim Berners-Lee who we’ll explore in March) did.

Gyorgy was a child in Hungary during World War I. His experiences led him to search for what might make for lasting peace in the world. From an early age he believed in the interconnectedness of all things. A gifted artist, as a young man he studied at the Royal School of Arts. Believing his main medium, painting, was stale, he turned to the newer medium of filmmaking, now convinced that art should *say* something, should change society. His film teacher was Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, a leader in the new Bauhaus movement. When Moholy-Nagy moved to Chicago to set up the new Chicago Institute of Design, Kepes followed, eventually becoming an instructor and finally heading up the Department of Light and Color. Then came the opportunity for a professorship at MIT in Cambridge, MA, which was working toward building up its arts education offerings.

Not long after moving his family to Cambridge, where the Kepes family joined the Unitarian Church, World War II erupted, deflating all Kepes' ideas that a single artist could affect the world. Rather than giving into despondence, he revised his thinking. It had been idealistic to believe in the power of a single person, but perhaps many people, working together, could affect true societal change. His approach was not to dwell upon the horrors of war, but to create something new, fresh and hopeful for the world.

A keen observer and relentless reflector, Kepes noticed that conflict arose when people believed they were radically different from one another. Why, he had a clear example in front of him on campus every day—artists and scientists. They seemed perpetually to put one another down. The scientists weren't creative, according to the artists, and the artists were a bunch of undisciplined dreamers in many scientists' eyes. Art wasn't "real." Science had no "heart." But of course, Gyorgy knew better. Artists are keen observers and used science and mathematics regularly in their work, for example, mixing their paints, editing film, drawing with perspective. And scientists were imaginative—problem-solving and thinking up new theories. If he could bring these two together, he would know that peace between groups that considered themselves radically different was possible. Thus was born his new dream, which he nurtured bit by bit, until the new Center For Advanced Visual Studies was born. Its mission was to bring the finest, most creative artists together with scientists and mathematicians. This marriage of art and science changed art forever. From the CAVS, kinetic sculpture, sculpture using light and sound, was brought to life.

Gyorgy himself never stopped creating art, and no project was too big or too small. He designed bathroom tiles, and the large stained glass rose window for the First and Second Church (which was lost in its big fire). He pioneered a new form of filmless photography. And he returned to painting, this time using forms from nature resembling fractals. He wrote seminal books on visual design that continue to influence both artists and engineers. After 95 fruitful years on this earth, Gyorgy Kepes died in 2002.

To me, this story is inspirational because a man fully combined his talents and beliefs to change not only his professional discipline, but to create the larger connections, the larger peace he dreamed of, at least in his corner of the world. It is a shining example of "think globally, act locally." He never tried to be anything other than what he was, to follow a dream other than his own. But rather, he fully became himself. And in doing so, he changed the world.

We live in a society that idolizes money and power. Our children are steered towards education and careers that will make them financially successful, not necessarily the ones that will make them happy or use their talents best. It's great if someone loves something that makes them money. But how many financially successful people do you know who hate their jobs? Or wish they had the time to do something to make the world better, but their income-producing jobs are too demanding?

What if, instead of raising children to be materially successful, we raised them to be fully themselves, whatever that might be? What if we nurtured a belief in them, empowered them to believe that they could use their talents to make the world a better place—that improving the world isn't a hobby or something to do in retirement? What things might they then recycle, reconnect to create something new? How might their dreams for our world become reality in ways we cannot even imagine?

In faith, Tracy