

Minister's Musings – December, 2022

Soul Matters theme: WONDER

(Interspersed between my writing is Rev. Lynn Ungar's poem, "Boundaries" in blue.)

*The universe does not
revolve around you.
The stars and planets spinning
through the ballroom of space
dance with one another
quite outside of your small life.
You cannot hold gravity
or seasons; even air and water
inevitably evade your grasp.
Why not, then, let go?*

I learned recently that at the planetarium at the Liberty Science Museum is showing images of the universe from the Webb telescope. As soon as I heard about it, I began making plans to see it. It seemed like a good way to mark this month with its theme of WONDER.

I have seen the images on my laptop screen. Even in that small context, wonder washes over me, if I slow down long enough to really see the image before me. I can't wait to have the images be over me, literally, as I lean back in the planetarium and look up, as I find myself surrounded by wonders of the cosmos made visible to us only recently, but long there beyond our grasp.

Though it doesn't always feel good to be reminded how small I am, how small we are – like in moments of humiliation or feeling helpless – this kind of reminder of my small life is something I seek, something I crave, something that gives me what feels like a healthy perspective on my existence and the nature of reality.

*You could move through time
like a shark through water,
neither restless nor ceasing,
absorbed in and absorbing
the native element.
Why pretend you can do otherwise?
The world comes in at every pore,
mixes in your blood before
breath releases you into
the world again. Did you think
the fragile boundary of your skin
could build a wall?*

While a "fragile boundary of [my] skin" doesn't feel comforting, there is something surprisingly soothing ~ something that holds deep resonance ~ for me about the fact, not just the

metaphor, of interdependence. That dissolution is where each of us begins and all of us end. While I don't particularly like, or understand, the poet's reference to being like a restless shark, the rest of this poem makes me come alive. Especially how it ends:

*Listen. Every molecule is humming
its particular pitch.
Of course you are a symphony.
Whose tune do you think
the planets are singing
as they dance?*

This month, as we explore wonder, culminating in our congregation's celebration of the Christian holiday of Christmas, claiming it in our own Unitarian Universalist way, I wonder how you might slow down just enough to experience wonder? Whether it's a trip down the Shore, or to a planetarium, or dancing so freely you can hear the planets sing or the molecules hum, or tending to a loved one in their most needful hour?

At this time of year, the pernicious mantra that capitalism always has on low hum is ratcheted up: generosity, self-worth, and the possibility of transformation looks like spending money on things. May you find your ways, in the midst of such relentless background noise to the hum of the molecules and the singing of the planets. May you find your way to dancing to wonder.

It is a blessing to be on this journey with you, ~ Rev. Karen