

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017

# SOUNDINGS



Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Charlotte

DISCOVER DEEPER SPIRITUAL MEANING

Depth through reflection

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## IN THIS ISSUE ON:

### EXPANDING OUR COMFORT ZONES

2 | A Summer of Expanding Our Comfort Zones

Doug Swaim

3 | When Comfort Zones Aren't So Comfortable

Tommy George

Neal Sigmon

5 | Where's It Supposed to Hurt?

Debbie George

6 | Pivoting from Familiar to New

Nancy Cook

Mike Raible

8 | Journey Through Love and Loss

Judy Love

9 | The Benefits (and Risks) of Risk-Taking

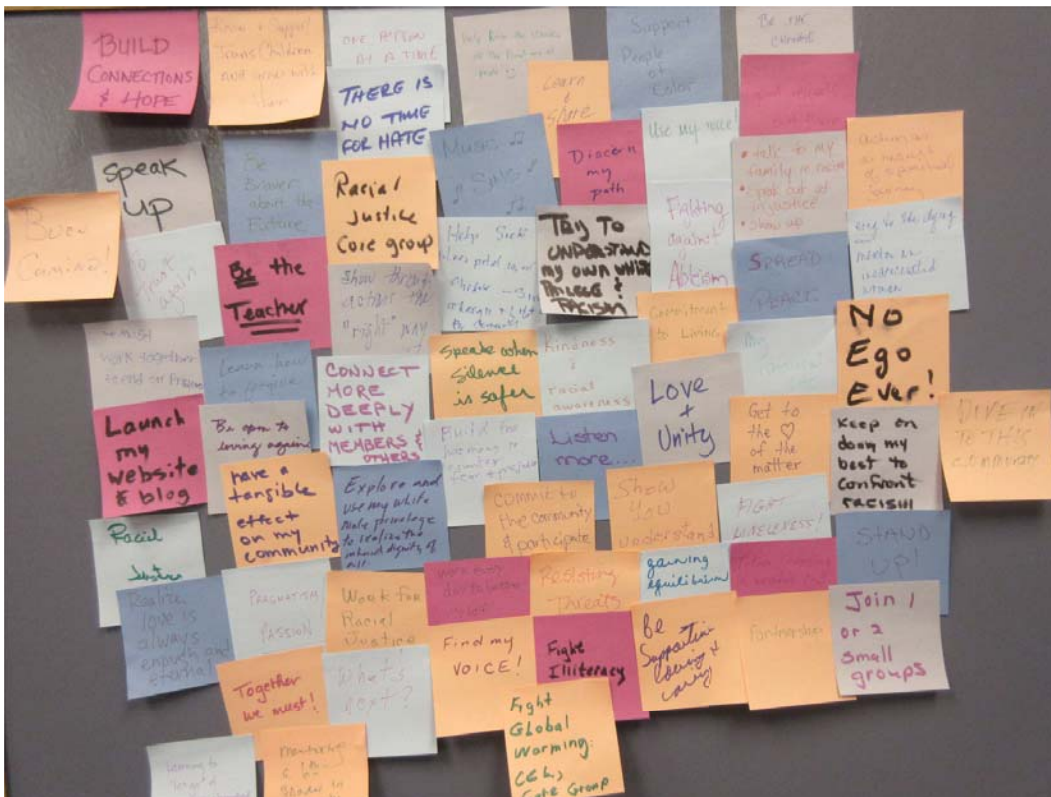
Doug Sea

10 | The Revolution Will Not be Comfortable

Melissa Mummert

11 | Expanding Comfort Zones with Our Children and Youth

Melissa Vullo



Our professional staff led us in worship on Sunday, August 27, in services entitled, "Coming to the Edge," a variation on our annual water service. Members were challenged to name a commitment they were willing to make as they "wade into" the work of transformation. These notes are some of the commitments that were posted in Freeman Hall following that day's services. photograph by Kelly Greene

...there is exhilaration and terror wrapped up in pushing your boundaries. Regardless of success or failure, you can grow when you are willing to go beyond what you know and what is comfortable.

—LEVI BEN-SHMUEL IN

*How UNCOMFORTABLE ARE YOU WILLING TO BE??*



*The Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte is to inspire children, youth and adults to discover and articulate deeper spiritual meaning evidenced in lives of integrity, compassion and stewardship of the earth.*

*La mision de la iglesia Unitaria Universalista de Charlotte es inspirar a los niños, jóvenes y adultos para que descubran y articulan un significado espiritual profundo, evidente en una vida de integridad, compasión y en el manejo de los recursos de la tierra*

## A SUMMER OF EXPANDING OUR COMFORT ZONES

by Doug Swaim

A year ago in June this congregation adopted a bold new Vision that commits us to a path of spiritual, societal and environmental *transformation*. It's an audacious 25-year commitment.

But what does the new Vision require of us in the short term? Late last winter our Board of Trustees answered that question with an equally bold "Call to Action." In the Call, our Board told us if we are to take seriously this work of transformation, we need to begin by expanding our comfort zones. In their words, "We believe that this commitment requires that we seek out opportunities to listen to people and ideas that may challenge long-held assumptions, ways of understanding, commitments and practices and may *expand the comfort zones* that surround even our worthiest habits and traditions."

Taking our cue from the Board's Call, everything we have done this summer at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte has been an exploration of the notions of comfort, discomfort and expanding comfort zones. A major component of this summer programming was a series of worship services, led mostly by members of the congregation, where we've reflected on expanding our comfort zones—and how we are probably more practiced at it than we realize.

We also witnessed acts of risk-taking as the speakers made their confessions—revealed difficult self-truths—in front of us. We are truly blessed to have been the recipients of the gifts of our members' deeply personal stories. In the spirit of this place, we hold them all in our hearts with gratitude and love.

In this issue of *Soundings* we are reproducing many of our members' personal reflections from the summer worship series (edited for length). You may listen to all the reflections, as recorded during the services, by visiting our website (<http://www.uuccharlotte.org/learn-more/sermons/>). The collection represents powerful and deeply moving testimony to our experience "expanding our comfort zones." May we find in these reflections inspiration for the transformative journey that lies ahead.

### Summer Series: "Comfort, Discomfort and Expanding Our Comfort Zones"

#### Sunday, July 2

Rev. Jay Leach, Senior Minister;  
Helen Fowler, Lay Service Leader

"Comfort, Discomfort and Expanding Our Comfort Zones"

#### Sunday, July 9

Rev. Jay Leach, Senior Minister;  
Laura Hamilton, Lay Service Leader  
"The ache for home lives in all of us':  
Appreciating our Attraction to Comfort"

#### Sunday, July 16

Tommy George & Neal Sigmon, Lay Guest Speakers  
"When Comfort Zones Aren't So Comfortable"

#### Sunday, July 23

Debbie George, Lay Guest Speaker;  
Louise Cleveland, Lay Service Leader  
"Where's It Supposed to Hurt?"

#### Sunday, July 30

Nancy Cook & Mike Raible, Lay Guest Speakers  
Pivoting from Familiar to New

#### Sunday, August 6

Judy Love & Rita Heath Singer, Lay Guest Speakers  
"Journey Through Love and Loss"

#### Sunday, August 13

Doug Sea, Lay Guest Speaker;  
Cindy Hostetler, Lay Service Leader  
"The Benefits (and Risks) of Risk-Taking"

#### Sunday, August 20

Rev. Melissa Mummert, Affiliated Community Minister; Nicole Thomson, Lay Service Leader  
"The Revolution Will Not be Comfortable"

#### Sunday, August 27

The Professional Staff  
"Coming to the Edge" (A Water Ritual Service)

#### Sunday, September 3

Ed & Nancy Wielunski, Lay Guest Speakers  
"Finding Harmony in a Cacophonous World"

## WHEN COMFORT ZONES AREN'T SO COMFORTABLE

by Tommy George



To be “thrown to the lions” is to be placed in a difficult situation for which one is completely unprepared.

At age 13, I was in that predicament. I attended parochial school at St. Anne’s Catholic School from kindergarten through 8th grade. Most of the kids were northern transplants, and

there was little to no cultural diversity. We dressed the same, we drew the same pictures in art class, we knew how to be quiet and we walked in straight lines.

All that changed abruptly after the 8th grade when my parents could no longer afford Catholic school. In the fall of 1973, I rode the bus to Carmel Junior High for the final year of middle school, then to South Mecklenburg for high school. It would be a gross understatement to say that I was just a little afraid; I was petrified. Most of my grade school friends were going to Catholic High, and my public school friends went to Quail Hollow. Writing this brings back memories, scary feelings of loneliness, an outsider being thrown to the lions, and lions they were. I was unsure of myself and what kind of clothes to wear that would fit in. The black and white kids hardly mixed except for those who played sports together. My curious mind witnessed apathy, my gentle caring spirit witnessed disrespect and my strong work ethic witnessed a laziness toward education.

I saw a number of fights and even occasional violence directed toward teachers as well. It was extremely uncomfortable, the social part of it was just plain difficult, light years out of my comfort zone. At South Meck, there was a racial tension that was hard to ignore. Fights were common, teachers sometimes the object of angry blows.

This is where the discomfort still bothers me to this day. One of my high school acquaintances, who you might describe as a “good ole boy,” was a racist, a bigot and one of the instigators of the rioting. He brought a dozen eggs to school that he used to incite a crowd of black students clustered in the quad, across from the white students. He was looking for a fight. I, on the other hand, ran for the safety of my home-ec class where I remained until the fracas abated and school was dismissed. In hindsight, I should have stood up against the hatred and racism. But in classic Tommy George fashion, I avoided the conflict at any cost.

My son Dylan recently pointed out a note from a classmate named Sylvia in my Carmel Junior High yearbook. It wasn’t until I looked through class pictures that I recalled my young African American friend who was an unlikely pal during a tough transitional year. She wrote:

Tommy,

I’ve known you for almost a year now, and I’ve really enjoyed being your buddy. You’re very nice and friendly young man. You’re very smart in Algebra too. Someday you’ll be very successful in life and make some young lady a wonderful husband. It just might be me.

Love Always, Sylvia



St. Anne’s Catholic School  
photograph courtesy of Tommy George



## WHEN COMFORT ZONES AREN'T SO COMFORTABLE

by Neal Sigmon



September 1957 marked the beginning of a school year unlike any other in Charlotte's public schools. Comfortable patterns were disrupted. Four people of color were enrolling at all-white schools. While three succeeded, the fourth, Dorothy Counts, left Harding High School after four days, including a

tumultuous start I witnessed as a rising 9th grader. Charlotte was highly segregated. People of color were mostly invisible to me. My father worked as a carpenter among a few people of color, sometimes making loans to these workers, a situation that did not please our mother, but made an enduring positive impression on me and older siblings.

Dad grew up on a Lincoln County farm which was also home to a family of African American sharecroppers who provided loving care for my father after his mother died when he was three. Their care continued until his father remarried. As a youngster, I accompanied my father to this family's house while he made repairs and I witnessed his warm relationship with that family.

But my exposure to people of color was limited. My understanding of racial issues was not well formed or informed on that September day.

The first day of school was short with junior high students starting first. As we departed, senior high students arrived. Dorothy Counts and her father approached the school on Irwin Avenue. As we started home, a crowd gathered on Irwin. A friend and I stopped to see what was happening. We stood there witnessing a jeering mob like we had never seen. We were passive. We didn't join the mob or try to intervene. We were stunned and unprepared.

Once home, I told my older brother what happened, suggesting how lucky he was to have avoided that situation. Sixty years later, exactly what did I mean? Was the change discomforting? Was it passiveness as another human being endured the crowd's ugly greeting? Was it school integration? Nothing about that day brought me comfort.



Harding High School  
photograph by Neal Sigmon

I never saw Dorothy after her arrival. From Dorothy's account, those were tough days. When a window on her brother's car was smashed, her family removed her from Harding. She finished high school in Philadelphia. Back in Charlotte she graduated from Johnson C. Smith, married, and now is Dorothy Counts Scoggins.

Students captured in photos on that day have had their image spread around the world, in museums, and on the internet. Several met with Dorothy to apologize. One friend, the editor of the school newspaper, attempted to reach out to Dorothy in those few days. She started her career in education, beginning in an Atlanta African-American high school, a choice inspired by what had happened at Harding. After college, I left Charlotte for 40+ years, returning four years ago to a much different Charlotte, an aspiring city but still facing racial issues.

I heard Mrs. Scoggins speak 18 months ago at Caldwell Presbyterian. She shared her Harding experience vividly but without rancor. It was uncomfortable to hear her account although she seemed at peace. Afterwards, shaking her hand gave me great comfort.

## WHERE'S IT SUPPOSED TO HURT?

by Debbie George



### The Way Beyond Constriction Through Yoga and Meditation

Learning how to expand tight places toward greater spaciousness and ease in one's body and mind is possible for each of us. Any activity that asks us to think and stretch in new ways—to make choices that aren't the

usual ones—naturally intimidates us.

Beginning a yoga practice when one doesn't know what it is, what it will do, how I will do it—not to mention how I will look doing it and whether I'll "succeed or fail"—can be a daunting prospect for any of us. Isn't it true that any number of possible endeavors that take us out of our familiar habits, our comfort zones, can be scary? Let's hear a story about this essay's title.

My student would half-jokingly say, "Now, where is this one supposed to hurt?" with each new posture he would get into. This gentleman, in his 70's, had been a military officer and a former NFL referee. He was no stranger to toughness or challenge. We'd laugh, but really he was asking, "Am I doing it okay? Am I going to make the situation worse?"

We all fear discomfort. We worry about doing things "wrong" and not being able to be dignified in the process. We shy away from feeling vulnerable. We fear losing our composure, our control of the situation. It is scary for all of us to truly release and relax, to go beyond familiar boundaries. And then, like this

student, we are rewarded with truly feeling better.

Accepting our fear is vitally important. Fear is part of our DNA. Whether it's a holdover from the days of saber toothed tigers or the instinct to seek safety, we each have varying degrees of fear and confidence. Some of us are cliff jumpers—strap on the contraption and run off the cliff, airborne for lengths of time. Others of us tend more toward the "safe or sorry" category. Others are like the hermit who rarely goes out of the house. We don't have to love roller coasters to live a full life with an open heart. Our comfort zones do vary. To open from where you happen to be is the invitation to expand your experience of life.

We don't go it alone. Going together, getting stronger and being inspired by one another feeds us. It takes courage and humility to open to the help of another. It takes courage to live fully and to love fully. Years

ago, 15 years into our marriage, my husband and I attended a marriage encounter weekend . . . believe me, it took courage. And it helped us in our marriage as have other tune-ups. It's easy to think our most intimate relationships are as comfortable as they're going to get. I'm grateful to learn that we can stretch and expand as a couple too.



photograph by Judy Love

Whatever pulls at your heart, start where you are. Remember discomfort is inevitable. Fear is natural. Start with one step, one action, in the direction of your dreams!

## PIVOTING FROM FAMILIAR TO NEW

by Nancy Cook



### From Corporate to Art Career

Twenty years ago I worked in organizational development (OD) for Duke Energy. Job duties were quite diverse—e.g., working to decrease lifting accidents to zero where dropping a screw driver could cause a fatality; analyzing

workforce needs; and developing voluntary part-time work options with benefits. I consulted on selection tools for nuclear operators, customer service, and financial management.

While the varied challenges were rewarding, one element caused problems. OD programs often lead to layoffs. As rounds of layoffs occurred, I asked: Does laying off employees or retraining employees make better business sense?

After researching data on both options, it was clear that retraining was the best long-term business decision for the company, employees and community. To my naive surprise, I found that the Wall Street perception that layoffs were best was more important to Duke Energy than the economics.

My role in layoffs was uncomfortable, but seemed justified if a fiscally strong company was better for most employees. Based on my research, no longer could I be comfortable with my role.

So, I asked to be laid off. Even though retiring early eliminated long anticipated travel, the sacrifice was worth it.

Throughout my professional career, creating with my hands was relaxing and a good contrast to job responsibilities. While at Duke, I began creating art quilts. Initially my skills were elementary but I had some success entering exhibitions and selling my art. There is little more satisfying than creating a piece of art someone loves, wants to live with, and will pay for the opportunity. The previous several years I had been improving my quilting and marketing skills. But to

make art my primary business required a great deal more competency.

It was really scary to make this step into the unknown. Occasionally a piece of my art was good, but I didn't know why, and couldn't repeat it. Basically, I was unaware about what makes good art.

But, loving to learn and being scared, I set out to gain the skills needed for my new career. Grants helped pay for studying with international artists and seeking professional status in the fiber art group, Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA), which provided professional level information and training on techniques and marketing. A colleague and I established a local fiber artists group to support and provide critical analysis. That group has been amazingly helpful even today.



"Late Summer Dawn" fiber art by Nancy Cook

Learning from others and developing necessary knowledge provides me comfort in making changes.

As a result, my work juried into many exhibitions so my art traveled throughout the USA and to five continents. More travel than I ever dreamed to do myself.

After 20 years creating art quilts, I retired from the art business. I now create art from vintage linens, providing me great joy in giving new life to old treasures.

And as I look back over the number of significant changes I have made, all of them started with discomfort with the current situation or awareness of unavoidable changes coming.



## PIVOTING FROM FAMILIAR TO NEW

by Mike Raible



### The Reality Roller Coaster

Thirty seconds into a conversation with someone new. The question gets asked. It is asked in several different ways, but it is nevertheless omnipresent.

*Where do you work?*

*What do you do for a living?*

In a culture that reports weekly on those who are unemployed as a way of determining just how healthy the country is, we have translated being un- or under-employed as something negative to be avoided.

Retirement, one of life's pivots that we all face at one time or another, puts us squarely in the crosshairs. When asked the omnipresent question, those who have pivoted here either describe how busy we are, or begin a work-for-your-self alternative that avoids the R word.

I chose the latter. In 2012, I was in my eighth year as an executive in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. I was in a position of power and influence, one of eight members of the superintendent's cabinet. On December 1, 2012, I took early retirement and declared myself a consultant. I planned to continue doing what I had done for CMS, offering my services to school districts all over the country.

As a consultant I have worked on projects with professionals that I know and respect. I have had the opportunity to represent an innovative organization headquartered in Denver, Colorado. I have had two books published and have co-authored a series of articles in *School Planning & Management* for the past five years.

You must know that my pivot has been a roller coaster experience—the exhilaration of writing two books about a school superintendent and district in Kentucky whose program has created eight years and counting of zero dropouts, and the shame of having colleagues of 14 years ignore my emails or phone calls.

Truth is that I am afraid (uncomfortable in this summer's theme) of being under-utilized and unemployed. There is a part of me that enjoys the freedom to visit long-lost friends, as I did a couple of weeks ago. But there is another part of me that is ashamed—of no longer having the power or influence to make as big a difference.

There are more and more of us in this country every day that face this pivot and join the long gray line of the underutilized.



"All That Jazz" fiber art by Nancy Cook

The classic Hollywood pivot was in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Cornered, Butch and Sundance find themselves at the edge of a gorge. The river is at least 200 feet below them. Sundance wants to shoot it out with the posse like before. Butch wants to jump.

Sundance refuses. When pressed, he finally confesses that he can't swim! Butch finds this hilarious. "Hell, the fall will probably kill you."

Retirement is like that: dictated by circumstance or intention, luck or fate, the outcome is uncertain at best.

As scary and uneven as my retirement pivot has been, I guess that I am better off for it. And so are my grandsons—and sometimes even my wife. May it be so for you, as well.

## JOURNEY THROUGH LOVE AND LOSS

by Judy Love



Since late December I've been sorting through everything that has accumulated throughout my late husband Roger Van Tassel's eight decades. I've gained insights into Roger that further deepen my appreciation of him as a human being. I miss him terribly but I am proud that I have made it this far. It has been the ultimate challenge—

an astounding, terrifying, often exhilarating, moving, heart breaking and equally heartwarming journey through love and loss.

I had known Roger for over twenty-three years before he passed away. We had been a couple for ten of those and married for nearly two. Our life together was full. I knew when we first met that he had prostate cancer but for eighteen years he had kept it in check with minimally invasive treatment. Then it went on a rampage and both of our lives changed forever.

The ensuing years were full of ups and downs. It was hard and exhausting work to care for Roger and yet at the same time it was very rewarding. His needs became more and more complex, and I was proud when I mastered new skills. Even so, sometimes I felt trapped and resented putting my life on hold in deference to his. Sometimes I felt frazzled by the constant demands. Sometimes I was impatient. Sometimes I lost my temper. I was ashamed of myself at these times since I knew how much worse it was for Roger. He was so much more resilient than I was. Despite his pain and nausea, his fatigue and anxiety, he faced each new hurdle with grace. He rarely complained and expressed his love and gratitude constantly. But fear of the unknown and grim reality got me down.

Three small strokes before Thanksgiving signaled Roger's last decline. As his major caregiver and power of attorney, I had to make terrible decisions—whether to instate Do Not Resuscitate orders, when

to call hospice. It was heart-breaking to see the fear in Roger's eyes, to hear him say he didn't want to leave me. When we agreed that it was time to call hospice I saw his resignation. And yet, hospice was our saving grace. They helped get Roger home for his last days in the peaceful quiet of his own home with his dog at his side. They treated death as a natural event—not a failure.

That last day time played tricks on me for it seemed to stretch and compress simultaneously. We were keeping vigil. Throughout the day, dear friends visited. The hospice chaplain blessed and prayed for him. How relieved I felt not to be alone. My sweet neighbors, Sandra and Fran, had just brought our dog Beau back from a walk, Roger's son, Zachary, was standing by and as luck would have it, our minister, Jay Leach, had stopped by to check on us when with three deep sighs Roger slipped away. It was so peaceful. It felt as if it had all happened so quickly and yet we had been at it for years. Sharing this journey with such a remarkable man has been a huge gift and I am grateful.



photograph by Judy Love



## THE BENEFITS (AND RISKS) OF RISK-TAKING

by Doug Sea



It was a mid-October Saturday in the woods outside Chapel Hill. A sea of faces looked expectantly toward me as I tried to remember my wedding vows. June had just spoken her vows, beautiful poetry of love and commitment. I opened my mouth and out came that now infamous first line: “This is the biggest

risk of my life.” What followed was a lawyer’s closing argument, urging myself to go through with this insane idea of marriage.

I admit it. I am a risk-averse person. Fears of failure and embarrassment often appear unbidden when I find myself in an uncomfortable position. I don’t like change or uncertainty. I plan every vacation in neurotic detail. I bought our last house the first day we started looking, just to end my anxiety. Mostly I have constructed a safe, cocooned life for myself. I stick to routines I have followed for years and spend most nights quietly at home.

But here’s the problem: the safety and sameness of my life often ends up leaving me dissatisfied, even numb. My comfort becomes a cage until the urge to break free, sometimes in foolish ways, becomes unbearable. Essayist Anais Nin wrote, “And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

And I’m not the only one with this problem. We live in a fear based culture that has become increasingly risk-averse. We communicate more online than face to face; we’re suspicious of strangers and overprotect our kids. We buy big SUVs to feel safer when we drive. As Americans, we think comfort and safety are our birthrights.

While the desire to feel safe is normal, even healthy in moderation, living this way all the time is limiting our experience, wasting our freedom and too much of our precious life. In order to grow spiritually, humans

need to experience challenges and take risks. Only when I put myself out there do I feel truly alive. And I’m not alone. Research is finding a whole cluster of psychological benefits to intelligent risk-taking that have been coined “the risk-taker’s advantage.” Risk taking spurs creativity, builds confidence, develops new skills, gives us a sense of pride and accomplishment. Through risk we develop emotional resilience, become more flexible, optimistic, feel more engaged and happy. Therapist Larry Green signs off his emails not with the cautious, “Take care.” Instead, he urges “Take risks.” Green says, “Predictability and habit can give me a security that turns into a rut. A rut is the risk of a risk-free life.”



Doug Sea, wedding day, photograph courtesy of Doug Sea

As my wife likes to remind me, taking that biggest risk of my life 33 years ago is probably what saved my life. If we are not uncomfortable, we’re not growing spiritually. Albert Einstein said: “A ship is always safe at the shore. But that is not what it was built for.” So let’s adopt a new spiritual practice: the art of risk taking. And I’ll see you on the dance floor. If necessary, drag me out there.

## THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE COMFORTABLE

by Melissa Mummert



Seven or so years ago, after teaching at the Mecklenburg County jail and hearing the same old stories about women who couldn't find adequate employment after incarceration, I wanted to do something to help women access viable livable wage jobs. I imagined creating a food service business run by women with criminal

records. As many of you know because you donated or volunteered or bought mac and cheese or coffee from us, I started a social business called Second Helping under the agency for which I work, Changed Choices.

From the beginning, it was hard. I had to learn a whole new industry, raise the funds and assemble the team to manifest the vision. I had to make our case to donors to invest in our vision and then had the weighty responsibility to use that money well. I felt the pressure of indebtedness all the time. After Second Helping opened, I stayed up late most nights, pushing through the latest daily challenge. A new skilled volunteer showed up at the kitchen but felt underutilized. A grant didn't come through. A client's car broke down so the shop opened late. A catering mix-up.

The hardest moment by far was when an African American case manager from Changed Choices pulled me into her office and told me that some of my behaviors were perceived as racist by our employees of color. She asked, did I see that in seeking needed help for the business, I routinely empowered white folks over people of color? That I clearly trusted white voices more and our employees could see this and were demoralized by it? I hadn't seen this, but when she presented evidence, I saw she was right and it horrified me. My intent was good, but this person I respected showed me that my impact was really hurtful. What a wake-up call!



"Rose Gentian"  
fibert art by Nancy Cook

When Second Helping closed abruptly, I felt embarrassed and ashamed—all of it a failure. But in the years since, one of Second Helping's alumni staff, Candice, got a job at Safe Alliance's Shelter as a chef, thanks to connections she made as a Second Helping employee. She makes a living wage and for the first time ever, gets paid vacations. The head chef at Second Helping, Gigi Cruz, is now the event manager at Something Classic, a job she also gained through a connection at Second Helping. She manages huge fancy events and is now in a position to hire others with criminal records. Monique, Second Helping's catering manager, now makes twice as much as I do as a sales rep. and is now working creating housing for people coming out of jail and prison.

One of the big learnings of Second Helping for me was realizing that I need to talk less and listen more to people who have been directly impacted by incarceration. I have taken the saying to heart that was taught to me by a Changed Choices client: "Nothing about us Without Us."

## EXPANDING COMFORT ZONES WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

by Melissa Vullo



Last spring, I was privileged to be part of team creating programming for the whole congregation based on expanding beyond our comfort zones. The idea was that the whole congregation would be delving into the same topic creating a multigeneration synchronicity within our congregation. I was so

excited I requested to be the summer coordinator for the elementary program. It seemed the perfect job. Just one problem. I had to commit to coming to church all summer. For both services! Had I ever done that before? Had anyone ever done that before? All jesting aside I made the commitment to step out of my comfort zone, sacrifice any opportunity to sleep in, and show up.

Our amazing Director of Children and Youth Religious Education, Kathleen Carpenter, lined up a remarkable ensemble of teachers to teach our children about “streeetching beyond comfort” through hands-on, fun activities. It was a privilege to participate and get a peek at all the talent lurking in our congregation. Here’s a quick synopsis of each class:

**Week One:** Ben Gatti shared his love of science by teaching us about polymers through the comforting practice of making slime. Turns out science, technology, engineering, and math are not so threatening after all.

**Week Two:** Gillian Baxter proved to us that kindness really does rock. Everyone tapped into their creative side by painting a rock. Check out the hashtag #kindnessrocksproject to connect to others all over the country who are rocking kindness. Better yet, look around the grounds of the UUCC to find your own kindness rocks rock. If you find one you can keep it or pass it on by leaving it in a public park or path where someone else can find it.

**Week Three:** Sherry Sample helped us explore our own comfort circle through a series of games and a

special art project that pushed us outside of our comfort zone by melting crayons. Check out our work on the table just inside of the CYRE wing.

**Week Four:** Line up in order of birthday (without talking?), play tug of war (using just your pinky?), play a friendly game of tag (called “assassin?”) were some of the ways Rich Green helped us expand our comfort zones. He also shared his experience at SUUSI.

**Week Five:** Camilla Mazzota explored the topic of how sometimes people who are different from us often seems a little scary and make us feel a little uncomfortable. Through her love of literature, we explored ways to overcome this discomfort by acting out some skits.

**Week Six:** Erin Bailey literally helped us streeetch beyond our comfort zones through some yoga stretches. Each child got to pick a pose they thought would be the most comfortable and the least comfortable to create a unique line up of poses for each class.

**Week Seven:** Ben Gatti returned to share more science.

**Week Eight:** Cate Stroud allowed us to experience for a few moments what it might be like to be differently abled through some hands-on activities that explored the experiences of visual and hearing impairment.

I more than survived the summer. I have a new routine for Sunday mornings. My daughters and I experienced some remarkable talent among the teachers who came sharing their gifts and talents each week. I enjoyed getting to know the elementary children and their parents better. I’m hoping that as we expand our comfort zones around our new vision statement in the coming year we will continue to embrace a multigenerational lens as we did this summer.



“Kindness Rocks:” Check out the hashtag #kindnessrocksproject to connect to others all over the country who are rocking kindness. Better yet, look around the grounds of the UUCC to find your own kindness rocks.”



# SOUNDINGS

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