



April 2019 Monthly Theme

# Magic

*the Practice of Changing*

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*The intention of the themed year is to help Unitarian Universalists build a robust spiritual and ethical vocabulary. The themes are points of departure for religious liberals seeking to think, speak and act theologically, prophetically and prayerfully. The themes reclaim religious language, casting old terms in a new key to deepen spiritual grounding and sharpen moral reasoning. More at: [wbuuc.org/themes](http://wbuuc.org/themes)*

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## QUESTIONS

Is Magic real? Does it matter?

Why do we long for Magic? Why is magic and its works such a strong and continuing theme in the human mind, in literature, in story?

It is easier to change, or not change? What is the role of inertia in human affairs?

Why do we avoid change?

## QUOTATIONS

“Sometimes a child is born into a perfect lightning storm and somebody who loves her offers her a pencil as oar. That’s what happened to me. What a magical wand and oar a pencil is. It is one part tool and three parts pontoon. If that child can make her way through the first flashes of lightning without too much fear of being hit, if she can be overtly curious about the lightning, if she can see the lightning as more than worry and trouble, if she can even find out later that lightning is no bigger than a pencil (the Weather Channel), then she might get very close to being who she has come to earth to be.” — Nikki Finley, author

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.” — Maya Angelou

“Sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something was pushing and drawing in my chest and making me breathe fast. Magic is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us. In this garden - in all the places.” — Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

“The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.” — Yeats

## POETRY

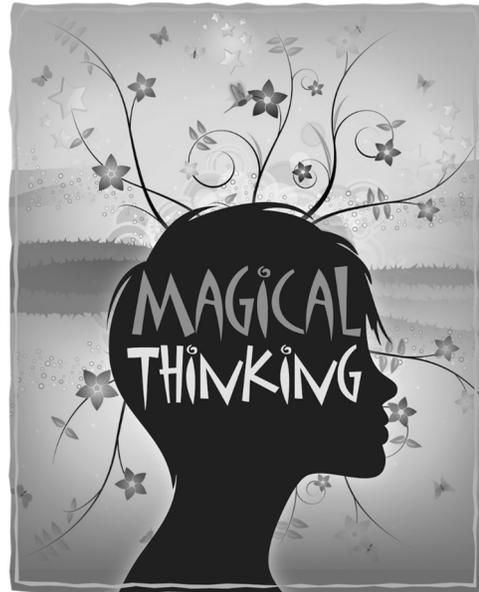
Take me, God, and make me over—  
Make me sweet as honey clover  
Or a rose without the thorn.  
Yet, dear God, I am not sure  
If such sweetness could endure—  
People might not love me then,  
An unnatural specimen.  
— Jewell Bothwell Tull

## READINGS & EXCERPTS

### The Seven Principles of Magical Thinking:

<https://youtu.be/qyyzfx2Ew>

1. Anything can be sacred.
2. Anything can be cursed.
3. Mind over matter.
4. Rituals can bring good luck.
5. Names carry meaning.
6. Karma is just.
7. The world is alive.



### Excerpts from an essay "The Induced Meandering of the Lenten Season" by Erin Dunigan:

[induced-meandering-of-the-lenten-season](#)

... Implemented thoughtfully, this induced meandering can provide irrigation to soil, plants, and trees long after the rains have passed. The benefits are both immediate and long term. The more induced meandering, the greater the overall health of the entire area, not just of a particular plant or tree. Induced meandering is not just a concept for the garden, of course. In life as well as in land, induced meandering can encourage the necessary conditions for slowing down and in so doing, allowing its currents to sink in, not just run down the drain.

... an opportunity to slow down, to meander rather than to rush, to allow life to sink in a bit, to find ways to go deeper and not always stay on the surface. A time to observe, to pay attention, and then to act — and in so doing provide the space to move from rush to replenish. When we take this practice seriously, we plant its blessings so that they benefit not only us in our lives for this season, but also extend to the world around us.

### Excerpts from an essay by Rachel Mize in UU World Spring 2019

I don't believe in magic. I love magic, but I don't believe in magic. Or signs from heaven. Or ghosts, or miracles, or God, really, in any traditional sense. So it was strange to find within myself an intense desire to go on an ancient Catholic pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago.

...As we made the final trek into Santiago de Compostela, I felt a lightness in my heart, a peace both with religion and with myself. I reached into my pocket to retrieve my ugly rock, ready to lay it, and all of my ugliness, down at the feet of Santiago. But it was gone. It had been there for 100 miles, but on that day, *the* day, it was gone. Rather than the rough, sandy edges of the rock, my fingers brushed the smooth, cold polish of jade. My first thoughts were practical.

How could this happen? I hadn't even opened that pocket for days. Then a terrible revelation began to wash over me. I stopped short in the middle of the path, causing a disturbance in the flow of pilgrims all around me.

Time dilated as I pulled that shiny jade of happiness out of my pocket and at that moment I knew. I don't get to lay down the parts of myself that I don't like. The inconvenient parts. The less than perfect parts. If I want to move forward, to love myself and find peace within myself, I'm required to lay down this—this shiny, happy mask. The part of me that tells those who truly care that everything is fine when it's not. The part that second-guesses every action, prescreens every word to make sure that they're "right." I'm going to have to learn to love all those rough edges, and, worse, allow others to see and to love them, too. A terrifying notion, really. But I left that jade in Santiago and brought home with me the intention of living with authenticity.

I never did find the ugly rock, and don't have any explanation for its disappearance. I don't believe that the stones were switched by magic. They weren't a sign from the universe or God's hand reaching down to guide me. But I do believe that if your mind is open, and if your heart is willing, a well-timed coincidence can become a life-changing lesson.

## EXERCISE

The purpose of this exercise is to enable you to have more choice in how you respond to situations where, in the past, you feel you have acted inappropriately. There could be a whole range of emotionally-based actions that would fit here: anger, anxiety, frustration, impatience, sadness, etc. Think in metaphor about how you're feeling: *I'm forever running up against a brick wall; I'm carrying the world on my shoulders; I think I'm cracking up; I see a light at the end of the tunnel.* You will need blank paper and colored pens. When you answer the questions in the exercise, give yourself time for images and feelings to emerge into consciousness before writing or drawing.

1. Identify a metaphor for when you are feeling an emotion and act inappropriately as a result:
  - a. Draw an image that depicts what it feels like
  - b. Look at your drawing: Is there anything else? Add new information to the drawing, and when you've got all that you can get for now, go on to the second metaphor.
2. Identify and draw a second metaphor for that feeling. How you would prefer to respond?
  - a. Ask yourself, "How would I prefer to respond? What does that look like?"
  - b. Draw the metaphor that comes to mind. Is there anything to add to the drawing?
3. Think how you can convert or evolve the first metaphor into the second:
  - a. Place your drawings in front of you.
  - b. Consider how Metaphor 1 can evolve into Metaphor 2.
  - c. Notice:
    - i. What's the first thing that needs to happen for Metaphor 1 to start becoming Metaphor 2?
    - ii. What's the last thing that needs to happen before Metaphor 1 becomes Metaphor 2?"

Take your time when completing Step 3. Remember it may take a number of intermediate stages for this to happen. Don't reject an idea just because it seems bizarre (the land of metaphor is often closer to a dream world than to everyday reality). You'll know when you've found the solution that's right for you, and it usually contains an element of a surprise.

4. Having identified a way for Metaphor 1 to become Metaphor 2, how does this translate into what you need to do in your everyday life? How will this information guide your behavior next time you are in a similar situation?
5. Practice transforming in daily life.

## MUSIC

### Lyrics from *Beautiful, Sunday in the Park with George* by Stephen Sondheim

Changing...

It keeps changing, I see towers,  
Where there were trees  
Going, All the stillness, the solitude, Georgie  
Sundays, Disappearing, All the time  
When things were beautiful...

[George]

All things are beautiful, Mother  
All trees, all towers, Beautiful  
That tower-  
Beautiful, Mother, See?  
A perfect tree  
Pretty isn't beautiful, Mother  
Pretty is what changes  
What the eye arranges  
Is what is beautiful

[Mother]

Fading

[George]

I'm changing, You're changing

[Mother]

It keeps fading...

[George]

I'll draw us now before we fade, Mother

[Mother]

It keeps melting before our eyes

[George]

You watch while I revise the world

[Mother]

Changing, As we sit here-  
Quick, draw it all Georgie...

[Mother]

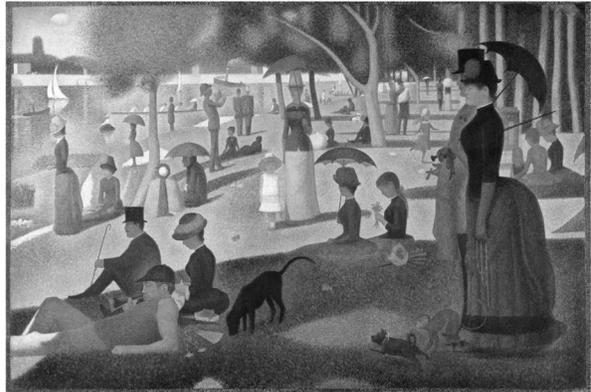
Disappearing, As we look-

[George]

Look! Look!

[Mother]

You make it beautiful  
Oh, Georgie, how I long for the old view



### Change by Tracy Chapman

...How bad, how good does it need to get?  
How many losses how much regret?  
What chain reaction  
What cause and effect  
Makes you turn around  
Makes you try to explain  
Makes you forgive and forget  
Makes you change  
If you knew that you would be alone  
Knowing right being wrong  
Would you change?  
If you knew that you would find a truth  
That brings a pain that can't be soothed  
Would you change?  
If everything you think you know  
Makes your life unbearable  
Would you change?  
If you'd broken every rule and vow  
And hard times come to bring you down  
Would you change?