



REPAIR

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

My grandfather knew how to keep time moving. Head bent over the wooden jeweler's bench at the back of his jewelry store and peering through a small magnifying loop attached to his glasses, he repaired watches. He patiently disassembled gears and springs and knew how to put them back together so they could once again keep time.

As we turn from last month's theme of "Brokenness" to this month's theme of "Repair," I am wondering what we are asked to repair — in the world and in ourselves. And, how do we know how to make these repairs as well as when we might need to start over anew?

With a watch, it's obvious it needs repair when its numbers or hands stand still. But when it's just running fast or slow, it might take a while to realize something needs fixing. So too with less mechanical things prone to breaking down — relationships, systems, practices, communication, understandings. Perhaps the first fix to consider is letting ourselves stand still long enough that we can notice what really needs repairing. Not coincidentally, this is one of the fruits of having a spiritual practice and participating in a community of faith.

Once we do notice a brokenness that needs repair, the rapid pace of change itself can make it difficult to know how to begin. Were he still living, my grandfather would not have the knowledge needed to fix today's

gearless digital watches. Similarly, when we look at the brokenness of the environment or the broken institutions that perpetuate systemic oppression, we often do not know how to fix them. So this work of repair requires creative engagement with the discomfort of not knowing. We are asked to let go of old assumptions and challenged to stretch our hearts and minds as bridges between past and future, open to new knowledge and learning as we go.

The word repair traces its origins to an old French word meaning "to make ready, again." Notice, it is not about returning to where we were before the breakage. Nor is it a matter of perfection — original or restored. Repair, at its core, is about preparing to begin again.

How relevant this is to today's challenges, as we work to repair our relationships with nature and one another, especially across our differences. And, how ancient too, arising from the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*. According to the story from Jewish mystic Isaac Luria, before creation there was only a holy darkness. Then God sent divine light into the world, bringing about all forms of life; but the vessels carrying the light shattered and ten thousand shards of divinity became scattered as sparks embedded in all beings and every part of creation.

Humans, the story says, were given the capacity to find this light hidden in all beings and events and to make it visible

by our interactions with them. This task, known as *tikkun olam*, is restoring the wholeness of the world. No wonder it is a teaching and phrase often applied to environmental and justice work.

Clearly, the brokenness around us and within us today cannot be repaired by returning our inner gears to their previous alignments. Perhaps instead, our task of repair is one of uncovering the hidden light, first in our own hearts, and then in the world around us. Might this make us, and the world, ready again — for right relationship with nature and one another, for wholeness and the beloved community we seek to make real?

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Repair Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme, a variety of resources including books, poems, videos and audios, are listed in this month's Chalice Circle packet available online at www.unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html and in the brochure racks at church.

Also visit www.unityunitarian.org/uploads/6/1/0/3/6103699/repair.pdf for sermons and other resources from previous years on this theme.