Turn the Principles Upside Down

By **Gail Lindsay Marriner, minister**, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe, New Mexico

One night before going to bed a farmer was standing a few steps in front of his house, meditating over the many troubles that had beset his livestock. "I cannot imagine why the cattle do not get better," said he out loud to himself. "I will tell you," said a squeaky little voice close by him. The farmer turned in the direction of the sound and saw a tiny little man, looking very angrily at him. "It is," continued the wee man, "because your family keeps on annoying mine so much." "How is that?" asked the farmer, surprised and puzzled. "You are always throwing the slops from your house down the chimney of my house," said the little man.

"That cannot be," retorted the farmer. "There is no house within a mile of mine." "Put your foot on my foot," said the small stranger, "and you will see that what I say is true." The farmer complied, putting his foot on the other's foot, and he could suddenly and clearly see that the slops thrown out of his house did indeed go down the chimney of the other's house, which stood far below in a street he had never seen before. As soon as he took his foot off the little man's, however, there was no sign of house or chimney. "I've been pouring my slops down your chimney! Well, indeed, I am very sorry," said the farmer. "What can I do to make up for the annoyance which my family has caused you?"

The tiny little man was satisfied by the farmer's apology, and he said: "You had better wall up the door on this side of your house and make another in the other side. If you do that, your slops will no longer be a nuisance to my family and myself." Having said this he vanished in the dusk of the night.

The farmer obeyed, and his cattle recovered. Ever after he was a most prosperous man, and nobody was as successful as he in rearing stock in all the land. And unless they have pulled it down to build a new one, you can still see his house with the front door in the back.

—A Welsh Tale: "Why Deunant Has the Front Door in the Back"

The farmer in the story doesn't set out to inconvenience anyone. He's simply minding his own business and taking care of his farm with the minimum amount of effort and fuss. He is, in fact, completely unaware of his neighbors. Now, of course, the neighbors in the story are "wee folk," whose households and economies are invisible to the man even when he is told where to look. In fact, without special assistance, the farmer cannot see either the little man's village or the mess his "slops" have made!

In a similar way it has been common practice in the dominant western culture to not see the homes or life-ways of the poor, of people of color, of first nation's peoples or even of native plant and animal ecologies for that matter—freeing us to blithely dump our slops over the wall into the "weeds." For many of us, as part of this culture, our focus has been on ourselves and our convenience, and we have demonstrated an amazing inability even to see certain others.

In the opening pages of his book *Deep Economy*, Bill McKibben writes: "For most of human history, the two birds *More* and *Better* roosted on the same branch. You could toss one stone and hope to hit them both." More food, more shelter, more stuff, more mobility—these without a doubt made life better for millions of people, and since More is easier to quantify than Better, and since More initially leads to Better (as in better health and better standards of living), governments and cultures started to focus on More.

Quest

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To find yourself,
think for yourself.
—Socrates

A monthly for religious liberals

INDEPENDENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE

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Unfortunately, one of the side effects of this focus is that more for some often means less for others. And if the "others" are invisible—well, that's fewer folks with whom we have to share, so the better for us.

But, McKibbon tells us, Better no longer roosts on the same branch as More. All over the world, it seems that once basic needs—food, clothing, housing, education, health care—are met, any additional happiness is far more closely correlated to intangibles than it is to money or stuff. After those needs are satisfied, our lives become appreciably better not when we have more stuff, but rather when we have deeper connections, stronger relationships, a more vibrant commons, a cleaner environment, more culture, more meaning.

It turns out that our individualistic pursuit of More—more money, more stuff, more convenience—ends up consuming a lot of the time and energy that could lead to Better. This also creates a lot of slops and the need to find places to put them.

You have probably heard of "Peak Oil"—that moment when our fossil fuel consumption peaks and the oil reserves of our planet are half depleted. Well, I am anxiously awaiting the moment of "Peak Stuff"—the time when our throwaway material culture begins to reverse itself. I am looking forward to the moment we cease to see those slops as waste to be dumped over the wall and start to see them as resources to be composted for the garden.

I look forward to the time when we will stop buying things to be used and thrown away and instead start investing our time, creativity and energy to help create durable objects, healthier ecologies and stronger, more resilient relationships and communities. What we need is a shift in how we view the world, one that will, in turn, shift how we organize our actions.

When an artist wants to critique a composition that has grown too familiar he or she will often look at a piece of art in the mirror or turn it upside down, to gain a different perspective. Moving our intention from a world where More is the goal to a world that is looking for Better is one way to shift the focus. Reading our UU Principles from bottom to top is another.

> Human happiness isn't about More for me; it's about Better for all of us. To get there we need to turn our whole culture upside down.

What happens when we turn our Principles upside down? On one level, nothing changes. All the same words are there. But something is different when we affirm and promote: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" as the first thing on our list and leave celebrating the inherent worth and dignity of every person until the end—along with its implied parenthetical conclusion: (especially me).

I'm intrigued by this reversal because I think we get stuck in that first principle rather often. In our voluntary associations we often come and go based on whether we feel like our inherent worth and dignity—or our perspective and opinion—is accorded its full due. I suspect (although I haven't a smattering of proof) that if we start reading and living our principles beginning with the communal disciplines and ending with the more personal ones we could find ourselves in the midst of a fulfilling transformation. I imagine that by paying more attention to the interdependent web of existence of which I am a part than to my inherent worth and dignity, I can shift my emphasis from More to Better.

Humans are relational beings: like it or not we are always embedded in community. This is good because it means that by tending to our community we also support our own well-being. Creating stronger relationships and a vibrant commons gives all of us and each of us a better quality of life. Nurture what is Better in the community and we arrive at Better for each individual.

Recall that our UU values were initially articulated in the midst of the Enlightenment at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Even the wealthiest of most of our UU forebears were materially quite poor. To walk through Thoreau's cottage or Emerson's home or the Alcott house is to be reminded that although they were intellectually and spiritually and relationally wealthy, our spiritual ancestors were materially poor in comparison to us.

In that time, our Unitarian forebears were deeply grounded in their interconnected community, but their innovative emphasis on the worth and dignity of the individual was needed as an important Enlightenment corrective to both the undue privileging of some classes of human beings and the impulse to devalue all humankind as cogs in an economic machine.

What *they* took for granted in their shared interdependent web of relationships with each other and with the places they lived, *we* have nearly lost in our intense pursuit of the individual good. In our time we need a different corrective.

I am persuaded that much of the harm we do to ourselves and to others falls under the category of unintended side effects—slops dumped over the wall unknowingly. Our forebears never dreamed that honoring the inherent worth and dignity of every person would result in the hyper-individualism and disconnection of our current culture. It never occurred

to them that human agency could create global warming or decimate local food sheds or destroy the relational fabric of our communities. It never occurred to them that we would forfeit the "good" that they took for granted in our pursuit of more stuff, more choices and more convenience.

If we UUs reverse the order of our principles we will shift our goals and our focus from "more for me" to "better for us." Both the intended results and the unintended side effects will be healthier for all concerned.

Your inherent worth and dignity are still important. You do not have to give up imported coffee or chocolate. You do not have to silence your needs or stifle your feelings or become a door mat for others to walk all over. You do need to be willing to flex, and to go out of your way to act for the good of the group first, in trust that acting for the good of your neighbor will benefit you by and by.

As Bill McKibben writes, "Reorient your personal compass a little bit (to) shed a certain amount of your hyper-individualism and replace it with a certain amount of neighborliness…. Think of yourself as a member of a community and you'll get a better deal. You'll (help) build a world with some hope of ecological stability, where the chances increase that you'll be happy."

Human happiness isn't about More for me; it's about Better for all of us. To get there we need to turn our whole culture upside down. And what better place to start than reorienting our own principles in order to live in a new way? ■

How It Happens

BY **KARIN LIN**, LAY LEADER, FIRST PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

After presenting my first workshop at the 2011 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association, I decided to reward myself by purchasing a gold chalice necklace, which I've been wanting for a while. I went to the exhibit hall to one of the jewelry vendors, where the artist kindly walked me through the dazzling display of options. I found a small, delicate gold pendant on a beautiful chain, and when she fastened it around my neck and I looked in the mirror, I fell in love.

I decided to buy it, even though it was three times what I'd originally been planning to spend. As she prepared to take my credit card, I added the cost of the pendant and the chain and asked for confirmation of the total. She, clearly impressed with my mental arithmetic abilities, responded, "That's right. I don't want to stereotype, but you're some kind of Asian, right? So, math is, like, in your DNA?"

I was rendered temporarily speechless.

Many Unitarian Universalists know that our denomination has always struggled with racial inclusion. So for me to hear a remark like this at our General Assembly was a great disappointment, especially just after presenting an emotionally demanding workshop on this very issue. I knew the artist's intentions were not malicious, and I knew this was what we call a "teachable moment." But I just wasn't in the mood to engage. I was tired, and I've been burned too many times when calling people—even seemingly nice people—on racial insensitivity. I simply said, "No, not all Asians are good at math. I happen to be."

She ran my card, I thanked her, and I made a beeline for the DRUUMM booth. Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries is an organization for UU people of color, and our booth at GA provides information, chaplaincy, and a place to just hang out. Several of my friends were there. I related the incident. There were grumbles, eye rolls and jokes—expressions of the frustration that we felt about our many experiences of marginalization in our faith communities.

I also posted about it on Facebook. Responses of commiseration, mostly from my friends of color, included sarcasm, irritation, anger, confusion, and calls for boycott. My minister, Fred—a white male—asked whether he should have an "educational conversation" with the vendor. I told him he was welcome to do so.

The next morning, Fred found me and told me he'd had a great conversation with the artist, who had been horrified when she realized the impact of her statement. In tears, she'd asked him how she could make things right.

Upon hearing this, I left plenary as soon as I could and returned to the exhibit hall. As I approached her table, her eyes filled with tears once again and she said, "Thank you so much for coming back, Karin. Can you ever forgive me?"

I sat down across from her, took her hand, looked into her eyes, and said, "Yes." Tears continued to stream down her face as she told me how she always tried to do the right thing, but sometimes she just didn't get it. I told her that we all make mistakes, and that I certainly made plenty around issues of sexual orientation, class, age, and even people of other races. I explained that racism was something that is taught to us, and that the only way to fix it is to have conversations like the

one we were having right then. I told her that I was grateful for her openness and willingness to talk and that I was sure of her goodness.

Still in tears, she told me she was so incredibly sorry that she'd ripped up the charge slip for my necklace. I said that was a very kind gesture, but it wasn't necessary, and I meant it—the jewelry hadn't been cheap. She insisted, "I've already done it. It's done. And I hope that when you wear it, you won't think so badly of me."

I responded, "It's a beautiful piece of jewelry. And when I wear it, I'll remember this gift. I'll remember you, and I'll remember this conversation." I asked if I could hug her, and I spoke of the many ways in which the forces of the world seek to divide us, and that we had to trust that the love we have for each other would carry us through. I patted her shoulder and said goodbye. She was still crying when I left.

I am moved and humbled.

How quickly had my friends and I been prepared to demonize this woman, someone who I knew was good at heart, because she hurt me through her inability to understand my life experience? How quickly did a pleasant business transaction degenerate in my mind to yet one more example of the ubiquitous, incessant racism I have dedicated my life to fighting? How quickly had my feelings of comfort at being loved and nurtured in my faith community been destroyed at the reminder of how far we still have to go?

We cannot simply ask people of color to be patient and understanding when they encounter racial insensitivity. Such a request ignores our pain and leaves the burden of reconciliation where it has been for far too long, on the shoulders of the marginalized. But neither can we label as fundamentally bad all those who inadvertently cause pain out of ignorance. To do so is to concede victory to the forces that seek to divide us. We must harness the power of love and trust in its ability to hold us.

I am an atheist, but I consider this an experience of the divine. Her life experience was too narrow to inform appropriate actions without education. My pain and brokenness were too great to risk engagement without guarantee of a safe response. So someone else stepped in to build a bridge over the gap, to connect us through the borderlands. And thus, a 68-year-old white woman from Texas and this 37-year-old child of Taiwanese immigrants found common ground.

My friends, this is how it happens. This is how we heal ourselves and each other. Trust in whatever it is that you hold sacred, no matter what you call it. Build bridges and let them be built for you. Allow yourself to be changed. Choose love, and you will create more love. ■

Welcome to Cell No. 9

BY JOHN SANGER, CLF MEMBER, HOMINIY, OKLAHOMA

American prisoners are an independent lot—or that's what most of them want you to believe. But there comes a time when even the hardest among them need help. Moreover, sometimes these tough guys are the first to reach out to those in need.

Take Bill and Nate. They arrived after dinner on Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. Those of us living in the housing unit at the top of the hill watched them trudge up the sidewalk carrying their bulky sleeping mats and blankets and little else. What few personal items they possessed would be stored until the prison staff returned after the four-day holiday. Until then, the only clothing the new guys had was what they were wearing—and that didn't include a coat.

Their new home, cell No. 9, stood vacant, occupied only by a large puddle of water. The puddle was a remnant from a plumbing leak that had been repaired earlier in the day. However, water continued to drain out of the plumbing chase for another two days.

On the bright side, the cell's single large window faced east, so it let in the warmly golden morning sun. Unfortunately, the portion of the window that could be opened—a narrow rectangle about four feet wide and five inches high—wouldn't close. The overnight low: 27° F.

Realizing that there would be no help from the prison staff until Monday or later, several prisoners on the pod pitched in to wedge cardboard in the window and provide a few of life's necessities: toiletries, towels, toilet paper, a bulb for the cell's single light fixture, and, most importantly, a bag of instant coffee.

Although the "state" was helpless in this situation, the pod's residents were not. They abandoned their independent natures temporarily and formed an interdependent network to help Bill and Nate get settled. Then on Monday everyone became fiercely independent again. ■

Note: Names and cell numbers have been changed.

Many of our nearly 600 CLF prisoner members exchange monthly letters with a non-incarcerated UU. If you're a UU who might enjoy being a part of CLF's *Letter Writing Ministry* you can read about our program and request an application at www.clfuu.org/penpals or write to the CLF Prison Ministry at 24 Farnsworth St, Boston, MA 02210-1409.

One Today

BY **RICHARD BLANCO**

One sun rose on us today, kindled
over our shores,
peeking over the Smokies, greeting
the faces
of the Great Lakes, spreading a
simple truth
across the Great Plains, then charging
across the Rockies.
One light, waking up rooftops, under
each one, a story
told by our silent gestures moving
behind windows.

My face, your face, millions of faces
in morning's mirrors,
each one yawning to life, crescendoing
into our day:
pencil-yellow school buses, the rhythm
of traffic lights,
fruit stands: apples, limes, and oranges
arrayed like rainbows
begging our praise. Silver trucks heavy
with oil or paper—
bricks or milk, teeming over highways
alongside us,
on our way to clean tables, read
ledgers, or save lives—
to teach geometry, or ring-up groceries
as my mother did
for twenty years, so I could write this
poem.

All of us as vital as the one light we
move through,
the same light on blackboards with
lessons for the day:
equations to solve, history to question,
or atoms imagined,
the "I have a dream" we keep
dreaming,
or the impossible vocabulary of sorrow
that won't explain
the empty desks of twenty children
marked absent
today, and forever. Many prayers, but
one light
breathing color into stained glass
windows,
life into the faces of bronze statues,
warmth
onto the steps of our museums and
park benches
as mothers watch children slide into
the day.

One ground. Our ground, rooting us
to every stalk
of corn, every head of wheat sown
by sweat
and hands, hands gleaning coal or
planting windmills
in deserts and hilltops that keep us
warm, hands
digging trenches, routing pipes and
cables, hands
as worn as my father's cutting sugar-
cane
so my brother and I could have books
and shoes.

The dust of farms and deserts, cities
and plains
mingled by one wind—our breath.
Breathe. Hear it
through the day's gorgeous din of
honking cabs,
buses launching down avenues, the
symphony
of footsteps, guitars, and screeching
subways,
the unexpected song bird on your
clothes line.

Hear: squeaky playground swings,
trains whistling,
or whispers across café tables, Hear:
the doors we open
for each other all day, saying: hello,
shalom,
buon giorno, howdy, namaste, or
buenos días
in the language my mother taught
me—in every language
spoken into one wind carrying our
lives
without prejudice, as these words
break from my lips.
One sky: since the Appalachians and
Sierras claimed
their majesty, and the Mississippi and
Colorado worked
their way to the sea. Thank the work
of our hands:
weaving steel into bridges, finishing
one more report
for the boss on time, stitching another
wound
or uniform, the first brush stroke on
a portrait,
or the last floor on the Freedom Tower
jutting into a sky that yields to our
resilience.

One sky, toward which we sometimes
lift our eyes
tired from work: some days guessing
at the weather
of our lives, some days giving thanks
for a love
that loves you back, sometimes
praising a mother
who knew how to give, or forgiving
a father
who couldn't give what you wanted.

We head home: through the gloss of
rain or weight
of snow, or the plum blush of dusk,
but always—home,
always under one sky, our sky. And
always one moon
like a silent drum tapping on every
rooftop
and every window, of one country—
all of us—
facing the stars
hope—a new constellation
waiting for us to map it,
waiting for us to name it—together.

From Your Minister

BY **MEG RILEY**
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

I love acknowledgments pages, and award acceptance speeches, and other public expressions of gratitude where people spell out how their individual success is interconnected with the gifts of other people. And it occurs to me that, rather than going through all of the struggle of writing a book or making a film or performing a song, I can use this column right now for my own acceptance speech, to offer thanks.

For what? You ask. For my life! Here goes:

Oh! What a surprise! I can't believe I was picked for this award—a lifetime in a human body on planet earth! I am honored to accept! But I could never have done it alone. There are so many I must thank!

First of all, I would like to thank the prokaryote cells, the first single-celled organisms, which evolved three and a half billion years ago. You taught me about personal boundaries.

I wish I could name all of the single celled beings who contributed to my life, but time simply won't permit. You know who you are. To the sea sponges, who began to differentiate tissues six hundred million years ago, it couldn't have happened without you.

I must name the flat worms, who developed brains 550 million years ago. Thank you for having the idea of a brain, and a brain to put the idea into. To the Cambrian explosion that led to a sudden diversification of life, I will forever be grateful; that your explosion headed my direction.

To all of the eels and fish who developed complex nervous systems, backbones, jaws, eyes, and limbs, you made me who I am today. How could 365 million years have passed so quickly?

To the tetrapods and amphibians who made it possible to come out of the water, who developed lungs so that you could live on the land—to frogs and dinosaurs and birds and reptiles—thank you. It is a privilege to still share the earth with some of you, and we will forever grieve those gone too soon. Lighting a candle for you, stegosaurus.

> *Accepting our kinship with all life on earth is not only solid science,… in my view, it's also a soaring spiritual experience.*
> –Neil deGrasse Tyson.

To the proto-mammals who evolved away from the true reptiles, and eventually became mammals, I know it must have been hard. Thanks for taking the risk 250 million years ago.

And mammals, such gifts you have given me! Warm blood, hair, the ability to sweat and regulate my temperature—always appreciated. And giving birth to live babies instead of laying eggs made my whole entry into the world radically different than it would have been.

Dear, dear, primates…where to begin!!! When I imagine you evolving about sixty five million years ago, just as the dinosaurs died out, I think perhaps it was meant to be. Kismet. The opposable thumb? Sheer genius.

The variations in primate species over the next 64,900,000 years are simply too many to name, and the music is beginning to swell. But let me just thank the lemurs and the tarsiers for forward-facing eyes; the gibbons for stronger shoulders, larger brains, and the lack of a tail; the orangutans and gorillas for deepening intelligence and more social skills; the chimpanzees and bonobos for the larynx, which makes speech possible….

And I simply must mention a few more of you. To the Australopithecus—my beloved Lucy—thank you for walking on two feet! To the Homo Habilis, thanks for using those stone tools. They made many things possible.

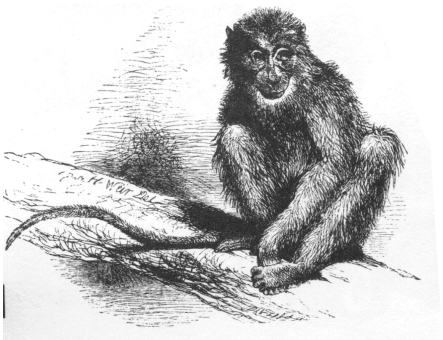
To Homo Ergaster, less than two million years ago, I'm glad your arms shortened, and I can't thank you enough for fire. And, while I'm proud to have come from Africa as all humans did, I am also glad that you were bold and adventurous enough to seek other parts of the world.

To Homo Heidelbergensis, ancestor of the Neanderthals, words can't suffice. And you Neanderthals, in Eurasia, you've given some of us a bit of our DNA by mating with Homo Sapiens. I'm sure your parents gave you a hard time about that, but I'm glad you did it.

And to Homo Sapiens, we're so new here—only 100,000 years old, and people say only 50,000 with advanced languages, art, music, and long distance trade, but you are my home team! While we've evolved in some ways I wish we hadn't, still I must lift up our collective name with praise for such things as squirrel-proof bird feeders and Pablo Neruda's poetry.

To my direct ancestors, to my parents, I couldn't have done it without of you.

Thank you. Thank you so much. ■



REsources for Living

BY **LYNN UNGAR**, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

One of the most exciting things about growing up is that you can do more and more things by yourself.

Babies are totally dependent on others. (There's not much that a person who hasn't yet learned how to locate their hands can do on their own.) But before long babies generally learn to roll themselves over, and sit up, and crawl and walk and run and before you know it they have grown into people who can ride a bike or make their own dinner or get a job.

The process of growing up is the process of gaining skills that allow us to take charge of our own lives, to become independent. And it turns out that our self-esteem, our sense of pride in who we are, comes not from having people tell us all the time how wonderful we are, but rather from proving to ourselves, over and over again, that we can manage to do stuff that seems hard at first. Our ability to handle things, to be independent, is inextricably tied up with our sense of self.

Which might explain something about why there are so many depressed and anxious students at the affluent high school where my wife works. If every detail of your life is managed and structured around someone else's idea of what you need to do to get ahead, there's not that much chance to feel like you've taken charge of your life, that you are growing in independence as you develop the skills to take your place in the world. If you haven't had the chance to fail and then start over and figure out how to do it right then you won't have much trust in your ability to manage on your own.

And we do need to learn to manage on our own. We need to learn how to be complete individuals, capable of deciding for ourselves what we like or don't like, what we will or will not do, based on our own heart and mind and conscience. Without that kind of independence you aren't really a grown-up.

But that independence is only half of the equation. Because even as babies, as much as we need to learn and grow, what we need is to be connected. We need to know that we are loved, that we belong, that we can trust the people in our lives to be there for us. And children who are raised in families where they can't rely on the security of those connections are hurt at least as much as children who are never allowed to risk and fail and choose for themselves.

> Who we are is defined as much by the ways that we are in relationship with those around us as by what we are able to do all by ourselves.

All of our growing up—which is to say all of our lives—is a process of learning how to be independent at the same time that we learn to be *inter*dependent. Yes, we need to learn how to do things and make choices for ourselves, but we also need to learn the skills of interdependence: connection, caring, compassion and the ability to see how our lives are woven together with all the other beings of the planet.

And it isn't always obvious from the outside what exactly independence and interdependence look like. A person can be disabled to the extent that they rely on an assistant to eat or get dressed or turn on a light switch, but still be fully independent: committed to their own goals and ideals, risking and growing and learning in the ways that matter to them. A person can be fully interdependent living alone on a mountain, but committed not only to the well-being of the plants and animals around them but also working or praying for the well-being of people they never see.

I want to say that we spend our lives learning to balance independence and interdependence, but that isn't right. That view implies an equation in which you take away from one so that you can add to the other to get the same sum, like an algebra equation. In reality, we can grow in *both* independence *and* interdependence at the same time, acknowledging that becoming most fully ourselves can't be separated from becoming most fully connected to the people and other beings around us.

When we learn to walk, we almost always take those first steps toward the waiting arms of someone who loves us. When we choose to volunteer at a soup kitchen or plant a tree or lobby congress, we do so because we believe that our lives and our choices can make a difference in the world, that our own little lives matter. Who we are is defined as much by the ways that we are in relationship with those around us as by what we are able to do all by ourselves.

So if you live in the US, happy Independence Day! In fact, happy Personal Independence Day, wherever you might live. And happy Interdependence Day as well, since one doesn't mean much without the other. How will you celebrate? ■

"Congregations are a place where you can find friendship and support. The CLF is just such a place, reminding us online and through the mail that there are bigger things than the day to day challenges we face. I am happy to provide financial support for the gift that this true community really is."

—Eli, a CLF supporter

Ensure this welcoming community continues to flourish. Make a monthly commitment today by using the enclosed envelope or visiting us online at www.clfuu.org. ■

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The sun shines not on us but in us. The rivers flow not past, but through us. Thrilling, tingling, vibrating every fiber and cell of the substance of our bodies, making them glide and sing. The trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies as well as our souls, and every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song, our very own, and sings our love.

By **John Muir** (1838-1914), from his journals