



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York

"Sex Ed is for Everyone!"

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"Did that heart
Did it
Break just a little;

When God realized

'Oh no—
They have made leaves into underpants!'

If God says things like 'underpants'?"

I wonder how many of us were raised in a church where we'd ever hear the words "God" and "underpants" in the same sentence? Especially from the pulpit?

We are a faith that questions, after all. Which means that we wonder. Wonder that means both curiosity AND delight.

Today's readings - thank you ALL so much - invite us into lots of wonderings.

"OWL programs transform a cultural climate of confusion and fear about sexuality into a new reality in which every person's inherent worth and dignity is valued."

I wonder what the world would be like if every person was raised truly to feel a sense of self-worth instead of shame, dignity instead of scorn? I wonder what the world would be like if we were not scared to talk about sex - and not just sex, but the whole realm of human relationships. I wonder what the world would be like if we loved our bodies no matter their age, their size, their abilities?

“My body is a container for love and pleasure; I am a container for wonder and joy.”

I wonder how I would have felt growing up not just hearing this message but truly receiving it? I wonder how much of my own sense of wonder was eclipsed in fear and uncertainty, as my own body grew and changed and became strange-seeming to me at times?

“Pleasure reminds us to enjoy being alive and on purpose...
Pleasure—embodied, connected pleasure—is one of the ways we know when we are free. That we are always free. That we always have the power to co-create the world.”

I wonder how many of us were raised with messages that there was something wrong or bad or even evil about pleasure? Within our churches, our homes - even our schools? When I was in high school in the 1980s, the entirety of my semester of health class - which is what we called sex education - was focused entirely on preventing disease. While the AIDS pandemic was first and foremost in the minds of sex educators at the time for very good reason, I wonder what it would have been like to learn the good information about taking responsibility for my own sexual health without the scare tactics? Without the judgment both implicit and explicit?

“We may express our sexuality in different ways, and we may not always understand each other’s identities and behaviors, but if we consider sexuality within the context of our UU Principles and the Our Whole Lives values of

self-worth, responsibility, sexual health, justice and inclusivity, we will treat our own and others' sexuality with respect, acceptance, and joy."

I wonder, oh I wonder, what the world would be like if everyone had a chance to take Our Whole Lives, the incredible and life-saving curriculum that we are celebrating today. Because [Our Whole Lives](#) (OWL) - a shared project of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ - absolutely knows that our lives and our world would improve if we dared to remove the stain of sin and shame that too many of us have learned in too many cultures and religions. If we stopped promoting the idea that human relationships, human bodies, and human pleasure at every age and stage of life were something to be ashamed of and instead celebrated them as something to learn about, to understand deeply, to be able to communicate about well, and to share responsibly and joyfully!

"And then the weight hit God

Like the first time you watch your child feel self-conscious
Hold back the loud belly laugh
Or worse yet bring down their eyes
Because the shoes you bought
Aren't good
Enough.

Did God's heart
Break just a little
to see the beauty of freedom slip from their hearts
As the heat and heaviness of shame washed over
The two in that garden
Who now knew
Not enough
No more naked
No more belly laugh
And for the first time wondered

Am I good enough?

Did God cry a little,
Maybe even turn away so they wouldn't see the tears?"

I love [Robin Tanner's poem](#) so much, and the first time I heard it was a total gut-punch. That Christian idiom, the idea of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the moment when humans realized that they were naked and felt shame - that was a huge part of my upbringing. That my body was something to be hidden out of shame; that I was in some way not good enough because of a metaphorical mistake made in a metaphorical garden.

It's the image of God trying first not to laugh and then not to cry that gets me. If we go with the conceit of the poem and the story, if our bodies are gifts from God, if the leaves are ALSO gifts and NOT underpants - then what are we doing? In the Christian idiom, why are we perpetuating this harm when the sacrifice of Christ was in direct response to the so-called "original sin" that made Adam and Eve reach for those leaves in the first place?! And if we are not Christian, how do we see and acknowledge that harmful interpretations of this story - they are not all harmful, to be clear, but plenty are - how do we see and acknowledge the harm done by these interpretations and work to correct that in our shared world? Is it enough to say "that's not my tradition so that's not my problem?"

It is not. The OWL program and the amazing people who keep updating the curricula, and the amazing people in our congregation and congregations everywhere who keep offering these classes and training new facilitators, know that one of the ways we all get free is by learning a love and respect for ourselves and our neighbors that wipes away shame and fear.

To go back to adrienne maree brown from our [chalice lighting](#): "Pleasure heals the places where our hearts and spirit get wounded. Pleasure reminds us that even in the dark, we are alive. Pleasure is a medicine for the suffering that is

absolutely promised in life... Pleasure is the point. Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom.”

I dare to wonder if a world can exist where we can erase the shame and fear, a world where we can see our bodies as vessels for wonder and delight, a world where human sexuality can be seen with respect, acceptance, and joy.

I dare to wonder about making that world possible, because the Our Whole Lives curriculum helps us to navigate our way into that world.

You are beautiful, you are loved, you are enough. May all hear that message and know it to be true.

So may it be.