

### ***Thoughts on Chrysalis, from a Child of God (and Adult of the Church)***

In March of 2020, just after the first (of many) lockdowns, I celebrated my 35th birthday. Some of you might know that 35 is the age when the UCC stops considering you to be a “young adult” and you become, I guess, a “regular adult” in the eyes of the church. That demarcation had me pondering what it means to step over that threshold. Can I step into a place of deeper partnership with my church? Can I be more responsible for, and more accountable to, my community of faith?

Lately, I’ve been thinking of the pandemic as an extended season of chrysalis—where deep profound changes are occurring within each of us, and (I hope) within our churches and our society. I see the Holy Spirit at work in the determination, creativity, and fortitude within our clergy and congregations as we meet challenges we could never have imagined.

We all have chrysalis moments in our lives, when we experience transformation and with the help of the Holy Spirit we emerge, changed. I hope each of you has experienced transformation in your life because of your faith and your faith formation through the United Church of Christ. I know my life has been deeply shaped by my participation in the UCC! Singing in children’s choir and around the campfire at Camp N-Sid-Sen ignited my lifelong love of music. My sense of social justice, leadership, and creativity have all been formed through the UCC: on high school mission trips, marching in the Pride Parade, women’s retreats at Pilgrim Firs, and serving as a lay leader in the Pacific Northwest Conference. I remember when my church took the Open & Affirming vote, and the members who shared vulnerable testimony about the importance of becoming O&A. I remember when my church adopted the New Century Hymnal, and even as a child listening to church leaders articulate why inclusive language was a UCC value. I’ve watched my church grow and change, just as I’ve grown and been changed by being part of a church family. And as a new fully-grown-up Adult of the church, I wonder who I would be without the United Church of Christ and I’m filled with gratitude.

In this time of physical distance, I’m feeling deeply connected to church (the church I attend, the church I work for, and through my participation in the life of the Pacific Northwest Conference) in new and surprising ways. Being unable to gather in person has helped me understand how important this community is to me. We are in a Chrysalis Season right now, where the whole world is experiencing radical change and transformation. It is a deeply uncertain time. But the gift of the chrysalis is the trust that God is here, with us in our uncertainty, and is our partner in this transformation. *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11*

The church makes transformation possible, and we make the church possible through our presence, prayers, and pledges. In these uncertain times, I think about my financial support as message of intention— or perhaps as a prayer for the future. The full impact of this pandemic is still unfolding, and the Pacific Northwest Conference will be a vital participant in the recovery and resurrection work ahead of us. We can do this work together, as individuals, clergy, and churches in community.

Seeing how we've each been transformed by the United Church of Christ, the gift of the chrysalis is also an invitation to give back— and in our giving, make it possible for God to transform others.

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