

Hello Unity of Fairfax!

In the United States, the age 65 has come to represent the standard measure for retirement; however, Unity of Fairfax is taking its 65th anniversary on September 17, 2021 as the impetus for *refirement* – a time of rededication to and regeneration of its mission and vision and ongoing building of spiritual community.

Slide:

What is Refirement?

RE –CONNECT

Re – IMAGINE

Re – AWAKEN

Re - COMMIT

In my comments today, I will outline, as four themes, key ways this “refirement” will happen. Each theme will encourage (a word derived from the French language meaning “full of heart”) current and future members to reconnect with one another, to re-imagine our mission and vision, to recommit to being enthusiastic ambassadors of Unity of Fairfax, and to re-awaken the world to peace, abundance, and respect for all creation.

Since its inception, Unity of Fairfax has inspired thousands of people to live their best lives; and now with the expansion of our technologies, our reach is global. As an innovative leader in spiritual growth and transformation, Unity of Fairfax remains open to Spirit’s guidance on how best to be of service to the world while at the same time affirming our commitment to supporting the community we already have. And this is key to remember: we **have** and we **are** a strong, vibrant,

and victorious community. Not even a global pandemic can prevent us from fulfilling Spirit's calling for us to be difference-makers in the world!

The Unity movement and Unity of Fairfax as a member of Unity Worldwide Ministries, has been ardently broadening its focus from strictly personal transformation to include collective transformation. A recent example was the Unity Worldwide Ministries Resolution on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that coincided with Juneteenth 2021.

The pandemic has given Unity of Fairfax a pause to appreciate how far we've come in supporting the creation of a world that works for everyone and to discern what meaningful actions can be taken to further our capacity to be catalysts for good - locally, nationally, and globally. Here's a fun fact to substantiate this you may not know: while most of our **podcast** listeners are in Virginia, there is distribution across the country and in France, Germany, Columbia, and the Dominican Republic! Special thanks to Dave Sobel for getting our podcasts on to the major platforms.

Let's look at how the individual themes of *refirement* – (re-connect, re-imagine, re-commit, and re-awaken) – will be made manifest by, through, and as us in the next few months:

Slide 1 for Homecoming Sunday, September 19, 2021 (have my and Ron's contact under a picture of the church) – prominently features the word: RE-CONNECT

Let's look at the theme "Re-connect." You could say we have already put up two significant wins since July 4 – resumption of the 11:00 am in-person Sunday service with safety protocols, and this hybrid meeting!

On Sunday, September 19, Unity of Fairfax will bring back “Homecoming,” an invitation to renew our relationships and re-connect with one another as members of Unity of Fairfax.

In concert with the Board, Staff, and our Unisync planning and vetting team, we decided to designate the Sunday closest to the Unity of Fairfax birthday (September 17) as “Homecoming Sunday.” The observance of “Homecoming” held in November in former years; and now is the time to bring it back. Owing to unknowns related to the pandemic, I am not sure yet how we will mark the occasion, but I do have three asks of you:

Slide 2 for Unity of Fairfax Homecoming Sunday on September 19, 2021

Three asks for the Unity of Fairfax Homecoming Sunday on September 19, 2021

1. Please share with Rev. Ron & me your ideas that can easily be implemented
2. Please volunteer to support this activity
3. Please encourage your Unity of Fairfax friends to join us either in person or via livestream on September 19.

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Slide: cover of the book *Trusting the Gold*, by Tara Brach – prominently features the word: RE-CONNECT

A second key initiative to support the “re-connect” theme is Unity Awakening 2021 that begins on October 3. Unity Awakening is our annual autumn series of Sunday messages and small groups – both virtual and in person – in which we ordinarily focus on the work of a Unity author. This year, we are making an exception by studying the words and wisdom of local and world-famous mediation teacher Tara Brach as shared in her new book, *Trusting the Gold: Uncovering Your*

Natural Goodness. Our Small Groups coordinator Donna Lee is already working on the study guide that will tie in the content of the book with foundational Unity teaching. The book is awesome, and I encourage you to order yours today. If you shop Amazon, use the Amazon Smile option and designate Unity of Fairfax as the beneficiary.

Small groups are highly effective in supporting the creation and development of relationships; and relationships are the heart and soul of any community, especially a dynamic faith community like ours. The Sunday series will end on November 7, which is, conveniently enough, the day of our 2021 Annual meeting.

Slide image of Social Justice page on the website – prominently features the word: RE-IMAGINE

Here's an opportunity to engage the "refirement" theme "re-imagine" that is very timely.

Beginning on Monday, September 20 the Unity of Fairfax Social Justice Team is promoting "From Apathy to Action" – an interactive online workshop whose focus is healing the underlying causes of racism. This program will be co-facilitated by Patty Hagan and her presentation partner from Unity of Albuquerque, NM.

Apathy was one focus of today's message, which is healed with enthusiasm: In this case, enthusiasm for supporting each person "in awakening to the Christ within." Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. invited the nation to image a world where individuals were judged not "by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Racism, by its very nature, not only denies the worth, i.e. the Christ within, of the victims of racism, but also its perpetrators – even those whose engagement of racism is unconscious. I'll be candid – learning about implicit bias is both humbling and liberating! By integrating the principles of this multi-part program, we can free ourselves from limiting paradigms and co-create, as a manifest reality, Dr. King's vision.

More information about this, and other social justice programs, is found on the Social Justice page on our website.

Slide prominently features the word: Re-AWAKEN image of the CCST page on the website

As a way of highlighting the “refirement” theme “re-awaken,” the Unity of Fairfax Compassionate Service Team is hosting two events on September 17 and 18 that focus on our commitment to supporting and valuing individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities. Recent events have brought into keen focus the imperative of promoting the interests and honoring the contributions of all individuals, and that includes these populations as well.

On the 17th, Unity of Fairfax will show the movie “Crip Camp.” “Crip Camp” focuses on teenage summer campers who turned themselves into activists for the disability rights movement and follows their fight for accessibility legislation.

On the 18th, the Compassionate Community Service Team is hosting a program entitled “The Power of Roles: A Path to a Life Like Yours.” Please join us for this virtual workshop where we will explore the power that valued social roles, such as employee, beloved older brother, and member of a club baseball team, have to lift people out of devaluation and open up the doorway to what the typical life of a valued citizen has to offer. Benefits include self-advocacy, self-respect, and overall better outcomes for marginalized people.

For more information on this and other programs, please visit the Compassionate Community Service Team’s page on our website.

Slide prominently features the word: RE-COMMIT

image of the Fresh Farm Farmers' Market at Unity of Fairfax (or a generic farmers' market) with the date and time: August 21, 2021, 9 am – 1 pm and russellheiland@unityoffairfax.org accountant@unityoffairfax.org

Although our reach is global and our mission is noble, we have the opportunity right now to build relationship with our local community as enthusiastic ambassadors of Unity of Fairfax. That is where you come in to empower the “refirement” theme “re-commit.”

Unity of Fairfax hosts a year-round farmers market; with over *620 customers who shop on our grounds every Saturday* during the peak summer months. It is time we introduce ourselves to them in an intentional manner; and we will do just that on Saturday, August 21 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

On that day, we will have an information table from which we will distribute reusable Unity of Fairfax shopping bags, each of which will contain information about our dynamic community. I am asking community members to take 1-hour shifts to hand out the bags and introduce Unity of Fairfax to shoppers. This is an extraordinarily easy opportunity to have an extraordinary impact on our immediate neighbors. Let's make sure they know we're open on Sundays, too!

To join me in this fun activity, simply email me and/or Patie Wilcox to let us know when you can promote this activity. Whether for one hour or more, your presence will make a huge positive impact!

In addition to these programs, our standing ministry teams continue to do their work of furthering the mission and vision of Unity of Fairfax and relationship building. Earlier today, you heard about the exciting work of the Prayer Chaplain Ministry, and in recent weeks, we have heard great news from EarthCare. could go on and on and on (wait, I did that already this morning!) about the fantastic contributions of all our ministry teams; but in the interest of time, I want to thank

all of our dedicated volunteers who have maintained their passion for service in these challenging times. You're all heroes and s/heroes, and you are appreciated!

And a big, heart-felt "thank you" to everyone who has continued to support Unity of Fairfax with your prayers and your pocketbooks.

Slide: From Retirement to Refirement – Unity of Fairfax at 65!

Speaking of money, it is love offerings, as a specific income category, that fuels our mission. As you are aware, church revenue, especially that from programs and rentals, has been and probably will remain far less than budgeted for this year; however, the financial health of the ministry directly affects our capacity to give shape and form to manifesting our mission and building our community. Thusly, I have shared these pieces of information and we have other programs and activities in the works. Damn the pandemic, full speed ahead!

To ensure our capacity to serve is both sustainable and viable, we recently mailed a fundraising letter to the Unity of Fairfax community inaugurating the fundraiser entitled *From Retirement to Refirement – Unity of Fairfax at 65!* which has as a goal generation of an additional \$65,000 (about what it costs to operate the church for one month) for our Operating Fund by year-end. I hope you received it. If not, Treasurer Richardson and I would be thrilled to ensure you get a copy!

In the letter, a variety of ways is suggested that will help us to reach that target. I have absolute faith that we will reach our goal, thereby avoiding the need to make difficult cost-cutting decisions. The heart of the fundraising has to do with making contributions above and beyond your regular giving that in some way tie in to the number 65 – such as 6.5% increase per giving period, 6.5% contribution based on earnings in the stock market, or one off gifts of \$6.50, \$65.00, \$650.00, \$6,500.00 or even \$65,000. Please somehow note "65" with your gift so Patie can track the progress of this appeal. If you would like to speak to me, Dave, or Patie privately about ideas you have to support this effort, please let us know.

I do have one more “ask” related to this campaign, and it may not seem prosperity-related, yet it is at the absolute core of any successful fundraising endeavor; and that is, what is the personal impact of the mission in people’s lives?

From my education in donor development, I learned that contributors and donors want to know how their gifts are making a difference in people’s lives... how individuals are experiencing spirit-driven transformation, and how the organization itself is facilitating transformation in the world. That’s where you come in.

From now through the end of the year, I want to highlight periodically in Sunday services and/or in our weekly emails stories that illustrate the meaningful impact Unity of Fairfax is having on you and/or how you see Unity of Fairfax making a meaningful impact in the world. Therefore, I am asking you – yes, all of you – to consider sharing for up to 3 minutes on the topic “how Unity has refired my life” or “how Unity is transforming the world.” Consider the four themes of the “refirement” campaign: re-connect, re-imagine, re-awaken, re-commit... how are they being manifested and demonstrated through Unity of Fairfax? How is our impact being felt in the minds and hearts and bodies of those whose lives we touch?

Our task in Unity ministry is not to ensure profits for the quarterly dividend for shareholders or even to win souls for the Lord. Our calling is to “awaken each life to the Christ within,” and confirmation of that is both felt and experienced in sacred stories of healing and transformation, connection and inspiration.

So, if you are willing, please contact me soonest. Now is the time. Your story, your holy witness is the proof in the pudding of the success of our mission, and sharing your story is the foundation upon which the next glorious 65 years of Unity of Fairfax will be built.

Thank you.