

UUFL Weekly Newsletter

Sunday, September 20, 10:45 AM

Program: "Doubts: Reconciling Old Beliefs With New Ones"

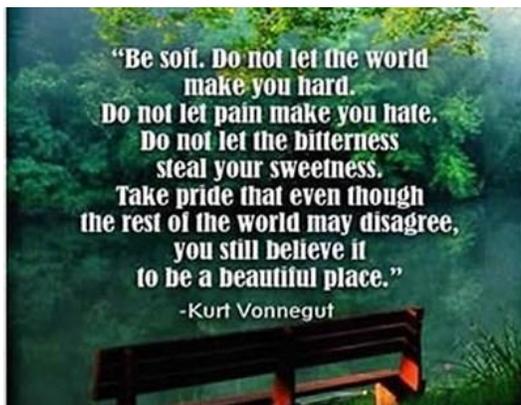
Join us for our first combined onsite and Zoom service, Sunday, September 20, 2020. Tina Rushing will be sharing with us "How do UUs connect the old with the new? " Whether on-site or Zoom, I am sure you will enjoy Tina's presentation.



Zoom Sunday Service Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8780546386?pwd=dIFMVHNRSDcwS1N0TE5aazlUWnVadz09>

Carol's Words of Wisdom Collection:



UUFL Financial Support:

Those of you who wish to contribute financially can mail your contributions to:
UUFL P O Box 3451 Longview, TX 75606. If you would like to contribute electronically, contact Tammy.
1021der@gmail.com

Our Favorite Story Teller (A Room of Her Own, with a Door She Can Lock)



My first acquaintance with homeless people began when I worked as a nurse at the local VA Hospital. On the Chemical Dependency floor, we had a number of homeless fellows who came to us now and then, when they needed to come indoors for a while. They were alcoholics and other addicts who lived on the tiny income our government doles out to its elderly and its chronically ill, at that time just about \$650 a month. A person couldn't afford housing and food for a month on that little money. One of the guys had a solution he liked – he would spend his check in the first two weeks of the month, renting a motel room and stocking it with alcohol and whatever it was that he ate, and for two weeks he'd be comfortable. Then he'd live as a homeless person for the remainder of the month. Three of our fellows pooled their resources and managed together, sometimes finding lodging and other times sleeping in an abandoned swing set factory in Bossier City. This worked for them until the unusually cold winter morning when two of them awoke to find the third dead of hypothermia. One stayed on in the Gym Dandy factory, and the other came to VA and checked in with us. He was, at first, determined to get sober, stay sober, and find a way to live under a roof. He endured Detox and then did well in Rehab until his camping-out partner got lonely and came to collect him. Their way of living was what they were accustomed to, and they would continue it. I've never seen either of them in the newspaper frozen to death, and I retired from VA in 2006, so I don't know if they're still living, and if they are living, I don't know how they're managing nowadays.

Some of our guys seemed to make an extended Boy Scout camping trip out of homelessness. One asked me to keep his pickle bucket in my office for the day, and at my request, he showed me its contents. I'm not sure I can remember all of them, but I do remember that he had a bar of soap, a length of garden hose with the fitting for attaching to someone's outdoor faucet, a hand can opener and a fork. He could stay clean, or clean enough, and he could eat from a can. And he had a paperback book, so he carried his entertainment. He talked with pride about his ability to cope with living outdoors and assured me that the Army had prepared him well for this way of life.

Another told me more than once that the problem with sobriety was that he would get "Sick and tired of being sober," and so he would return to drinking. Those of us who've lived part of our lives in AA meetings know the phrase, "Sick and tired of being sick and tired," and he had apparently, heard enough of that phrase to figure out what it was that he really couldn't stand – sobriety. He had a wife and a daughter, but neither of them would have anything to do with him after all the years of promises and binges. He was proud and happy when an old woman down the street from VA told him he was welcome to live under her porch. Over the years we watched him die by inches, and there was nothing we could do about it. An alcoholic who is drinking is on a downward trajectory, and nothing short of incarceration can stop some of us. We weren't empowered to

incarcerate anybody, and so we watched our friend die. Slowly. And sometimes we cried about him. We cried softly, and only when we were alone.

Two of our vets, a man, and a woman, found each other there in Rehab at VA, and they developed a plan for living together, pooling their checks and their wits. They finished Rehab and moved into one of Shreveport's largest homeless camps, the one between Holy Cross Episcopal Church and the railroad. They had a tent and lived a pretty organized life in it, and they became the de facto parents for the camp, two sober people who could provide counsel and other help to less fortunate members of their community. I remember how very much they looked like Santa and Mrs. Claus. And again, I don't know how their lives worked out over the long haul, but when I drive past Holy Cross I think fondly of them, and I wish them well.

One of our Social Workers was assigned the task of outreach to the homeless, and another Social Worker made me laugh telling me how afraid June was of the homeless. "I can just picture her," she said, "driving into the camp and cracking the window of her Cadillac just enough to throw a handful of her business cards out, and then yelling, 'Y'all call me, you hear?'" before she hightails it out of that scary place." I suppose the Social Work Supervisor had asked for volunteers and found none – hence, the assignment.

After I retired, I lost contact with our VA homeless population, but later I became acquainted with another set of the homeless when I began volunteering at Hope Connections. This is a facility that provides day-time services to the homeless while working to connect them with agencies in our area that can help them, especially toward finding housing. I got to sit in on some of the weekly meetings of the representatives of those agencies, and it was both encouraging and discouraging to listen as they discussed one person after another who needed housing. From a list of about fifty homeless people who were registered with Hope Connections, they might find housing for five or six on a good day. And meanwhile, I got to sit in on counseling sessions with homeless women, and on other days I set up a table with art materials for anyone who wanted to draw and paint. This way I got to listen to a lot of people who were coping with being homeless. I got to watch some amazing talent as well. One man had been a commercial artist, and he taught all the rest of us some lovely tricks with paint and brushes.

In group counseling sessions with the women, I heard a mother tell about spending the night outdoors with her mate and their baby. She cried as she told us about trying to keep the mosquitoes away from her little one. That haunts me. Parenting can be a hard assignment sometimes, but I'd never heard of anything that awful. Well, yes, there are the stories from the Concentration Camps, but not here in Shreveport!

One woman told us several times about the home she and her mate had made under a local bridge. They wandered the area panhandling, and as they went, they found good stuff and carried it back to their bridge shelter. They had a mattress and covers so that they could sleep comfortably. She had built herself a stove with someone's discarded grate and some cement blocks to support it. She told us proudly that other homeless people would pool their change to buy her the ingredients for meatloaf, and she'd cook it for the gathering. A dinner party under the bridge – who'd have imagined it? She was proud and happy telling her tales of Gracious

Outdoor Living, and I marveled at her ingenuity and her courage. But then there came the day when she fought tears as she told us that their outdoor living space had been raided and destroyed. While they were away from their bridge, others had trashed the home they had made and taken everything they had treasured. Their home was gone. Sometimes tears are probably the best response we can make to another's sorrow.

Christa Pazzaglia, my wonderful friend who ran the day shelter, used to say that "Every woman needs a room of her own and a door she can lock behind herself." Probably every man does too. This is one of the reasons nobody should live under a bridge. I think I'd add windows with screens, so that the baby, and his parents, don't have to contend with the mosquitoes, and come winter, I want a safe source of heat for each of us. Certainly, a pickle bucket can carry our necessities, but a porch, a bridge, or an abandoned factory shouldn't be our only shelter. And before I'd roughed it very long, I'd want more accouterments than a pickle bucket can carry. Camping trips are only fun for a little while. And in the wealthiest country on Planet Earth, surely we can afford to provide the basic necessities for even the saddest of us. Enough to eat, and a room of our own with a door we can lock.

Sherry K.

UU humor:

When live church resumes

<https://youtu.be/CrnXQo5Ja0w?t=161>

2020 Election:

Gregg and surrounding counties are looking for election poll workers for the November general election. This could be a way for you to contribute some time and energy.