



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

CONGREGATION OF FREDERICK

Seventh-Generation Thinking

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The Sixth Source of Unitarian Universalism is “Earth-centered Traditions.” Part of the wisdom we draw from this source is the importance of “Seventh-Generation Thinking”: considering the impact of our actions even to the seventh generation to follow. Or as I have heard this perspective phrased: the invitation is to see yourself as the midpoint of a seven-generation span — such that **ethical decisions should try to honor the wisdom of the three generations that preceded you (back to your great-grandparents) and to consider the legacy you are leaving for the three generations that will follow you (your great-grandchildren)**.

Our annual Transitions Service is an ideal time to consider the ripples that flow from generation to generation. In particular, this is a time for honoring of high school graduates. And one of the tools I have found most helpful in shifting my perspective to keep current with each new crop of graduates — since they are always around 18, and we all keep getting older — is the “Mindset List,” which is released every August by Beloit College to help professors “be aware of dated references.” The most recent Mindset List includes 55 “cultural touchstones that shape the lives of students entering college,” but I’ll share only my favorite “Top 10.” For current college freshmen, keep in mind that:

1. Among those who have never been alive in their lifetime are Tupac Shakur... and Carl Sagan.

2. On Parents's Weekend, they may want to watch out in case Madonna shows up to see daughter Lourdes...or Sylvester Stallone comes to see daughter Sophia.
3. When they see wire-rimmed glasses, they think Harry Potter, not John Lennon.
4. Their collection of U.S. quarters has always celebrated the individual states.
5. "Press pound" on the phone is now translated as "hit hashtag."
6. Celebrity "selfies" are far cooler than autographs.
7. Women have always attended the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel.
8. Courts have always been overturning bans on same-sex marriages.
9. [Thanks to Dolly the sheep,] cloning has always been a fact, not science fiction.
10. Women have always been dribbling, and occasionally dunking, in the WNBA, and female referees have always officiated NBA games.

And since we've been talking a lot about UU history this spring, I'm also reminded on this transitions Sunday when we celebrate high school graduates (most of whom were born in 1997, the year *after* I graduated high school) that,

- When King John Sigismund of Transylvania [history's only Unitarian king] issued his [landmark] Act of [Religious] Toleration [in 1568] he was twenty-eight.
- When James Freeman led his King's Chapel parishioners in removing all the Trinitarian references from their prayer book [in 1783], he was twenty-eight.
- And when Ezra Gannett helped to found the American Unitarian Association and was elected its secretary, he was twenty-four. (149)

The invitation becomes for us and for upcoming generations not only to *study* UU history, but to join together across generations to *make* UU history.

Jasmine, we have been honored and privileged to accompany you up to this point on your spiritual journey through this life. We — the three-plus generations who precede you — have sought to create a theologically-liberal religious community that would nurture you in the best

sense of that word liberal: open to new ideas, generous, openhanded, open-hearted, and open-minded. As you go out into the world, we charge you with living out the UU values you have been taught: freedom, reason, pluralism, interdependence, standing on the side of love, building the Beloved Community. And we hope that you will pass these values on to the generations to follow you. We look forward to seeing all that you will do with your life. And know you that whether you are near and far, our hearts and best wishes go with you.