



September 2016 UNiverse

NWUUC NORTHWEST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

What Is Religion?

Dear Friends,

This question came up for me twice this past week.

The first time was with a fellow Unitarian Universalist, who said that he thought that our religion really wasn't a religion at all. "We have no God, no creation myth, no afterlife myth, no sacred text," he wrote me. "Our true guide is not a god or a great spirit. It is the 'human condition' as revealed through history, philosophy, psychology, neurology, sociology. Our sacred text is the natural world revealed through science." I didn't disagree.

The second time was during a conversation with a fellow recovering friend of mine, who was asked by someone whether 12-step programs weren't really a religion. My friend noted that our program's commonly used textbook could be considered our sacred text and the 12 steps to achieving and maintaining a sober and clean life our doctrine. "And," he added, "we encourage members to develop faith in a god of their own understanding. Doesn't all of this make our program religious?" I didn't disagree.

For me, the question "What is religion?" is a hard one to answer because it has so many answers. As I reflected on it some more, I decided

to go to the Internet to see what others were saying.

The simplest – and broadest – definition came from Merriam-Webster, which read "Religion is an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group." This definition suggests that *anything* that is of utmost significance in one's life could be considered a religion—



including guitar playing, arguing about politics, spending time with children, or following UGA football. I can go along with that, but think religion is also something more.

For a definition that, perhaps, gets to the collective whole of what religion is, I found a helpful one on the website "Common Sense Atheism." Attributed to James C. Livingston, a former professor of religious studies at the College of William and Mary, it reads:

"Religion is that system of activities and beliefs directed toward that which

is perceived to be of sacred value and transforming power."

For me, the key phrase in Livingston's definition is "that which is perceived to be of sacred value and transformative power." Who or what is *that*? God? Acceptance and love? Human creativity and intelligence? The amazing natural world?

Whatever the *that* is for each of us, my guess is that we each can think of something that is sacred to us and has the ability to transform us. My hope is that Unitarian Universalism is the system of activities and beliefs – the religion – that helps you connect to yours.

My hope is that this is the religion that invites you to discover and live into your best self, supports you in your highest and lowest moments, and challenges you to expand your view of the world and your place in it.

I hope this religion – Unitarian Universalism – is the religion for you. And, I hope that, together, we can celebrate it, grow with it, and work for its vibrant future.

Warmly,

Terry
Rev. Terry Davis

Worship Services for September 2016

Service at 10:00 am

Reflecting on Saints

The Nursery is staffed and available during services and Fellowship.

Our Sunday worship services are led by our minister Rev. Terry Davis, guest ministers or members of the Northwest Worship Associates team. Additional information about the coming week's service is published in the weekly NeUUs and on our website. Not getting the NeUUs? Contact Office Administrator Shirley Banks at office@nwuuc.org to sign up.

September 4 – Responding to Islamophobia

Worship Leader – Earl Daniels

Worship Associate – Hannah Cowart

Music – Northwest Passage and Join-in Choir



As justice-seeking UUs, we need to know how to respond anytime anyone is oppressed. When is the time and place to speak up when you witness hateful actions or words towards Muslims? How can you stand in solidarity with Muslims? We will explore how to respond to Islamophobia, and how our responses become a part of ending oppression of all humans.

Earl Daniels is studying for the Unitarian Universalist ministry. He currently serves as an intern at the Atlanta community of L'Arche, a high-impact international federation of over 140 communities worldwide. L'Arche's mission is to build community with people of all abilities and to help our society imagine the human family differently, inspiring others to similar initiatives.



September 11 – 9/11: Stories and Lessons

Worship Leader – Rev. Terry Davis

Worship Associate – Hannah Cowart

Music – The Northwest Choir and Dr. Grace Fowler

Today marks the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attack on our nation. As we reflect on this tragic day, what are some of the stories that recall the best of human nature? What lessons have we learned about ourselves, our capacity for love, and our quest for peace?

September 18 – Our UU Saints

Worship Leader – Rev. Terry Davis

Worship Associate – Lynne Dale

Music – Northwest Passage

Miracles and saints aren't just for other faith traditions – we have them, too! Come discover who our Unitarian Universalist saints are and how their deeds changed lives and helped shape our progressive faith.



Worship Services for September 2016

Service at 10:00 am

Reflecting on Saints

September 25 – We Who Defy Hate

Worship Leader – Rev. Terry Davis

Worship Associate – Jay Kiskel

Music – Dr. Grace Fowler



In 1939, Rev. Waitstill and Martha Sharp – a Unitarian minister and his wife – left their children behind in the care of their Wellesley, Massachusetts parish and boldly committed to a life-threatening mission in Europe. Over two dangerous years, they helped to save scores of imperiled Jews and refugees fleeing Nazi occupation. On Tuesday, September 20 on PBS, filmmaker Ken Burns and director Artemis Jourkowsky tell their compelling story in their documentary *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*. On this Sunday, we examine the courage of the Sharps and how these times are calling us to summon our own.

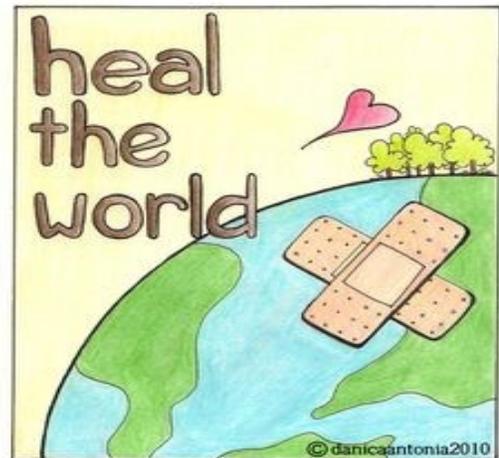
October 2 – Blessing the World with Forgiveness

Worship Leader – David Stewart

Worship Associate – Tony Barbagallo

Music – The Northwest Choir

Unitarian Universalists have been called to heal a hurting world. What practices can we implement in our life to maintain right relationships? What does it mean to truly let go of a slight, an injury, or a devastating event? Does forgiveness require an extended olive branch?



Last Call!

Northwest All Congregation Retreat, October 7-9

Last call for our NWUUC All Congregation Retreat October 7-9 at our Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. Our retreat workshop this year, *Peace Begins With Me - Intro to Compassionate Communication*, led by Nonviolent Communication facilitator LeAnne McDaniel, couldn't be more timely in these troubled times. Learn what you can do to make your part of our world more peaceful and compassionate. Our youth will have their own activities while the adults are in their workshop. Then, hike, play, relax, eat well, connect with new friends in our shared community at this magical place on top of The Mountain.

Rates are \$180.00 per adult for two nights, youth 8-17 \$70.00, children 0-7 FREE. Single room: add-on \$35.00 per night.

Register at www.TheMountainRLC.org, or 828-526-5838. Credit cards are accepted, except Amex. For more information contact Penny Raney, Rebecca Cabral, Mani or Ruth Subramanian. A detailed schedule is also available in The Mountain notebook on the What's Happening table in the foyer. Need partial /full scholarship? Let Mani know your financial need.

Board Focus: Vision to Action



implementation steps of our Safer Congregation Policy. We will encourage participation in racial justice work and in the North Georgia UU Social Justice Cluster. We will support our ministry team leaders in the work of strengthening our ministries.

Developing strong leadership and maintaining continuity of processes may make you yawn and say ho hum. However, if we don't have strong leaders and strong leadership development, we risk our

Our new Northwest board members gathered in July to review progress and to establish new goals for 2016-2017. We asked ourselves some tough questions, such as what would success look like? What can we do to move the congregation's vision to a reality? What can we do to ensure progress and follow through?

One of our key goals this year is to move our congregation's vision into action in a way that keeps the dialogue open. Our visioning themes include being a beacon for UUism and a harbor from the storms of our daily lives. What we heard from the congregation is that we want to be welcoming, have an engaging worship service and offer meaningful programming. We want to improve our facilities and grounds to provide space for fellowship and worship. We want to provide a strong RE program for families and adult learning. We want to be engaged in social justice within the community and spread the word about UUism and Northwest. One of our first steps as a board will be to work with a UUA consultant to establish an action plan and a timeline. We will continue to communicate with the congregation on our progress.

There are three goals established by the outgoing board that we are continuing to work on this year: becoming more engaging, developing continuity of leadership and processes, and building our financial future. There are many ways we can foster engagement and be welcoming. We will be exploring the UUA LGBTQ Welcoming Congregation Refresher program. We plan to move forward with

health as a congregation. Being diligent with the storage and access of past processes respects the work of past boards and helps us move forward with new business.

This year, our board will be working on refining our decision-making processes and establishing guidelines so we will be nimble while being transparent in making decisions and following through with action. I've heard some frustration by members that we decide to do things and then nothing ever happens—a joy killer for sure. Our hope is to change that frustration into joyful participation.

Building our financial future continues to be a top priority for the board. At the congregational meeting in May, members supported a plan to explore a capital campaign. The board will be working with a UUA consultant over the next few months to see what a capital campaign might do for Northwest. We talked about improving our facilities,



2016 UUMN Conference

This year's UU Musician's Network Conference was held in Madison, WI for a fun and enlightening five days. This was my fourth annual conference. Each year, I find myself getting a little more involved.

I was honored and thrilled to play guitar in two of the four morning services. I played with some terrific musicians, including Northwest's former music director, Sarah Dan Jones, and I learned a few good songs that I'll introduce to our band and choir.

On the final day, I played for somebody else's workshop, and then presented my own, titled "Building the Band." I recruited a band for this workshop, but we couldn't find a time and place for everyone to meet. Instead, I met with one or two musicians at a time and put it all together for the first time in the workshop. My workshop dealt with issues that arise in starting and developing a contemporary band for UU congregations. The program was well received, and I already have some ideas for another.

I made more personal connections this year than I have in the past, probably because I played a lot of guitar with



others. I'm quite shy about talking with people unless I have a guitar in my hands which gives me a "safe" way to interact with other conference attendees. As a result of my deeper connections, I'm planning a joint workshop with another UU music director. If our proposal is accepted, we'll present a workshop on musical improvisation.

During our choral reading sessions, we sang our way through a pile of choral music. This is normally a good way to preview new music for the choir. The pickings were slim last year, but they made up for it this time. The choir can look forward to learning a lot of new music this year!

There were so many good things about this year's conference that I couldn't fit it all into a newsletter article. You can visit my [blog](#) to read more about it.

Tom Godfrey
Director of Music

LUUnch BUUnch Discusses Islam, September 21 and October 19

On September 21 and October 19, Greg Pattison will give a presentation on Islam during LUUnch BUUnch. Greg has spent almost three years in the Middle East learning about the culture, religion, geography and systems of government.

As you may be aware, Islam may be the most misunderstood religion on the planet right now. What is it that you know about Islam, other than from propaganda or distortion?

So come learn about Islam's beginnings; the split of Islam; their age of enlightenment; their revival; the first terrorists; their history; and how they want to be

viewed in today's world. Learn what the different schools of Islam are; the role of the Qur'an; what are hadiths, Pillars of Islam, Hafiz, and jihad. What is UDHR, and where is Islam headed?



Bring your questions and concerns, and be prepared for an informative and exciting opportunity to learn. Remember to bring your lunch.

LUUnch BUUnch meets from 11:45 am to 1:15 pm in the Art Gallery on the third Wednesday of most months.

Earth Ministry: New Team Leaders and Upcoming Programs

Do human beings have more in common with apes or ants? Do the insects, plants and animals matter as much as humans in the life of the earth? Should we make biodiversity and the setting aside of habitats for nonhuman species top priorities in order to stop the Sixth Extinction? Or do we redouble efforts to advance a human centric world?

New Earth Ministry Team Leaders

Tom and Linda Couch will host programs in September and October addressing such concerning questions by focusing on environmental and conservation thought-leaders and their solutions for saving the earth. The first Second Hour session will introduce you via video presentation to Edward O. Wilson, a quiet-spoken entomologist who began by studying insects and became an outspoken giant of scientific thought and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for his work on what it is to be human and how we can turn around the damage done to the earth. We will focus on the concepts and



solutions Wilson presents in his 2016 book *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*. The video segment will be followed by our own group discussion. Look for announcements in UNiVerse, NeUUS and emails about this upcoming October program.

In September we encourage you to come to the Second Hour program on the mosquito-borne Zika virus. Though not sponsored by Earth Ministry, our own fellow Northwest member Rebecca Cabral, a health educator at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will be making the presentation. Earth

Ministry will follow up by including a brief discussion in our Second Hour program in October on what thought-leader Edward Wilson's opinion is on the *Aedes aegypti*, the Zika carrying mosquito.

Also in September plan to attend the Earth Ministry Pot Luck Dinner at Dave Zenner's house where we will discuss fresh plans for the coming year as well as continuation of initiatives such as our work with West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA), keeping track of what Georgia Water Coalition and our Georgia legislators are doing, maintaining Northwest's Green Sanctuary status, monitoring our solar and power consumption, a future discussion on climate change, as well as plans for a video panel discussion on how environmental problems and social justice intersect. Check your emails and Northwest publications for details. Questions? Contact Tom or Linda at tcouch4921@aol.com or [706/346-1634](tel:7063461634).

Something to Think About



How about forming geography-based social groups? Long-time Northwest members may remember color groups - Red, Blue, Brown (which became Chocolate) many years ago. Think potluck

suppers or other activities (hikes, picnics, etc.) or whatever the group decides.

Think about once-a-month or every other month. Think about East Cobb, West Cobb, Chamblee-Dunwoody, Intown, Gwinnett County, where else? Think about hosting and being a coordinator of your group. Think about signing up Sunday mornings in September. Contact [Ruth Subramanian](mailto:Ruth.Subramanian@nwuuc.org), [770.452.1921](tel:770.452.1921) with questions.

Save the Date: Northwest 101, Oct. 22

Have you been wondering if membership at Northwest is the next step for you? Interested in learning about Unitarian Universalism and the Northwest UU Congregation? If so, please plan to attend the semi-annual Northwest 101 class on Saturday, October 22, 9 am - noon.

Recent visitors and friends will receive an invitation. Please contact [Ruth Subramanian](mailto:Ruth.Subramanian@nwuuc.org), [770/452-1921](tel:770.452.1921) for more information.



Adult Learning for September 2016

Northwest's Adult Learning program and topics are developed and conducted by members and friends of the congregation, guest speakers representing outside organizations, or our minister. Adult Learning opportunities encompass a wide variety of interesting and challenging topics, including social justice and human rights issues, spiritual growth and practice, UU history, environmental and sustainability issues, building a sense of community, personal growth and development, and living our UU Principles in the wider world. Learning sessions are held in various rooms on the church campus from 11:30-12:30 during Second Hour, the hour immediately following the post-worship refreshment break. Check the weekly publications for room assignments.

You are invited to participate in our Adult Learning program by attending sessions, suggesting learning topics for future sessions, and/or offering your services as a session leader. To submit suggestions, please contact Laura Hall at laurahallatl@gmail.com or Harry Trendell at geogprof@hotmail.com.

September 11

CDC Work on the Zika Virus

Session Leader: Rebecca Cabral

Rebecca Cabral will describe her experiences on a CDC Zika Response deployment, including the cultural and religious factors that affect prevention strategies on this South Pacific island.



Open Meditation

Session Leader: Gregory Byrd

What is meditation? How to do it? What can the benefits be? Learn this and more in *Open Meditation*. The "Open" means we are open to all, regardless of religion or lack thereof. Religious origins and aspects of meditation will certainly be discussed, as will the recent scientific research into the topic. The topic is usually chosen by the participants.

For our first session on September 11, we will show the Susan Piver video about meditation, which is an excellent introduction to the first of the two basic types of medita-

tion, stability meditation (it has many names and varieties). The video is fairly short, followed by discussion and practice of meditation. Chairs are provided!



In our second and third sessions (October 9 and 16), we will watch and discuss *The Dhamma Brothers*. This documentary gives a great view of the usefulness of the second type of meditation, analytical meditation (often called Vipassana) as well as an intense look at the realities of Alabama's prison system. An interesting preview to the topic, you might like to first view *Doing Time, Doing Vipassana*, which is a documentary about the original use in India of meditation in prison. Needless to say, introducing the practice into Alabama was more challenging . . .

September 18

CUUPS Mabon Ritual

Session Leader: Cynthia Flot

Please join Hawks Hoop CUUPS as we celebrate Mabon, the mid-harvest festival. This is the time when we take a few moments to honor the changing seasons and celebrate the second harvest. We will gather on the back porch for this ritual at 11:00 am.



Continued on page 9

September 25



Fellowship/Small Group Sunday

One of our favorite activities at Northwest is connecting with others over a cup of coffee and a light snack, greeting our visitors, getting to know newer members/attendees, and learning about and supporting one another. While we have the opportunity to do this most Sundays during the post-worship refreshment break and immediately prior to Second Hour, it's sometimes nice to have a longer uninterrupted time for fellowship. To provide this opportunity, the Learning Ministry has designated the fourth Sunday of

each month as Fellowship Sunday. Enjoy this time to make those connections we so cherish within our community!

In addition to fellowship, the fourth Sunday also supports small group ministry. Any small group that would like a space to meet is welcome to do so on Fellowship Sunday. Please note, this time is set aside for ministry groups and therefore is not appropriate for business meetings.

Small-Group Meetings on Fellowship Sunday:

Northwest Senior Network

Session Leaders: Renee and Mike Burke

The Senior Network is one of Northwest's small group ministries, comprised of seniors, retirees, grandparents, and caregivers, who gather to discuss life issues, provide support to one another, and plan social activities at various times and places around town. Their regularly recurring monthly meeting is held during Second Hour on each fourth Sunday of the month in the Art Gallery at Northwest. If you would like to join the group and be added to the email distribution list, please send your name and phone number to Renee and Mike Burke at renee-andmike@mindspring.com. Or just come to the gathering in the Art Gallery to meet other group members and join in the fun.

Share the Plate: Atlanta Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity partners with working families, sponsors, and communities to build affordable, green, quality homes and to provide support services that promote successful home purchase and ownership.

Share the Plate for September is supporting Atlanta Habitat for Humanity. Atlanta Habitat is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing and to making adequate, affordable housing a matter of conscience and action. In 1983, a group of concerned and motivated individuals in Atlanta founded a local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. Atlanta Habitat is now one of the largest affordable single-family housing developers in the city, and is one of the largest of 1,500 affiliates of Habitat for Humanity in the United States.

In addition, Northwest is supporting Habitat for Humanity by participating in an Interfaith Build Project in September. The interfaith program brings together religious communities from across the metro area to collaborate on a house build over eight weeks. This year's interfaith includes temples, mosques, churches, congregations and

fellowships of all types. NWUUC members will be participating on September 18 for the day.

Please open your hearts and wallets to this worthy cause. Half of all non-designated funds collected during services starting August 28 through September 25 will go to the Habitat of Atlanta. If you wish, you can designate all of your donation to go to the organization. Why are we starting early? Well Labor Day weekend is one of the only weekends of the year that Habitat Employees get off, since most volunteer builds happen on the weekend. So Holly Hart of Habitat will visit us the week before to kick off the share the plate and answer our questions about the Interfaith Build and other programs.



September Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays

Tiley Rooks	09/02
Kyle Thomas	09/04
Joyce Buis	09/05
Cynthia Flot	09/07
Marilyn Matlock	09/08
Jaiya Thomas	09/10
Lily Alford	09/13
Kim Rask	09/13
Karen Edmonds	09/18
Keith Kreycik	09/27

Joining Anniversaries

Caroline Romines	09/04/2011
Nancy Wylie	09/04/2011
Constance Dierickx	09/08/1991
Michael Dierickx	09/08/1991
Flore Vinton	09/10/2006
Thomas Vinton	09/10/2006
Linton Hopkins	09/11/2004
Elizabeth Hickman	09/14/1998
Dempsey Hickman	09/14/1998
Tony Barbagallo	09/15/1996
Kristen Fowks	09/15/1996
Brian Freeman	09/21/2003
Pam Freeman	09/21/2003
Maurice Frank	09/26/2004
Mark Perloe	09/30/1990
Mary Perloe	09/30/1990



Bob Thacker's Art on Exhibit in September and October

During the months of September and October, our Art Gallery will exhibit the works of Northwest member Bob Thacker.

Throughout his life, Bob has always been interested in the arts. He began drawing early in his life, but first took formal art lessons in his mid-fifties.

Bob has a very eclectic 45-year background as a former business owner, corporate manager, educator, engineer and scientist, author, and university professor.

His art is also very eclectic, including works in pastels, water colors,

acrylics, and oils. He has won blue ribbon awards for his pastels from the Dunwoody Art Society Festival and Southern Polytechnic State University Art Festival.

Stop by the Art Gallery this month and take a look!



UNiverse

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Hello, September!

September 4

Worship Service, 10:00 am
Activity Time, 10:15 am, CH
Band Rehearsal, 11:30 am

September 7

Choir, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

September 10

Bill Woolf Memorial Service,
2:00 pm, Sanctuary

September 11

Worship Service, 10:00 am
Activity Time, 10:15 am, CH
Open Meditation, 11:30 am
CDC Work on the Zika Virus, 11:30
am

September 13

Book Groupies, 7:00 pm

September 14

Choir, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

September 18

Worship Service, 10:00 am
Activity Time, 10:15 am
RE Potluck, 11:30 am, CH
CUUPS Mabon Ritual, 11:00 am
Band Rehearsal, 11:30 am

September 21

Choir, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

September 25

Worship Service, 10:00 am
Activity Time, 10:15 am
RE, 11:30 am, CH
Fellowship Sunday, 11:30 am
Senior Network, 11:30 am

September 28

Choir, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

CH=Chalice House

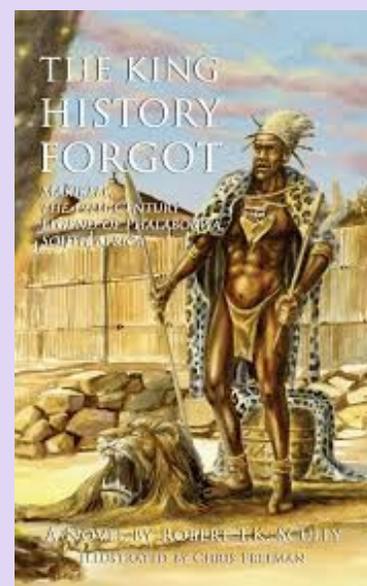
Book Groupies: *The King History Forgot, September 13*

The Northwest Book Groupies will discuss *The King History Forgot* by author and Northwest member Dr. Robert Scully at 7:00 pm on September 13 in the Art Gallery.

This historical novel is based on the oral traditions of the South African Ba-Phalaborwa tribe which Dr. Scully collected during his years as a Peace Corps volunteer with them. This is an engrossing and educational story of 19th century South Africa informed by Dr. Scully's knowledge of the archaeology and anthropology of the area.

All proceeds from Dr. Scully's book bought at our bookstore will go to Northwest. We will also choose our books for the next few months at this meeting.

The Book Groupies meet the second Tuesday of most months. All readers are welcome to join us!





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1025 Mt. Vernon Highway, NW, Sandy Springs, GA 30327

A Member Congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association

September 2016 UNiverse Newsletter

Publications Available Online

If you have a print version of the UNiverse and want more information about any programs featured here or about others happening this month, please go to our website (nwuuc.org) and access the electronic version under the Publications tab. You can use the live links in these electronic publications to easily contact event organizers and while you're there, you can read more about our congregation, its programs and services.

Northwest UUC Mission Statement

Our congregation creates loving community, inspires joy and spiritual growth, and supports courageous action.

Unitarian Universalist Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- ◆ The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

- ◆ Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- ◆ Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- ◆ A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- ◆ The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- ◆ The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- ◆ Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.