

## UUAC Monthly Theme

### February 2022 — Mending

To make mistakes is to be human. Different civilizations throughout time and space have defined their gods as perfect; their word is law. Therefore, to slip up, to break something, is to be a person. But if everything that everyone broke was allowed to remain broken, then our world would be in ruins. So then, to mend is also to be human. It is said that civilization grew from the mending of damage, the fixing of problems, the revolutions against broken systems. History is a patchwork that has been sewn and darned and patched together again and again.

The reverse is also true. Clothing has history, and mends show that history in a most beautiful way. Just by looking at a garment, it is possible to learn so much about the person who wore it. The spots that have been worn through indicate the wearer's movements and habits. Stains tell the story of a particular incident. There are some who attempt to cover up these marks of humanity. To match a thread color perfectly and reweave the worn area. To take a piece of fabric from an unseen place and under-patch a hole to close it. Being able to mend invisibly is an art, but it is a talent that is much more difficult for the everyday person. It requires learning, time, and patience: things that are hard to find in this day and age. But that is okay. Because the fun lies in mending the mistakes visibly. Let it be known that damage was done to the area by highlighting it with bright embroidery or a contrasting patch. Take the opportunity of the original integrity being compromised to make the broken part more delightful, and more you. If a mistake is made while mending, then it is all part of the fun. Embrace the imperfections and make them more beautiful by embellishing them. The purpose of mending is not to return the garment to its original state, but rather to make it wearable again.

Mending is very much a practice in sustainability. With the rise of fast-fashion— throw-away clothes meant to be worn for a season and then discarded at an alarming rate— taking care of the clothes that you have is a rebellion against capitalistic conspicuous consumption and those who wish to sell you cheap goods to fill a hole in your heart. Instead, cover that hole with a heart-shaped patch in your favorite color. Participate in “slow” fashion and cherish the fabric you already have. Repair the things to make them last longer. Take the time to sit down with your worn clothes and look back on the memories they gave you. If you would rather do it quickly just to make your clothes wearable again, put on a TV show or a podcast in the background and get your hands busy.

There may be times when what is left is too far gone to be repaired. Now is not the time to throw out the entire piece. It is time to salvage the scraps. Combine several destroyed things together into a patchwork quilt celebrating the memories of the originals. Use your favorite piece to mend something else, and maybe then toss the rest into the trash (or to a textile donation center), out of sight and out of mind.

There are instances when mending may not be the most logical choice. Maybe the original was too cheaply made, and the time it will take to spend mending it will be longer than the time it will take for the stitches to fall through and the hole to reappear. It is okay to get rid of things, as long as it is not done too often. Sometimes, the choice not to mend will be a good thing. The damage done may be beautiful. The history that lies there is so dear, so storytelling, that to fix any part of it would be to detract from the memories. There is a crack, or a threadbare patch, in everything. That is how the light gets in. After all, if everything were left in its initial condition, and nothing was broken in, the world would be a very uncomfortable place.

The purpose of clothing is to be worn. The purpose of life is to be lived. Don't be afraid to get out there and make a few mistakes. There is a needle and thread waiting at home to put the pieces back together and let you continue.

Mending applies to all aspects of life: the most obvious being clothing, but perhaps the more important application being relationships, which are so often in need of patching and repair. I invite you to reread this theme, and see how the metaphors may connect with human behavior, and with your own life.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. Do you tend to mend things? What type of things do you mend?
2. How do you discern if something is worth mending or not?
3. How do you mend? Do you take your time? Do you procrastinate? Do you spend the energy to make it last?
4. What's the difference between mending, fixing, and healing?
5. What are ways that you can make things last longer?
6. What are ways you can participate in slow fashion, rather than contributing to fast fashion?
7. Is it possible to mend something for someone else?
8. When is mending not enough? When do you need to rebuild from scratch instead?
9. If something is beyond repair, can it be used to create something new?

10. If you mend something enough times, so that all the parts are replaced, is it still fundamentally the same?

### **Readings and Quotations**

“Mending has baggage. Patched clothing speaks of shame and poverty and drudgery, even of slavery. But mending is a big word. It’s about repairing more than just clothes. History, for example, which must be unpicked and remade, healing systemic injustice, making reparations, exposing scars. Clothes historians do this via what we wear, which turns out to be more important than we realized. Visible menders do it literally, by stitching new stories onto the worn fabric of our lives. They’re just clothes, but if enough people adopted more creative ways of sourcing, tending, and mending then, we’d fix much that’s wrong with the world.”

- Kate Sekules

“There are the movers and shakers of the world.  
and then there are the menders.  
The menders are the innocent and the wise.  
They are innocent of cynicism and despair,  
and they are wise in not waiting for the world to be otherwise than it is.  
They patch up the wounds the world inflicts on itself  
without question and without grimace.  
The greater half of the world, when something is broken,  
has the instinct to throw it away and get a new one,  
but that lesser better half has the instinct to mend it. To make it well.”

- “*Vogue’s Eye View of the Menders*” March 1953

“Theology is not only about understanding the world; it is about mending the world.”

- Miroslav Volf

“Heaven have mercy on us all--Presbyterians and pagans alike--for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending.” - Herman Melville

“I’m always trying to tell fans to love themselves. I see them going through a ton of hardships on Twitter and being bullied. It’s really important and easier said than done to take care of yourself. A lot of people put themselves out for others and don’t really think about mending themselves.”

- Kirstin Maldonado

“Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue.” - Eugene O’Neill

“What I absolutely want is to suggest that before it’s anything else, redemption is God mending the bicycle of our souls; God is bringing out the puncture repair kit, re-inflating the tires, taking off the rust, making us roadworthy once more. Not so that we can take flight into ecstasy, but so that we can do the next needful mile of our lives.” - Francis Spufford

“Hope is a hollow backbone that can’t always carry the weight of reality. And I was tired of propping it up. I was tired of mending it each time it snapped.” - Leylah Attar

“Neglect mending a small fault and ‘twill soon be a great one.” - Benjamin Franklin

“Happy are those who hear their detractions and can put them to mending.” - William Shakespeare

“Mending a broken heart isn’t easy. It’s messy and complicated, but when it’s finished, it’s stronger than ever.” - Megan Duke

“In my home workshop, generally I’m mending things, which is interesting because you learn a lot about why they broke.” - James Dyson

“Is it never worthwhile to make rents in a garment for the sake of mending them? Nor to create doubts in order to show how cleverly we can quiet them.” - Charles Spurgeon

“It is those of us who have been broken that become experts at mending.” - Steve Maraboli

“Many people and governments share the mistaken belief that science, with new, ingenious devices and techniques, can rescue us from the troubles we face without having to mend our ways and change our patterns of activity. This is not so.” - Henry W. Kendall

“If things are going untowardly one month, they are sure to mend the next.” - Jane Austen

The Worship Associates are Susan Barrett, Jennifer Breault, Jeff Brown, Jen Ryan Brown, Alan Cantor, Aimee Dalrymple, Jess Jonas, Nora Kempner, and Katherine McHugh (chair).