

Soul Matters 2020-2021

October's Theme: World Community

The Soul Matters Sharing Circles provide an opportunity to explore our congregation's overall theme for the 2020-2021 program year, and within that, each monthly theme. We reflect on the previous month's theme in more depth. Here is my theme reflection from The Beacon newsletter:

We live on a beautiful blue-green planet, part of a community of living beings, rich with biodiversity. What an amazing world this is. When I am feeling the wearying effects of this ongoing pandemic, I remember to connect with my other relations: watch a heron feeding down in the Fraser River, learn about the whales in a BBC Planet Earth film online. Then my heart is moved, and I remember I am part of this greater world of wonder.

Our world community is struggling - the earth, animals and humans alike. The wildfires south of the border affect humans and animals alike, and we feel the effects. The pandemic has thrown into even starker contrast those who have and those who have not. We know the need for economic justice and for racial justice.

This year, we are invited through Beacon's yearly theme to not turn away from this but to engage it together:

**Imagining a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
As Unitarians and Universalists, grounded in our principles,
we use our heads to think, hearts to feel, and hands to serve.**

October is framed by our sixth principle which is highlighted in this yearly theme: we affirm and promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Last month, we reflected how interdependent we humans are within the larger web of existence. This month, we consider how we respond, knowing this. How do we create a world community that fosters peace? One that offers liberty and freedom to people equitably. Where justice is given to people regardless of the colour of your skin, your income, or your nationality. These issues can seem daunting when many of us feel we are already struggling day to day as people and as families. That's why we are not alone – we are part of this Beacon community, offering a place to come to grapple with these challenging issues. We listen to what is in each other's hearts and minds. We share ideas of what we are learning that can make a difference.

When you listen to the news, what issues are you grappling with these days? What moves your heart? Where are your hands already engaged in service?

Here are some areas Beacon is engaging in the coming months. In this newsletter, you'll read about Beacon's Team in the global Eco Challenge – come join Teresa and I in this fun event. Starting in November, I'll be offering a course in building an inclusive community that works

to create racial justice (more details coming soon). When we put our energies together, we can make changes in our world that reflect this principle we believe in and work towards creating the world we imagine.

My professors in eco-theology at seminary, Sallie McFague would say to us that if she could do one thing each day to make the world a better place for the children who come after us, she would sleep better. We are blessed to be part of a caring community that offers us support to do just that – one thing a day, caring and sharing as we go. As Margaret Mead writes, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

In the spirit,
Rev. Meg Roberts

A Spiritual Exercise for This Coming Month

Unitarian Universalists want to do more than just read and talk about spiritual topics—they enjoy experiential learning. Many of us learn and process concepts best through direct experience. Given this, group members are invited to choose a “spiritual exercise” on each month’s topic to engage prior to the meeting. I ask you to try the exercises, believing that—whether you “enjoyed” it or not—the experience of doing it will help you learn something about life and yourself—something that sitting in a room just thinking about the topic never could. ***I invite you to choose one of the spiritual exercises below and try it out over the coming month.***

Option A

Using a spiritual practice you already do, take time to reflect on, meditate on, and/or pray about creating a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all (or some part of this you are drawn to exploring). You may engage with the God of your understanding/the Spirit of Life, those you hold dear, others in your world, and yourself. See what arises within you and decide on one thing you will do in response over this month. Come back to the group with something you are willing to share about doing this spiritual exercise.

Option B

As your spiritual exercise, join Beacon’s team on the Ecochallenge – we’re working on earth community for all. (See details in Beacon This Week or contact Meg or Teresa Morton.) Each day, take time at the end of the day to reflect on challenges you undertook, check off those you achieved, post to the chat feed for the team when you have ideas or want to add to team moral. Come back to the sharing circle with an insight or thought you had from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option C

If you find a spiritual exercise is one more thing you don’t seem to get to, find an activity you already do that you enjoy and find a way to incorporate the theme of “world community with peace, liberty and justice for all”—whether in whole as a concept, or some part of it that you’re

interested in. Come back to the sharing circle with a few thoughts about this principle from doing the spiritual exercise.

One option: You may choose to explore the principle through creative expression (dance, singing a song, drawing/doodling/painting, journaling, poetry or some other writing form you know, etc.). Tip: If it helps you to commit to doing this with others, pick a time and day then invite anyone in the Soul Matters Circle to join you. If others are available to join you, contact Rachael to see if Beacon's Zoom room is available. (If not, a free Zoom account allows a 45-minute meeting before ending that meeting; you could create two separate Zoom links if you wanted to have more time.)

Option D

We create opportunities for our heads to think, our hearts to feel and our hands to serve. In this month focusing on developing world community, pick one thing you will do this month that relates to this, engaging your head to think, your heart to feel, and your hands to serve. It may be one or all of these. Come back to the sharing circle with a few thoughts about this principle from doing the spiritual exercise.

Option E

What is a spiritual exercise that comes to your mind when you think of the theme “world community with peace, liberty and justice for all”? Create that exercise and share it with the group by email (if you are willing). Share what it was like doing that spiritual exercise with the group when we meet.

Questions to Live With:

*Don't treat these questions like “homework.” You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply look them over and **find the one that ‘hooks’ you most.** Then let it take you on a ride. Live with it over the next couple of weeks. **Let it wander around in your unconscious the rest of the time.** Allow it to break into--and break open--your ordinary thoughts. And then come to your Soul Matters meeting prepared to share with the group something of what came up for you.*

1. What is one example when I affirmed and promoted the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all? How did it feel doing it? How does it feel now remembering that time?
2. Whose work inspires me in working for peace? For liberty? For justice?
3. When do I most struggle to live this principle? What might help me?
4. When I listen to the news, what issues am I grappling with these days? What moves my heart? Where are my hands already engaged in service? (or if not yet, where would I like to engage in service?)
5. Where have I seen an example of creating peace in my family? In my community?
6. When I am going to sleep at night, what haunts me about the state of our world? What do I commit to do to help those who come after me?
7. What question do I wish had been included here? I'll ask myself that question instead.

Other Resources

Quotes for the weekly e-news update: Beacon This Week

October 1 – “The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace.” — Mahatma Gandhi

October 8 –

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you - the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

October 15 – “Business, labor and civil society organizations have skills and resources that are vital in helping to build a more robust global community.” – Kofi Annan

October 22 – “If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace.” — John Lennon

October 29 – “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Family Resources – *How does your family want to help create a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all?*

[Option 1: Put your belief in Eco-justice for our Earth Community Into Action](#)

Join Beacon's Team - Beacon Unitarian - in the People’s Ecochallenge Wednesday Oct. 7 -

Wednesday Oct. 28! The Ecochallenge is an annual event that invites team members to take actions and earn points for our team; it is an excellent opportunity to put our principles in action. Challenges range from fact-finding to habit-forming and each team member decides which challenge(s) they want to take on. For instance, in the area of plastics, challenges include signing petitions, picking up plastic litter, forgoing plastic straws, and replacing single-use utensils with reusable utensils. You can choose only a few actions – make it reasonable for your family. As Reverend Meg explains it is ‘a really good way to build community, get educated, and make a difference! And the kids and youth participate(d) because it is action oriented.’

To Join Us: please read our attached FAQs page and go to EcoChallenge (Oct. 7-28) - learn more at <https://peoples.ecochallenge.org/>

Join the Beacon Team at any time over the time of the challenge.

For more info, please connect with Teresa teresa.at.ecochallenge@gmail.com or 778.855.1704

Option 2: Sharing our Gratitude – A Ritual for Thanksgiving Weekend

At your family meal, light a candle as your chalice, go around the table and each person says one thing they feel grateful for. If you have family and/or friends joining you via Zoom for your Thanksgiving dinner, be sure to include everyone. Consider continuing this ritual each week, once a week, during October. See how it affects how you feel as a family. Adapt the ritual to suit your family.

Option 3: CYRE's Principles Program Kit each month – It could come to your family!

From Ashley Cole (she/her pronouns), Director Of Religious Exploration:

While we continue to meet virtually the Children and Youth Religious Exploration Committee (CYRE) have been dreaming up opportunities to offer families connection with each other, the Unitarian Universalist tradition, and our Beacon Unitarian community. One way we hope to do so is my launching a mail out program kit that provides some ideas and resources for families to participate in religious exploration in their own homes and on their own schedule. The suggested activities will be based on the monthly theme, our Unitarian Universalists principles, and inspired by the well-loved chalice lighting words:

We are Unitarian Universalists, (*Cup hands to make two 'U's*)

With minds that think, (*Cover eyes and open hands*)

Hearts that love, (*Cross arms over heart*)

And hands that are ready to serve. (*Stretch hands out, palms up*)

Each month we will provide family activities for head, heart and hands. This newsletter is available both here on the [website](#) and will be mailed out to families who were registered in the 2018-2019 period. The mail-out will include some additional gifts/resources so if your family is not already on our list and would like to register for a physical copy please reach out to me at dre@beaconunitarian.org. For now you can also find the September Newsletter [here](#) and you can find the October Newsletter [here](#). Looking forward to connecting more this church year!

Here are some parenting resources for during the pandemic from the Unitarian Universalist Association:

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/parenting-pandemic>

Also, check out Ashley's "Quarantine Kit: Weekly package of resources to help families in this time of quarantine." Email her if you aren't yet receiving it then share it with friends, family and neighbours: dre@beaconunitarian.org.

Quotes

“People tend to forget that there have always been those who are deniers of history and they deny history for their own reasons. They deny, perhaps, because they’re slow-minded and dim-witted, but more importantly I think it’s because they believe in a certain delusion about our history that they are unwilling to give up.” - Senator Murray Sinclair, responding to fellow Senator Lynn Beyak’s comments about residential schools

“I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed, without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today – my own government.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Reflection on the Sixth Principle

“The sixth Principle seems extravagant in its hopefulness and improbable in its prospects. Can we continue to say we want ‘world community’? ‘Peace, liberty, and justice for all’? The world is full of genocide, abuse, terror, and war. What have we gotten ourselves into?

“As naïve or impossible as the sixth Principle may seem, I’m not willing to give up on it. In the face of our culture’s apathy and fear, I want to imagine and help create a powerful vision of peace by peaceful means, liberty by liberatory means, justice by just means. I want us to believe—and to live as if we believe—that a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all is possible. There is no guarantee that we will succeed, but I can assure you that we will improve ourselves and improve the world by trying.”

—Rev. Sean Parker Dennison, Tree of Life Congregation, McHenry, IL (read more from Sean in [The Seven Principles in Word and Worship](#), ed. Ellen Brandenburg)

Worship Resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Worship Web

Consider using as a piece to meditate on as a spiritual exercise this month.

Chalice Lighting by Bruce Southworth

For the gift of this day and for our community of spiritual nurture and compassion, we give thanks.

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith.

May our many sparks meet and merge in communion of heart and soul.

Affirmation by

The Seasons of Life by Mary Frances Comer



We are grateful to mark time with seasons,
to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries,
or to gather as family to remember our loved ones.
In all these seasons, may we give thanks for the breath of life,
ever mindful of the fragile nature of existence.
May we live fully in each moment.
From summer to fall and winter to spring,
we gather in mystery and in the bonds of beloved community.
May we radiate love both within and beyond these walls,
this day and all the days to come,
caring for those we love and for those we have yet to meet.

[Image from <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/affirmation/seasons-life>]

Closing by Eileen B. Karpeles

As we part now one from another, let these be our thoughts:

If that which is most holy lies within the human person, and if the greatest power in the world shines flickering and uncertain from each individual heart, then it is easy to see the value of human associations dedicated to nurturing that light: the couple, the family, the religious community.

For the power of good in any one of us must at times waver. But when a group together is dedicated to nurturing the power of good, it is rare for the light to grow dim in all individuals at the same moment.

So we borrow courage and wisdom from one another, to warm us and keep us until we're together again.

Closing

The Struggle Continues – by Israel Buffardi



The road that lies ahead of us is a long one, and the pace of progress will sometimes feel glacially slow.

Never forget that glaciers over time can carve out grand canyons and great lakes.

Moving tectonic plates can rise up mountains over millennia, or they can explode awe-inspiring volcanoes in milliseconds.

Our commitment to love and justice can do the same.

[Image from <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/affirmation/struggle-continues>]