

Soul Matters 2020-2021

January's Theme: Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

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:

What sets Unitarian Universalist congregations apart is the principle which is our **January theme**: we affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. It is what drew me to this movement. Other religions can affirm many of the principles that we affirm, but few could encourage and support me to find the truth as I understood it while drawing from such a variety of sources: world religions, science, philosophy, humanism, earth-based spiritual practices. I can honour the direct experiences of mystery and wonder that I have had in my life. I am encouraged to listen to the words and deeds of people who speak the truth to power and work for justice with compassion and love.

It is in the challenging times, when we are so aware of the suffering and pain in the world, when finding meaning from these sources is crucial to help give us focus for our lives. What sources do you turn to as you try to make sense of the world?

I know meaning-making is not done just in the head but also in the heart and spirit. It is about figuring out how to understand what is going on in our lives and in the world, and that is best done in community. It is when we hear others' stories and how they understand them that we get a sense of how we may understand our own. We recognize the things we struggle with are connected to the struggles of others. We are not alone. We come to know the things we feel grateful for in our lives. Doing this in community also allows us to be responsible for what we believe and to be accountable for our words and actions. It is like a life lab – testing out our ideas within a compassionate community of other seekers of the truth. What a gift this is! I look forward to sharing our stories and understanding of truth in the coming year.

I wish you a year that brings insights into truth and an enriching understanding of what gives your life meaning. I wish you good health and heart-felt connections.

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

Look back over your life as to what you have believed in spiritually/philosophically. (If thinking about your life feels a bit overwhelming, think about the last year.) What changed? What remains the same? When did you struggle? What helped you in those struggles? Come back to the group with something you are willing to share about doing this spiritual exercise.

Option B

Take time to think about an instance when you had to take responsibility for what you believed in and be held accountable for your words and actions. What did you learn about that is important to you? Did anything change as a result? If so, why? Come back to the sharing circle with an insight or thought you had from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option C

Do a spiritual exercise of praying or meditating about what gives meaning to your life and/or what are your truths.

- How does your relationship to a higher power/divine source, within the universe relate to this? If the concept of a higher power is not relevant to you, what is your role as a human being in making meaning of your life and how does it impact your actions in the world?
- What supports your understanding of meaning and/or truth spiritually?

In light of what comes up in response to meditating or praying about these questions, choose one thing you will do this month. Come back to the group with your reflections on your experience.

Option D

I say in my theme column that meaning-making is not done just in the head but also in the heart and spirit. In some instances, it is connected to something I’m doing with my body as well. Think of a time (whether recently or at some other point in your life) when you were doing something physically, and you had a significant insight about the meaning of life. Come back to the group with something to share from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option E

What is a spiritual exercise that comes to your mind when you think of the theme “a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” 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. Or consider something you are already doing that is creative and hold this principle in mind, heart and spirit, and see what emerges. Come back to the group with something to share from the experience.

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 sources do I turn to as I try to make sense of the world?

UU Sources listed here: <https://cuc.ca/unitarian-universalism/principles-sources/>

2. How do I make meaning out of what is happening in my life and in the world right now?

What supports me to do that?

3. How do I engage in a free and a responsible search for truth and meaning?

4. When have I felt tension between my freedom and my responsibility to others?

5. How do I know what is true for me? By using my head, heart, gut, spirit, and/or body?

6. How has my understanding of "truth" changed during my lifetime?

7. When have I struggled with what I believe in?

8. In what ways has a Unitarian Universalist community supported your search for truth and meaning? In what ways has it hindered it and why?

9. When have I struggled with what I believe in?

10. 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

January 7 – "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

— Mary Oliver, from "The Summer Day" (Unitarian Universalist)

January 14 – "The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions." – Ralph Waldo Emerson (Unitarian)

January 21 - "The truth is rarely pure and never simple."

— Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

January 28 - "I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being, first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole."

— Malcolm X

Family Resources – *We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.*

Download the Winter 2009 issue from <https://www.uua.org/families/uu-world-family-pages>

Option 1:

What sources do you turn to, to learn what is true?

Depending on the age of your child/ren, read either the story of “Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom” on page 1, or the story about Gandhi on page 4. Discuss the question(s) listed after each story.

Option 2:

Create a home hearth (page 2). During this month, try out some of the table graces offered on that same page, or from other sources, or make up your own. Near the end of the month, talk about how saying grace makes a difference to your time together as a family?

Also, check out Ashley’s monthly theme-based kits. Email her if you aren’t yet receiving it then share it with friends, family and neighbours: dre@beaconunitarian.org.

Quotes

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“Art is the lie that enables us to realize the truth.”

— Pablo Picasso

“When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.”

— Kahlil Gibran

Resource

UU World magazine article, “A search for truth and meaning: I would not be the kind of person I am today if I hadn’t kept searching.” By Aneesa Shaikh, August 26, 2019

“I think often about how different my life would have been had I not discovered Unitarian Universalism, and I always find myself thinking that I would not be the kind of person I am today if I hadn’t kept searching until I found what felt right.”

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/search-truth-meaning>

Worship Resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Worship Web
Consider using one to meditate on as a spiritual exercise this month.

Chalice Lighting by Julianne Lepp



We seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts’ deep questions.
As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.
May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom,
and welcoming of multiple truths.

Chalice Lighting by Shawn Trapp

Our chalice reminds us of that the fire within ourselves is the same fire that illuminates the Universe. It is our reminder that all is connected even though the space of the void is vast, and our experience here is but a blip in the cosmic timeline.

This flame is our promise that in our smallness and our short time on this Earth, that we live intently and deeply, with love for one another, with honesty and integrity, to be guided by rational thought and critical thinking, and with a sense of shared responsibility—for as the late astronomer [Carl Sagan reminded us](#), this pale blue dot is the only home we’ve ever known.



This image of the Earth, dubbed '[Pale Blue Dot](#)', is a part of the first ever 'portrait' of the solar system taken by Voyager 1 in 1990. From Voyager's great distance Earth is a mere point of light, less than the size of a picture element even in the narrow-angle camera. Earth was a crescent only 0.12 pixel in size.

Prayer –

Do Not Fear Agitation – by Tania Márquez



Do not fear agitation, for agitation is the rhythm of life itself; to be put into motion, to be stirred.

Do not fear the movements that decenter what you always thought permanent.

You carry within the center of your understanding, the compass to show you the way.

Carry with you the love that will hold you, the vision that will guide you, the relationships to all beings and the world that will ground you. Go in peace and in gentle agitation to stir this world to the side of love.

No temas a la agitación, puesto que es el ritmo de la vida misma: ser puesto en movimiento, incitarte.

No temas los movimientos que decentran lo que creías permanente. Llevas dentro el centro de tu entendimiento, la brújula que te muestra el camino.

Lleva contigo el amor que te sostendrá, la visión que te guiará, las relaciones con todos los seres y el mundo que te pondrán los pies sobre la tierra. Ve en paz y, con una suave agitación, mueve a este mundo hacia el lado del amor.

Blessing by Jean M. Olson

May you be brave enough to expose
your aching woundedness
and reveal your vulnerability.

May you speak your deepest truths, knowing that they will change as you do.

May you sing the music within you,
composing your own melody,
playing your song with all your heart.

May you draw, paint, sculpt, and sew,
showing the world your vision.

May you write letters, poetry, biography,
slogans, graffiti, the great novel,
laying bare your words to love and hate.

May you love even though your heart
breaks again and again.

And until the end of your days,
may your life be filled
with possibilities and courage.

Closing by George G Brooks

May the love that gives to life its beauty,
the reverence that gives to life its sacredness,
and the purposes that give to life its deep significance
be strong within each of us and lead us into ever deepening relationships with all of life.
Amen.

Closing by Mark Mosher DeWolfe (former minister in Mississauga, ON)

With what benediction shall I leave you?

This: In your life, may you know the holy meaning, the mystery that breaks into it every moment.

May you live at peace with your world and at peace with yourself.

And may the love of truth guide you in your every day. Amen.