

Soul Matters 2020-2021

April's Theme: Diverse Multicultural Beloved Community Through Dismantling Racism and Other Oppressions

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:

Our April theme is a principle that has been considered in many Unitarian Universalist circles over the past couple of years as the 8th principle:

We covenant to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Ours is a living tradition – the principles were meant to evolve over time, not just stick with seven principles. Now is the time to clearly re-commit to what is implied in our other principles but more clearly articulated in this principle. It also adds in “love” which doesn't appear in our other principles. Here's some background to this principle from the website <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/origin>:

- Paula Cole Jones, JPD (Joseph Priestley District—the mid-Atlantic district of the Unitarian Universalist Association, now subsumed into the larger Central East Regional Group, CERG) Director of Racial & Social Justice, developed the idea of the existence of 2 different paradigms in UU circles: the UU 7 Principles and Beloved Community (deep multiculturalism). After working with congregations on these issues for over 15 years, she realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions at the systemic level. Evidence: most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture (especially music), and leadership, even when located near diverse communities. She realized that an 8th Principle was needed to correct this, and talked with Bruce Pollack-Johnson about some of the components that should be in it. Bruce put together an initial draft in 2013, and the two of them worked with a group of anti-racist activists in the JPD to refine it. Bruce's congregation (the UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia) incorporated it into their Covenant at that time, then in May 2017 formally adopted it for themselves and recommended that the UUA adopt it.
- UUs and the UUA have done very good work in fighting racism, such as during the Civil Rights Movement and in the 1990's (passing a resolution in 1997 at GA, after a precursor resolution in 1992, to become an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression Multi-Cultural, or ARAOMC, Organization), but the funding and support started to wane in the 2000's – our accountability mechanism failed us.

By adopting this 8th principle, it includes a stronger accountability mechanism to take action and change. It can be adopted by individual Unitarian Universalists, congregations, and by

national organizations. I believe in this principle and encourage us to consider it here at Beacon as well as in our Canadian UU movement. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) struck a task force in May 2019 to do more work and education on racial justice in response to the conversations in the American UU movement. That CUC task force did the Dismantling Racism Study Group, and here's preliminary report on their survey of Canadian UU congregations: <https://cuc.ca/dismantling-racism-study-group/>
When you read it, you'll see evidence that racism exists in our congregations in Canada as well.

From the events of the last year, we are more strongly reminded that racism exists both sides of the border and all around the world. We want to build a beloved community that takes the next steps by learning and changing our behaviour as a result of what we are learning. Those working on the 8th principle project developed this description:

Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.

I encourage you to read the whole background of this movement for inclusion of this principle: <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/background> as well as the CUC resources: <https://cuc.ca/racial-justice/>

I invite you to consider materials provided in the April theme packet as well as come to our Sunday services. Our Soul Matters Circles have spiritual exercises and questions to deepen our learning taken from the theme packet, then will meet after this month to learn and share what we are learning. I hope you'll engage in this exploration and consider committing to this principle as well. If not now, when? If not us, then who?

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.***

The 8th principle:

We covenant to affirm and promote journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Option A

Do a spiritual exercise of praying or meditating about the 8th principle above (or adapt this to some other spiritual practice you do).

- How does your relationship to a higher power/divine source, within the universe relate to this?
- If belief in a higher power doesn't have relevance in your philosophy/theology, meditate on the 8th principle and how it relates to human-to-human behaviour.

What comes up for you? In light of what comes up, choose one thing you will do this month. Come back to the group with your reflections on your experience.

Option B

Read the theme column on page one, and watch this presentation about why this principle matters to UU Black, Indigenous and people of colour:

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/bipoc-and-8th-principle>

Come back to the group with some reflections from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option C

Read Dr. David Campt's *Equipping Anti-Racism Allies: Unitarian Universalist Edition* – here's a [PDF version](#) for purchase. (If your budget doesn't allow for this purchase, contact Meg for assistance.) Read this resource. OR if you took the recent two-part workshop by David, "R.A.C.E. Method of Dialogue for Dismantling Racism" hosted by the Canadian Unitarian, review your notes. During this month, practice the skills David is teaching, consider what you are learning about creating beloved community. Notice the feelings coming up as you are practicing these skills. Come back to the group with an insight you've had.

Option D

Spend time this month learning about racism and other oppressions in the community you live in. Learn about the local groups that are working to dismantle them. Consider a step you will take this month on this. Come back to the group with an insight you've had from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option E

What is a spiritual exercise that comes to your mind when you think of the theme of the 8th principle? Consider other resources in this theme packet – there is a helpful list from Donovan Hadyen later in the packet. Create that exercise and share it with the group by email (if you are willing). Include the principle in your creative expression (dance, drawing, journaling, music, etc.). Come to the group at our online meeting to share what it was like to create this exercise, how it was to do it, and what you learned from it.

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 involved in creating a diverse multicultural beloved community? What is my role in that process?
2. When I think back to the family/community I grew up in, what did I learn about racism? What did I experience?
3. What do I know about how racism and other oppressions work in our society?
4. When have I by my actions accountably worked on dismantling racism and other oppressions in myself and the institutions of which I've been a part? How did that go? What did I learn?
5. If I am Black, Indigenous, person of colour or multiracial, what helped support me when facing racism? What supports me now?
6. If I am a white person/multiracial, what helped me face racism? What am I learning as a result?
7. What is holding Beacon back from becoming a diverse multicultural beloved community? What is helping it move towards that?
8. What do I know about implicit or unconscious bias?
8. 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

April 1 –

"If we want a beloved community, we must stand for justice, have recognition for difference without attaching difference to privilege."

— Bell Hooks

April 8 –

"We are the people who return to love like a North Star and to the truth that we are greater together than we are alone."

—Rev. Theresa Soto, in "[We Hold Hope Close](#)"

April 15 –

"Where do you begin telling someone their world is not the only one?"

- Lee Maracle, *Ravensong – a Novel*

April 22 –

“Democracy is not simply a license to indulge individual whims and proclivities. It is also holding oneself accountable to some reasonable degree for the conditions of peace and chaos that impact the lives of those who inhabit one’s beloved extended community.”
— Aberjhani, [Splendid Literarium: A Treasury of Stories, Aphorisms, Poems, and Essays](#)

April 29 –

“This idea that Canada's racial injustices are not as bad as they could be, this notion of Slavery Lite, of Racism Lite, of what my friend calls the "toy version of racism" is a very Canadian way of saying: remember what we could do to you if we wanted to. Passive-aggressive racism is central to Canada's national mythology and identity.”
— Desmond Cole, [The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power](#)

Family Resources –

- Here are some [resources for multiethnic families](#).
- [Resources for talking about race, racism and racialized violence with kids](#)
- Vancouver Public Library resources: “[Stand Up! Racial identity, racism and resistance for Grades 4-7](#)”

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.

Resources

Here are recommendations from Donovan Hayden, our presenter at the January 31 Sunday service, “Anti-racism work as Spiritual Practice.”

Donovan is a Black activist and artist. He is currently a MA student in Theatre & Performance Studies at York University in Toronto. He spent the last year in Pittsburgh, PA, where he participated in the Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of George Floyd. Through his experiences, Donovan has had the opportunity to engage with Unitarians and anti-racism work on both sides of the border.

Intention

- Speak specifically about anti-Black racism
- Commit to small consistent actions

Attention

- Recognize visitor status
- Trust the authority of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people
- Be mindful of what you are saying and how long you are saying it

Recommendations for Congregation

- Adopt the 8th principle
- Share and send letter of solidarity to activist groups as a congregation

Individual practices

- Read Black authors
- Read resources and articles by Black Unitarians
<https://www.uua.org/worship/collections/black-lives-matter>
- Learn about Defund the Police and alternatives to policing
 - <https://defund.ca/>
 - Congregational Action Toolkit:
 - <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/community-safety-campaign.html>
- Donate
 - Local activist groups
 - GoFundMe's for people/families harmed by police
 - 1492 Land Back Lane
<https://ca.gofundme.com/f/legal-fund-1492-land-back-lane>
- Speak Up
 - Write and call officials
 - Amplify the voices of Black and Indigenous people to your networks
 - Attend protests
 - Identify and oppose racism within your sphere

[Article on Anti-Asian Racism in Canada](#)

[Article on Anti-Indigenous Racism](#)

Learn more about implicit bias – [take one or more test online](#)

Worship Resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association's Worship Web

[3 webinars on decentering whiteness in UU worship](#)

Chalice Lighting – by Deanna Vandiver

We light this chalice—symbol of our faith alive in this world—
naming our vision of collective liberation,
and daring to re-member each other into beloved community.

Chalice Lighting by Rebekah Savage

We light our flaming chalice as a beloved people
united in love
and thirsting for restorative justice.

May it melt away the tethers that uphold whiteness in our midst.
May it spark in us a spirit of humility.
May it ignite in us radical love that transforms our energy into purposeful action.

This a chalice of audacious hope.
This chalice shines a light on our shared past,
signaling our intention to listen deeply, reflect wisely,
and move boldly toward our highest ideals.

Affirmation – *Love by enfleshed*

Love cannot be bought or sold; it does not make a profit.
Love does not hide from truth.
Love dives deep.
Love takes on flesh.
Love is queer.
Love is platonic.
Love is erotic.
Love is asexual.
Love confronts evil.
Love delights in pleasure.
Love touches and weeps and flirts and feeds and creates.
Love is risky.
Love challenges systemic evil in all its forms.
Love is simple but not easy.
Love is collective.
Love rises up.

Love apologizes.
Love believes.
Love corrects.
Love holds accountable.
Love pays reparations.
Love heals.
Love tells its story.
Love embraces everyone, every creature, every creation.
It knows us intimately. It holds us collectively.
Love transcends every boundary that seeks to confine it.
It will not tolerate violence in its name.
It does no harm.
It only sets free.

Meditation - *We Hold Hope Close* by Theresa I. Soto

In this community, we hold hope close. We don't always know what comes next, but that cannot dissuade us. We don't always know just what to do, but that will not mean that we are lost in the wilderness. We rely on the certainty beneath, the foundation of our values and ethics. We are the people who return to love like a North Star and to the truth that we are greater together than we are alone. Our hope does not live in some glimmer of an indistinct future. Rather, we know the way to the world of which we dream, and by covenant and the movement forward of one right action and the next, we know that one day we will arrive at home.

Benediction by Elena Westbrook

Go in hope, for the arc of the universe is long and we can bend it toward justice.
Go in courage, for together we have the strength to confront injustice in our daily lives and the larger world.
Go in love, because a holy and generous love is both the reason and the means by which we transform our lives.

Closing by Kimberly Quinn Johnson

We are the ones we have been waiting for.*
We are not perfect, but we are perfectly fitted for this day.
We are not without fault,

but we can be honest to face our past as we chart a new future.
We are the ones we have been waiting for.
May we be bold and courageous to chart that new future
May we have faith in a future that is not known
We are the ones we have been waiting for.*

**the words of June Jordan in “Poem for South African Women,” which she presented at the U.N. on August 9, 1978*

The Unitarian Universalist Association’s Worship Web also has these resources “The Promise and the Practice of Our Faith for Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism:

What is The Promise and the Practice? It's a turning moment; a choice to listen deeply to the stories in our movement that have not been heard, and taken to heart, by all Unitarian Universalists.

It’s a lamenting of what our Unitarian Universalist tradition and congregations have lost by being unable – or unwilling – to center people of color (or even, at times, to merely include them).

The Promise and the Practice is a celebration of our shared commitment to live into a new chapter in the story of our UU faith.

A full set of [worship & RE materials](#) is available for your Promise & Practice Sunday!