

Soul Matters 2021-2022

The Soul Matters Sharing Circles provide an opportunity to explore our congregation's overall theme for the 2021-2022 program year, and within that, each monthly theme. We reflect on the previous month's theme in more depth. Here are some excerpts from my theme reflection from The Beacon newsletter from September and October to set up the themes:

September's Theme: Water and Wonder

Being in a caring community is so important when we are facing significant losses, like what has happened over the past 18 months during the pandemic and in an ongoing way now. We have lost congregation members – both those old and young – that hurts our hearts and spirits. Our hearts go out to those who have experienced these huge losses – whether through the death of a loved one or due to serious illness or some other crisis. Here at Beacon, we want to connect with you. It is part of who we are and who we want to become better at being. In the words in **Beacon's Vision**:

Connect with Compassion & Respect
Inspire Learning & Spiritual Growth
Transform through Joy & Justice

As we are experiencing the fourth wave of COVID-19, we want to keep engaged as a community.... I hope you've had moments this summer when you were able to relax and have some good quality connections with those whose company you enjoy – family, friends, neighbours. I know I savoured having more opportunity to see people face-to-face. As humans we need that connection. It is part of staying healthy, as is taking good care of ourselves and each other.

What will help us this coming program year to “inspire learning and spiritual growth”? Last year we chose the UU 6th Principle as the overarching theme. This year we will look to the six sources with the 6th Source as our theme. The sixth source reads “Our congregations affirm and promote spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.” After meeting together, Ashley articulated our discussion so clearly in these words:

***Inspired by our Unitarian Universalist sources and
by the elements of water, fire, earth, and air
we will explore what grounds us,
what we value, and how we want to be together.***

So, this month, we will be starting with the element of water, with our September 12 Ingathering Water Ceremony service – I hope you'll join us in-person or online. I'll be drawing from the first source in our Unitarian Universalist list of places we turn for inspiration: “Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.” In short, in Ashley's words, ***our September theme will be Water & Wonder.***

This fall, I look forward to being together, to listening to and sharing the stories of our lives with each other. Connecting and inspiring and being transformed into the kind of people and community we aspire to be. It is good to be on the journey together.

October's Theme: Water and Life

Here is a simple language version of our sources from the [Jefferson Unitarian](#) Church:

Unitarian Universalists find inspiration from six sources. The stories and lessons we offer in religious education are drawn from these foundations of our faith:

- the sense of wonder we all share.
- women and men long ago and today — people whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.
- the ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religious.
- Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.
- the use of reason and the discoveries of science.
- the harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

This month, we continue with the element of water. I remember the first time I saw these words on a sign in an Indigenous-led protest against a development and its impacts on the water. The sign said, "Water is Life." ***That is our October theme: Water & Life.***

What role does water play in your life? In the life of our communities here in the Fraser River Valley? What waterways in this area keep the animals and trees and plants alive, as well as us humans? I invite all of us to look and notice the water this month, and ask yourself: how does this help support life and well-being? I'd love to hear your thoughts:

minister@beaconunitarian.org

In the spirit of life,

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

Do a spiritual exercise of praying or meditating about ‘Water and Wonder’ (September’s theme) or ‘Water and Life’ (October’s theme). (If you don’t pray or meditate, adapt this to some other spiritual practice you do). Find the space and time to listen to that “voice still and small” (whatever you understand that to be – your conscience, your mindful self, and/or a sense of knowing when connected to a higher power).

- How does your relationship to a higher power/divine source, within the universe relate to these theme words and ideas?
- If belief in a higher power doesn’t have relevance in your philosophy/theology, meditate on ‘Water and Wonder’ and/or ‘Water and Life’ - and how it relates to human-to-human behaviour.

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

Option B

Attend the Sunday service October 3rd, 2021

In the Flow

Guest Speaker: Rev. Debra Faulk

Service Leader: Glenn Wooten

The theme of Water and Life inspires reflection on the communal and individual capacity to stay in the flow, getting through these rapids of change while keeping our own boat, and the vessel of community, afloat.

Debra Faulk, Reverend Emerita, recently retired after serving Calgary Unitarians for eleven years. She is a life-long Unitarian Universalist and has served the wider denomination since her youth. She has degrees in Psychology and Anthropology from UVic and a Masters degree from Vancouver School of Theology. Her passions include interfaith collaboration, community organizing, and gardening. She is now into a new venture of home co-ownership in Victoria.

During the service, consider how what you’re hearing applies to your life and experience. Then spend time after the service recording your thoughts and feelings – journaling, drawing, dancing, singing, walking and pondering... whatever suits you best. Come back to the group with your reflections on your learnings from those spiritual reflections.

Option C

The sixth source reads “Our congregations affirm and promote spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.” What ways does this apply to your experiences in September? What does that mean for you this coming month? As the turn of the wheel of the season happened at the autumn equinox, how have you adapted your life and schedule from summer to fall? Take time to consider various aspects of yourself: emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. Come back to the group with your reflections on your learnings from those spiritual reflections.

Option D

This summer, one of Meg's friends and colleagues, Karen Fraser Gitlitz, was part of an Indigenous-led Water Walk on the North Saskatchewan River. nêhiyaw/Metis/Mide Kwe Tasha Beeds (who mentored under the late Josephine-Ba Mandamin) will be the lead Walker. Marjorie Beaucage is another of the Water Walkers. It is a multi-year commitment as the walk will continue next summer. Here's a link to more info about what a Water Walk means: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KzUebtHK1aUSx9LcMGU5clfZl2-XHfDXFC-M2QBBGpw/edit>

Here's an article on it: <https://www.eaglefeathernews.com/events/women-to-walk-the-length-of-saskatchewan-river-in-ceremony?feature=1>

Consider your own relationship with the water where you were born, where you've lived and where you now live. Go spend some time by that water and notice how healthy it is, and what other creatures depend on it for their existence. Consider where the water comes from that we drink here. Come back to the group with some thoughts to share from doing this spiritual exercise.

Option E

What is a spiritual exercise that comes to your mind when you think of the themes of September "Water and Wonder" and October "Water and Life"? Consider other resources in this theme packet, in the Sunday services (past and upcoming), and in the news and in your life experiences and those dear to you. Create your own spiritual exercise and share it with the group by email (if you are willing). One option is to include 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 will help me this coming program year to "inspire learning and spiritual growth" in myself?
2. The first source in our Unitarian Universalist list of places we turn for inspiration: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life." What does this mean to me as a source of inspiration in my life experience?
3. What role does water play in my life?
4. In the life of my communities here in the Fraser River Valley? What waterways in this area keep the animals and trees and plants alive, as well as us humans? What do I know about these waterways?
5. What does "Water and Wonder" make you think of? (any memories or form of creative expression – a song, a poem, a story, a film, and other things)

6. What does “Water and Life” make you think of? (any memories or form of creative expression – a song, a poem, a story, a film, and other things)
7. As the turn of the wheel of the season happened at the autumn equinox, how have you adapted your life and schedule from summer to fall?
8. What question do I wish had been included here? I’ll ask myself that question instead.

Worship Resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Worship Web

Chalice Lighting –

We now light the chalice of our living tradition with these words:

To Face the world’s shadows, a chalice of light.

To face the world’s coldness, a chalice of warmth.

To face the world’s terrors, a chalice of courage.

To face the world’s turmoil, a chalice of peace.

May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

Closing Words adapted from Kayle Rice

[by Meg for Flower Communion, September 12, 2021]

... Today you brought water

Poured it into a common bowl.

Though our experiences have differed,

These waters mingle, signifying our common humanity.

Today you came;

And shared in this sacred community.

[When] you depart this sacred space,

Hearts filled with hope for new beginnings;

A fresh start. [New possibilities.]

Go forth, but return to this community,

Where rivers of tears may be shed,

Where dry souls are watered,

Where your joy bubbles,

Where your life cup overflows,

Where deep in your spirit you have found in this place a home...

Extinguishing Our Chalice

(a unison reading)

We extinguish this flame,

But not the light of truth,

the warmth of community,

or the fire of commitment.

These we carry in our hearts

until we are together again.