



DESTINY

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Revised by Denise Frick, June 2023, and Jerry Salley, March 2025

Welcome, Chalice Lighting:

Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.

Personal Check-In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

Destiny is like a wonderful wide tapestry in which every thread is guided by an unspeakably tender hand, placed beside another thread, and held and carried by a hundred others. ~*Rainer Maria Rilke, Austrian poet and novelist*

Questions to Prompt and Guide Discussion:

1. Most religions and philosophies have strong beliefs about destiny and how it controls or does not control our lives. Where do you stand?
2. Do you think a person can create a destiny—or avoid it? What in your life has felt like it was destined?
3. People often say things like, “There are no accidents,” “Everything happens for a reason,” and “It was meant to be.” How do people use these kinds of ideas as a way to cope with stressful times or situations? How does it work for you?
4. How do you see yourself tied to others in “a single garment of destiny,” as Martin Luther King Jr. has said?

Readings:

All . . . are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny . . . I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality. ~*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

What we call our destiny is truly our character, and that character can be altered. The knowledge that we are responsible for our actions and attitudes does not need to be discouraging, because it also means that we are free to change this destiny. One is not in bondage to the past, which has shaped our feelings, to race, inheritance, and background. All this can be altered if we have the courage to examine how it formed us. We can alter the chemistry provided we have the courage to dissect the elements. ~*Anais Nin, “The Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. 1: 1931-1934”*

The willing, Destiny guides them. The unwilling, Destiny drags them. ~*Seneca, philosopher of ancient Rome*

I really don't think life is about the I-could-have-beens. Life is only about the I-tried-to-do. I don't mind the failure, but I can't imagine that I'd forgive myself if I didn't try. ~*Nikki Giovanni, American poet*

I believe that you control your destiny, that you can be what you want to be. You can also stop and say, "No, I won't do it; I won't behave this way anymore. If I want something different, I must change what I think about and what I do." And when you do that, your destiny changes. ~*Leo F. Buscaglia, American Author*

Destiny is something we've invented because we can't stand the fact that everything that happens is accidental. ~*Anonymous*

It was not pre-arranged. It just happened that the driver made a demand, and I just didn't feel like obeying his demand. I was quite tired after spending a full day working.

~*Rosa Parks, Civil Rights activist, whose refusal to relinquish her seat on a public bus precipitated the 1955–1956 Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama, igniting the civil rights movement in the United States.*

I have noticed that even those who assert that everything is predestined and that we can change nothing about it still look both ways before they cross the street. ~*Stephen Hawking, "Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays"*

Everything is determined, the beginning as well as the end, by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect, as well as for the star. Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust, we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible piper. ~*Albert Einstein, German-born theoretical physicist*

No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path. ~*Gautama Buddha, "Sayings of Buddha"*

Destiny is a name often given in retrospect to choices that had dramatic consequences. ~*J.K. Rowling, British author*

Sitting in Silence: Reflect on the questions and readings before we start sharing.

Sharing: This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share responses to one or more of the session questions or readings.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break.)

Open Discussion: This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing Reading:

We are not alone, though sometimes we forget that truth. We are woven into one cloth, one gorgeous blanket, designed for use, for comfort, to sustain and to love...

~Rev. Dr. Sarah Lenzi, UU Minister. From online service "Woven in a Single Garment of Destiny" found at <https://www.uua.org/worship/woven-garment-destiny>

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice:

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.