



RELATIONSHIP TO MYSTERY

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC

Written by Kathleen Anderson, February 2, 2019

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *The World is so big, and we are small, and yet the whole world is contained in us. It is a gift, a wonder, a mystery, and we celebrate together.*

Check In: Briefly tell something from your life recently, and how you are feeling now.

Opening Reading:

The question is not what you look at, but what you see. It is only necessary to behold the least fact or phenomenon, however familiar, from a point a hair's breadth aside from our habitual path or routine, to be overcome, enchanted by its beauty and significance. ~Henry David Thoreau

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Tell about a time when you suddenly "got it," when you understood something amazing beyond yourself, when you had a feeling of awe, wonder, or connection. How did it make you feel or affect you afterwards?
2. How do you think religious feeling (or lack of it) informs epiphany, or moments of transcendence?
3. What do you think of the big mystery? What brings you close to it? What makes you uncomfortable? What part does it play in how you live?
4. How has your experience of mystery changed from when you were a child?

Sitting in Silence: (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings.)

Readings – see below

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 one or more responses to the session questions.

(After the Sharing 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 shares their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice Deep Listening.

Closing reading:

If you let yourself be absorbed completely, if you surrender completely to the moments as they pass, you live more richly those moments. ~Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Announcements/Plans

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

Extinguish the Chalice

READINGS:

The living tradition we share draws from many Sources: 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 that create and uphold life. ~From *Singing the Living Tradition*, First Source in List of Sources in Preface, UUA

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world. ~John Milton

Meanwhile, the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination,
Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting-
Over and over announcing your place
In the family of things.
~Mary Oliver, from her poem, *Wild Geese*

Here powers failed my high imagination:
But by now my desire and will were turned,
Like a balanced wheel rotated evenly,
By the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.
~Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*

and half of learning to play is learning what not to play
and she's learning that the spaces she leaves have their own things to say
and she's trying to sing just enough so that the air around her moves
and make music like mercy that gives what it is and has nothing to prove
she crawls out on a limb to build her home
and it's enough to look around and know that she's not alone
up up up up up up up points the spire of the steeple
but god's work isn't done by god
it's done by people.
~Ani DiFranco

I was out walking one night in busy streets of Glasgow when, with slow majesty, at a corner where the pedestrians were hurrying by and the city traffic was hurtling on its way, the air was filled with heavenly music; and an all-encompassing light that moved in waves of luminous colour outshone the brightness of the lighted streets. I stood still, filled with a strange peace and joy, the music beat on in its majesty and the traffic and the pedestrians moved through the light. They passed on their way, but the music and light remained, pulsating, harmonious, more real than the traffic of the streets. I too moved on.....till I found myself in the everyday world again with a strange access of gladness and of love that has stayed with me always.
~#208 From Alister Hardy's Collection, The Alister Hardy Foundation

I've always thought of myself as an atheist. I don't expect sudden messages from God, and I do expect when I die that will be the end of it. And yet, that day, as I looked at my hands, I was amazed to be alive at all, to be a part of a conscious vast universe, participating in this great dance older than time. That was it, nothing more, to be part of it, alive, living right fucking NOW. Now. And Now. It gave me such a sense of joy, and immediacy, to love my life and do all I could with it.
~Kevin Linker, quoted in an interview for the Daily Dish in *The Atlantic* magazine, edited by Andrew Sullivan

To have humility is to experience reality, not in relation to ourselves, but in its sacred independence. It is to see, judge, and act from the point of rest in ourselves. Then, how much disappears, and all that remains falls into place. In the point of rest at the center of our being, we encounter a world where all things are at rest in the same way. Then a tree becomes a mystery, a cloud a revelation, each man a cosmos of whose riches we can only catch glimpses. The life of simplicity is simple, but it opens to us a book in which we never get beyond the first syllable.

~Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*

Studying texts and stiff meditation can make you lose your Original Mind.

A solitary tune by a fisherman, though, can be an invaluable treasure. ~ Ikkyu, Japanese Monk

There are landscapes in which we feel above us not sky but space. Something larger, deeper than sky is sensed, is seen, although in such settings the sky itself is invariably immense. There is a place between the cerebrum and the stars where sky stops and space commences, and should we find ourselves on a particular prairie or mountaintop at a particular hour, our relationship with sky thins and loosens while our connection to space becomes solid as bone."

~Tom Robbins, *Skinny Legs and All*