

## **Gratitude—December 2012**

### **UUFVB Covenant Groups**

#### **Chalice Lighting**

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,  
but connected, in mystery and miracle,  
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

#### **Check-in: How is your spirit right now?**

#### **Opening Reading**

It is heaven itself to take what is given, to see what is plain, what the sun lights up willingly. We offer gratitude and reverence to the things that sustain us...the earth, our community, the mysteries of the universe, our good fortune in the miracle of life. *(poet Mary Oliver)*

#### **Topic Exploration**

To be grateful is to recognize the extraordinary existence of everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces. Gratitude, therefore, takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of life and of creation. The grateful person knows that creation is good, not by hearsay, but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference. *(Thomas Merton, adapted)*

#### **Questions/Sharing**

1. “Since we have not earned Bach—or crocuses or lovers—the best we can do is express our gratitude for the undeserved gifts, and do our share of the work of creation.” *(Rev. Robert R. Walsh)* What IS the work of creation, and how does it relate to gratitude?
2. Service flows directly from gratitude, according to the Rev. Tom Owen-Towle. Give examples of how your service to others has been based on gratitude.
3. What does expressing gratitude to others do for us? How can we express gratitude for things that cannot respond—a song, a story, a sunset, a good meal?
4. Gratitude is about keeping an open mind. It is about not having your mind so set on an apple that you can't be grateful when given a luscious pear. How have you found ways to be grateful for the ways that life turned out, rather than the ways you expected it to be?
5. Have you found ways to be grateful for difficult people or circumstances? Give examples.

6. In what ways do you practice your gratitude? What gets in the way of experiencing, or showing, gratitude?

**Check-out and reflection on today's session**

**Closing Reading**

As a life-affirming religion, Unitarian Universalism claims that in spite of our brokenness and cowardice, we still possess the capacity to demonstrate thankfulness for our lives and, therewith, to share the bounty of earth with fellow travelers. *(Tom Owen-Towle)*

**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.

**Housekeeping**