

Spirituality—March 2014

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

I define spirituality as the ability to see, feel, and live the big picture. It is the ability to feel connected with everything, to suffer gracefully, to keep things in perspective. People who make mountains out of molehills, who live only for the moment, or who can only care about the things and people that directly affect them are secular people, mundane rather than spiritual in their outlook. For some people, the “big picture” will include divinity, an afterlife, and other aspects of reality that are not a part of the physical world. But you can be spiritual without believing in any of these things. There’s plenty in this life we share to stay connected to. The fruits of that sense of connection, perspective, and knowledge of the whole are serenity and compassion.

(Rev Christine Robinson, senior minister of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico)

Topic Exploration

Modern spirituality is centered on the deepest values and meanings by which people live. It embraces the idea of an ultimate or an alleged immaterial reality. It envisions an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his/her being. Not all modern notions of spirituality embrace transcendental ideas. Secular spirituality emphasizes humanistic ideas on moral character (qualities such as love, compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, responsibility, harmony, and a concern for others). These are aspects of life and human experience which go beyond a purely materialist view of the world without necessarily accepting belief in a supernatural reality or divine being.

Carl Jung writes that during the first half of life, we focus on gaining competence and mastery in a vocational field or raising children. But the second half of life must center on the soul—developing one’s personal and spiritual life. If we do not do that, Jung believed, we will not achieve a sense of fulfillment and completeness when we face death. (William R. Murry, *Reason and Reverence*).

Spiritual practices used by some include: prayer, meditation or relaxation methods; journal-keeping; speaking about inner thoughts with trusted advisers or friends; reading inspirational stories.

Questions/Sharing

1. In order to explore the topic of spirituality, we must first attempt to define it for ourselves. What does this term mean to you?
2. One definition of spirituality, given by Rev William Murry, is having experiences that involve a suspension of ordinary life and a transcendence of the self. This can often involve experiencing music, painting, poetry, and literature. Does art play a role in your own spiritual renewal and growth?
4. Do you have any rituals or practices you use to bring yourself into relation with spirituality?
5. According to one 2005 poll, about 24% of the United States population identifies itself as spiritual but not religious. How would you identify yourself?

6. Rev. William Murry says that most UU congregations have a social justice committee and a separate group concerned with spirituality. He believes social justice and spirituality are and should be intimately connected. How do you feel?

Closing Readings

Enlightened leadership is spiritual if we understand spirituality not as some kind of religious dogma or ideology but as the domain of awareness where we experience values like truth, goodness, beauty, love and compassion, and also intuition, creativity, insight and focused attention. (Deepak Chopra, internet meditation series)

Human relations are built on feeling, not on reason or knowledge. And feeling is not an exact science; like all spiritual qualities, it has the vagueness of greatness about it. (Amelia Edith Huddleston Barr, British Novelist 1831-1919)

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