

## 10-Miracles—UUFVB Covenant Groups—October 2016

### 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

Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, edited a version of the Bible in which he removed sections of the New Testament containing supernatural aspects as well as perceived misinterpretations he believed had been added by the original four evangelists. Jefferson wrote, "The establishment of the innocent and genuine character of this benevolent moralist (Jesus), and the rescuing it from the imputation of imposture, which has resulted from artificial systems invented by ultra-Christian sects, unauthorized by a single word ever uttered by him, is a most desirable object." Jefferson apparently indicated, relative to Jesus, that it's ok to honor this "benevolent moralist" without believing in "artificial systems" including the immaculate conception, his deification, the creation of the world by him, his miraculous powers, his resurrection and visible ascension, his corporeal presence in the Eucharist, and the Trinity, to name a few. (Wikipedia)

### Topic Exploration

The outcome of any discussion of miracles seems to depend greatly on our worldview. The usual theistic view of the world is one that presumes the existence of an omnipotent God who, while transcending nature, is nevertheless able to act, or to express his will, within the natural world. Clearly belief in miracles is plausible if our enquiry takes this view of things.

Thus, supernaturalists believe that entities exist in some sense outside of nature, whereby "nature" is meant the totality of things that can be known by means of observation and experiment, or through the study of the natural sciences. They insist that the natural sciences are incapable of revealing the totality of all that there is. In contrast, naturalism denies the existence of anything beyond nature; that observation and experiment—or generally speaking, the methods of the empirical sciences—are sufficient to provide us with all of the knowledge that it is possible for us to have. (excerpted from Corner)

### Questions / Sharing

1. Do you consider yourself a supernaturalist or a naturalist? How did you reach that conclusion?
2. How would Unitarian Universalism define itself relative to those terms?
3. How do you explain the widespread belief in miracles in many religions and in many parts of the world?

C. S. Lewis, in his book, *Miracles*, addresses the issue of whether miracles are incompatible with natural law or science. He argues that rather than being mutually exclusive, miracles are definite interventions

that go beyond natural laws. Miracles are consistent with nature, but beyond natural law. Lewis presents the position that something more than nature as we know it exists. (Wikipedia),

4. Are you willing to consider that other worlds, or other dimensions, of which we are unaware, may exist? Why or why not?

The word "miracle" is often used to characterize any beneficial event that is statistically unlikely but not contrary to the laws of nature, such as surviving a natural disaster, or simply a wonderful occurrence, regardless of likelihood, such as a birth. Other miracles might be: survival of an illness diagnosed as terminal, escaping a life-threatening situation or 'beating the odds'. Some coincidences may be seen as miracles

5. Have you ever described an unusual or surprising situation or event as a "miracle," and if so, what led you to use that term?
6. If you wouldn't describe unexpected beneficial outcomes as miracles, how else would you define such occurrences?

### **Closing Reading**

Excerpt from Walt Whitman poem "Miracles"

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same,  
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all that concerns them,  
All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles.

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

#### **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**