

## Unitarian/Universalism—UUFVB Covenant Groups—August 2018

### 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?

**Centering:** Find a stillness, hold a stillness, let this moment of silence ease your soul.

### **Opening Reading:** Unitarian Universalist Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;  
Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;  
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;  
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;  
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;  
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;  
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

### **Topic Exploration**

Unitarian Universalists have no set creed, but we do affirm seven Principles. If you join in fellowship with Unitarian Universalism, you can hold any opinion you want about the existence of a god and what to call that god. You can change your opinion over time. You can follow your conscience, your readings, your thoughts, and your desires on issues like the existence of an afterlife, the idea of sin, the value of prayer, or the authority of religious texts. Among our congregations, you will find many different worship styles: raucous and religious, contemplative and nature-based, intellectual and secular. You can pray or not, sing in the choir or mumble the hymns, rush out after service or help brew the coffee, collect the canned goods or organize the field trip, pass out a petition or let the petition pass you by, dress casually for services or don your finest attire. Having set aside divisive doctrinal battles we seek a straightforward commitment to the fluid, open, collective work of seeking our truths together without assuming that we will all share the same truth.

Sound easy? It is not. But it is deeply rewarding. The seven Principles are simple to state but challenging to implement. Building a truly expansive intellectual, ethical, and cultural community is not for the faint of heart...The journey is the joy. The companions are the comfort. The work is the faith. *(Melissa Harris-Perry, Foreword excerpts from The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide, Fifth Edition)*

The first question most of us ask about someone's religion is, "What do you believe?" I am convinced that to ask what religious people "believe" is the wrong question. Beliefs change. None of us believes as an adult what we believed as young children. We should ask far more important and fundamental religious questions, such as: What do we love? What do we hold sacred? What moves us at the core of our being? What calls to us? How do we aspire to live? What shall we do with our lives? *(Peter Morales, Preface excerpt from The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide, Fifth Edition)*

We (Unitarian Universalists) respect the answers offered by Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and the world's other great faith traditions – we even draw our inspiration and some of our forms of worship from those traditions – but we respect the mystery more. We believe, in other words, that no single religion (or academic discipline, for that matter) has a monopoly on wisdom; that the answers to the great religious questions change from generation to generation; and that the ultimate truth about God and Creation, death, meaning, and the human spirit cannot be captured in a narrow statement of faith. The mystery itself is always greater than its name. (William F. Schulz, excerpt from *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide*, Second Edition)

### **Questions / Sharing**

1. What in your spiritual journey brought you to Unitarian/Universalism? To this Fellowship?
2. Why do you stay?
3. What do you experience as Unitarian Universalism's strengths and weaknesses?
4. How do you think others see us as Unitarian/Universalists? How do you answer when someone criticizes your faith by suggesting that UUs don't actually believe in anything?
5. As UUs, are we generally forthright in identifying ourselves? Are we hesitant? Are we defensive? Why?
6. What do you imagine your life being like if there were no UU communities?
7. In a casual situation, if someone asked you what Unitarian Universalism is, could you respond with a cogent two or three minute reply? What would you say?

### **Closing Reading**

May we open ourselves ever more fully to that Eternal Mystery which lures us onward toward life and creativity.

May we find the courage to live our faith, to speak our truth, and to strive together for a world where freedom abounds and justice truly does roll down like water.

May we know the fullness of love without fear, and the serenity of peace without turmoil.

May we hold one another in the deep and tender places with compassion, and may we grace one another by sharing our own vulnerabilities, being ever mindful of the divinity within that makes soulmates of us all. (*"Blessing" by Carol Meyers*)

**Check-out and reflections on today's session:** How were your needs for connection and spiritual growth met by this session? Do you feel your voice was heard?

### **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**