

After the Flood

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, October 2005

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.) (Include the ritual sharing of meaningful objects to welcome newcomers to the group.)

Focus Reading:

In the biblical story of the flood in Genesis, all was destroyed except for Noah and the inhabitants of his Ark. When 40 days and nights of rain ceased and Noah realized the depth of destruction around him, I suspect he felt a little survivor guilt too. That is when he chose to pray, to open to the spirit and what it might have to say to him. Then the rainbow appeared, as rainbows do, following a tremendous rainstorm. In prayer, the spirit told Noah that God was making a promise to never again destroy all of creation by flood. So the rainbow is the symbol of God's promise to the people.

Given the hurricanes, floods and tsunamis of recent months, maybe Noah, and all of us on the Ark with him, need to go back and listen, listen hard, to that spirit again.

If we were, right here and now, to open to the spirit – what would we hear? What would we see? Perhaps we would hear what God's promise is to us, or, maybe, we would hear what we should promise to the universe. It is time (long over due!) for us to make a promise in return.

What should be our promise to this earth and all who call it home? What should be our promises to one another and to life?

- Can we promise that we will be satisfied with enough and not let greed and possessions be our keepers?
- Can we promise to ease the pain of others and to help in the ways that are asked of us?
- Can we promise to live our lives with joy and to use that joy to meet the suffering of the world?
- Can we promise to be grateful? Grateful for the blessings of beauty and the honesty of our struggle for justice, and for peace.

Sometimes we go to the water. Sometimes the water comes to us. The waters, the powers and the beauty of nature, are amoral. They are not good or evil, punishment or justification for our privilege. They just are.

–Virginia Jarocho-Ernst

Focus Questions:

What are the lessons you have learned from the recent floods on the Gulf Coast?

How do you feel about the situation as time passes. As we gain perspective on the issues what has changed?

What responsibilities do individuals and governments have in responding to natural disasters.

What responsibility do you feel?

If you were to make a promise to the universe or to god, what would it be?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes:

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

The small plot of ground
On which you were born
Cannot be expected

To stay forever the same.
Earth changes,
And home becomes different
Places.

You took flesh
From clay
But the clay did not come
From just one
Place.

To feel alive,
Important, and safe,
Know your own waters
And hills, but know
More.

You have stars in your bones
And oceans
In blood.

You have opposing
Terrain in each eye.
You belong to the land
And sky of your first cry,
You belong to infinity.

- Alla Renee Bozarth