

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Atonement, Truth and Reconciliation
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

“Fundamental to faith is the truth--a truth that liberates us from the bondage of falsehood. But truth, with all its bitterness and dark sides, needs to have with it healing and reconciliation. It is the reconciliation that transforms the truth. We often feel we can be reconciled without knowing what we really need to be reconciled about.”

Rev. Nelson Johnson, Civil Rights activist, speaking about the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the US, formed in Greensboro, NC, to look into the Greensboro Massacre of 1979.

“The beginning of atonement is the sense of its necessity.”

Lord Byron

Check-In: *What experience did you have this month that was especially meaningful to you?*

Focus Reading:

"Let it be a statute for you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month, you shall starve your vital energies and do no manner of work.... For on this day it shall bring atonement upon you, to purify you, before God shall you become pure of all your aberrations."

Leviticus 16: 29-30

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

"All living beings have actions (Karma) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge. It is Karma that differentiates beings into low and high states."

Buddha

Focus Questions:

Why is accountability for past actions so important in many religions?

Does acknowledging past wrongs alter future behavior?

Have you ever experienced a religious ritual of “cleansing”?

If so, how did it make you feel?

Is there a form of self-examination for UU’s?

Responsive Reading:

Each member takes a turn saying the leading line in regular type, while others say the response in bold.

For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For each time that we have struck out in anger without just cause

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For each time that our greed had blinded us to the needs of others

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For the selfishness which sets us apart and alone

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For falling short of the admonitions of the spirit

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For losing sight of our unity

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle which have fueled the illusion of separateness

We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

from A Litany of Atonement by Robert Eller-Issacs

Closing Words and Extinguishing Chalice:

“The great gifts the Jewish people have given me, through the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, is the reminder that each year, even each new day, brings with it the hope for transformation, for possibility, for forgiveness and acceptance. And that when we bring those qualities of acceptance and forgiveness to our religious community, all of us grow and become better people.”

Rev. Barbara Wells, Paint Branch UU Church