

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP SESSION
THE ROLE OF BEAUTY IN OUR RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE
First Universalist Church, Auburn, Maine, Rev. Glenn H. Turner

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING

“(We) should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of (our lives), in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul.”

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

SILENT REFLECTION

CHECK-IN: (40-50 minutes)

FOCUS: "THE ROLE OF BEAUTY IN OUR RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE"

Beauty. At first I thought simply of a moonless night in August, gazing out at the stars, wondering beyond them. Beauty and awe. A sunset like fire in the sky. And then poetry: “She walks in beauty like the night...” leading to the beauty of the “she.” Physical beauty. Paintings, music, architecture - the stained glass windows in churches and cathedrals. To think about beauty, what it evokes in us, whether it softens or inspires or soothes or delights - I wondered about its role in my religious and spiritual life, and yours. I looked up quotations and saw the differing thoughts people have had about beauty. Here are several:

“Beauty is unbearable, drives us to despair, offering us for a minute the glimpse of an eternity that we should like to stretch out over the whole of time.”

— Albert Camus

“And I learned what is obvious to a child. That life is simply a collection of little lives, each lived one day at a time. That each day should be spent finding beauty in flowers and poetry and talking to animals. That a day spent with dreaming and sunsets and refreshing breezes cannot be bettered.”

— **Nicholas Sparks, *The Notebook***

“I think the biggest lie the devil ever told was that beauty and goodness are the same.”

— **Daniel Nayeri, *Another Faust***

“Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless.”

— **John Ruskin**

“Dwell on the beauty of life. Watch the stars, and see yourself running with them.”

— **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations***

“How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true;
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.”

— **W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats***

“Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”

— **Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason**

DISCUSSION:

Our conversation is about beauty, its role in your religious or spiritual life.

What are the things you find most beautiful? The most awe-inspiring?

In what way do they affect your life?

It is a truism that beauty is skin-deep. What do you find beautiful that is beneath the skin?

LIKES AND WISHES

CLOSING WORDS:

“We need mystery. Creator in her wisdom knew this. Mystery fills us with awe and wonder. They are the foundations of humility, and humility is the foundation of all learning. So we do not seek to unravel this. We honour it by letting it be that way forever.”

The quote of a grandmother explaining The Great Mystery of the universe to her grandson.”

— **Richard Wagamese, Indian Horse**