

**"BEGINNERS MIND. POSSIBLE?"**

First Universalist Church Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner, March 2017

**OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING**

The Buddha said, "Seeing misery in those who cling to views, a wise person should not adopt any of them. A wise person does not by opinions become arrogant. How could anyone bother those who are free, who do not grasp at any views? But those who grasp after views and opinions wander about the world annoying people."

Jack Kornfield recalls his teacher Ajahn Chah shake his head and smile, saying "You have so many opinions. And you suffer so much from them. Why not let them go?"

**SILENT REFLECTION**

CHECK-IN: (40-50 minutes)

**FOCUS: "BEGINNERS MIND. POSSIBLE?"**

Jack Kornfield wrote: "Freedom from views is like a cleaning of the glass, a breath of fresh air. Zen master Shunryu Suzuki calls this open-mindedness "beginner's mind." Listen to Rachel Carson, the great naturalist, as she evokes it: "A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life.""

William Wordsworth wrote an Ode called "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy...

At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

**DISCUSSION:**

Can you sense when you are clinging tightly to your views? How do you feel it in your body?

Do your opinions have an emotional charge to them?

When confronted with contrary view or new ideas, are you open or closed? Do you stop listening and begin preparing a rebuttal or can you suspend disbelief and entertain curiosity?

What areas of knowing, or what opinions, seem most fixed in your mind?

To what degree is it possible not to cling to views?

Is Wordsworth right, that we begin as children with open wonder and end up as an ossified grown-up?

How do you stay fresh?

**LIKES AND WISHES & IDEAS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

**CLOSING WORDS:**

“... there are moments,” says the poet Rilke, “when something new has entered into us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy perplexity, everything in us withdraws, a stillness comes, and the new, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it and is silent.”

May we release our grip on what we think we know, and open our eyes wider to let in more light.