

The Divine

Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL, Stephanie Certain Matz, 4/2007

At the end of the previous session, or sometime before this session, give to group members the preparation page for this session (attached at the end of this document.)

Preliminaries

Remind group members to complete the Ministerial Search Committee survey when they receive it in early May.

Chalice Lighting and Reading

Love all Creation
The whole of it and every grain of sand
Love every leaf
Every ray of God's light
Love the animals
Love the plants
Love everything
You will perceive
The divine mystery in things
And once you have perceived it
You will begin to comprehend it ceaselessly
More and more every day
And you will at last come to love the whole world
With an abiding universal love.
--- Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Check-in.

Transition Meditation

Help the group move from check-in preliminaries to silence with directed deep breathing, soft words, music, or other meditative techniques.

Meditation Reading:

Gentle me, Holy One, into an unclenched moment.
A deep breath, a letting go of Heavy experiences, of shriveling anxieties,
Of dead certainties, that, softened by silence, surrounded by the light, and open to the
mystery, I may be found by wholeness,

Upheld by the unfathomable, entranced by the simple,
And filled with the joy that is you.

--*Ted Loder*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

"The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word god means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself."

--*Paul Tillich*

Part One: Who or what was God to you in your childhood and youth?

Part Two: What do you believe about the divine now?

- What do you believe about "God" or the divine now? How have you experienced it?
- How has your understanding of "divine" changed over the years? What have you kept or left behind?
- What was your reaction to the readings you received?

Check-out

Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice

Reading:

As swimmers dare
To lie face to the sky
And water bears them,
As hawks rest upon air
And air sustains them,
So would I learn to attain
Freefall, and float
Into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
Knowing no effort earns
That all-surrounding grace. --*Denise Levertov*

So May We Be.

Preparation for CCUU Session: The Divine

“Your version of God, like all that is your life, will no doubt be different from mine, and that is not only ok, but we UU’s cherish the fact that our differences enrich our conversation. So my hope and my prayer for you this morning, is not that your version of God comes out just like mine, but only that, when the time comes, and it always will, for debuggings and revisions, that you will take that path of growth, and find it good, and find here in this community the resources and conversations to serve you on the journey.

---From a sermon entitled “God v. 3.5” by Christine Robinson

Food for Thought

Please think about your personal History of the Divine. Draw a picture, a symbol, bring an item, or use words to share about:

The God of your childhood and youth

The God of your now

And, think about these questions:

- What do you believe about “God” or the divine now? How have you experienced it?
- How has your understanding of “divine” changed over the years? What have you kept or left behind?
- What was your reaction to the following readings?

Meditation Readings

“The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word god means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself.”

--Paul Tillich

“Why do you go to the forest in search of the Divine? God lives in all, and abides with you, too. As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror, so the Divine dwells inside everything; seek therefore in your own heart.”

--Tegh Bahadur

"A small child was drawing a picture and the teacher said, 'That's an interesting picture. Tell me about it.' 'It's a picture of God,' said the child. 'Well, nobody knows that God looks like.' 'They will when I get done.'"

--anon

"I found God in myself and I loved her. I loved her fiercely."

--Ntozake Shange

"I believe in Omnipresence and find footsteps in grammar rules, in oyster shops, in church liturgies, in mathematics, in solitude, and in galaxies."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Tell me, what is God? He is the breath inside the breath."

--Kabir

"We can't capture God, but we can tell how we have experienced God."

-- Bishop Sprong

From *The Color Purple*

"I used to believe God was an old white man. But now, here's the thing. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifests itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folks, I think. Sorrow. . .

God ain't a he or she, but a it. Don't look like nothing. It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. I believe God is everywhere. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that, and be happy to feel that, you've found it.

My first step from the old white man was the trees. Then air. Then birds, then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it came to me: that feeling of being a part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laugh and I cry and I run all around the house."

Stephanie Certain Matz, Countryside UU and First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque 4/23/07