

“ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERNESS”

First Universalist Church Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner, Oct. 10, 2017

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING

What a world this will be when human possibilities are freed, when we discover each other, when the stranger is no longer the potential criminal and the certain inferior! W. E. B. Du Bois

And sometimes it's the very otherness of a stranger, someone who doesn't belong to our ethnic or ideological or religious group, an otherness that can repel us initially, but which can jerk us out of our habitual selfishness, and give us intonations of that sacred otherness, which is God.

Karen Armstrong

SILENT REFLECTION

CHECK-IN: (30 minutes) We may wish to share the joys or concerns we've had since last we met as a group: thoughts that have preoccupied us, ideas which have inspired us, worries that keep us on edge, concerns for ourselves or others close to us. Mindful of our time to share (40 minutes or so), you may request more time after we are all through sharing. We each have a little more than 5 minutes to begin with.

FOCUS: “ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERNESS”

If you're like me, you grew up in a neighborhood where most people were like you. White, middle-class, factory workers, English. Or, maybe your parents were well-off and you were surrounded by mansions. Or, maybe you were an ethnic minority in a declining neighborhood. Whatever. In the course of our lives we venture out and encounter people with very different backgrounds, cultures, ideas, values. We still do. There's "us", and those "others." Life is different in the city, the suburbs, in small towns. If we vacation, we may visit very different states like Mississippi or Oregon, Kansas or Louisiana. We might go to Norway, or Peru, or Australia, or Brazil. And what we encounter is otherness: people who are rich or poor, black or Asian, Latino or French, Catholic, or Muslim, you name it. You can't go through life without meeting gays, lesbians, Republicans, Democrats, cross-dressers, the mentally ill, and the self-righteous. Their way of being-in-the-world may be very different than ours. What have you made of this? How has this changed you?

DISCUSSION:

- 1) What have been your experiences with the "other"?
- 2) What did you learn about you? About them?
- 3) What has made you think differently about your own beliefs or life style?
- 4) Just for fun, if you could be reborn on this planet, who and where would you like to be?

LIKES AND WISHES

CLOSING WORDS:

In the Spirit which draws us into honest engagement with one another, including those who may be very different from us in various ways, God calls us to wake up and learn how to love and respect one another, period. Carter Heyward