

Ethical Eating

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“I’d suggest that we begin ... with the agreement to respect each person’s right and need to make choices that work for them. I might be willing to listen to your concerns about the problems of beef production in America or the link between child slavery and chocolate, but you need to know that my decisions about what I eat belong to me, just as yours belong to you. I like the way Sid Baumel, the editor of the Web site eatkind.net puts it, “Ethical eating, like ethical living, is not about absolutes. It’s about doing the best you’re willing and able to do — and nurturing a will to keep doing better.”

~Reverend Christine Brownlie, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Blacksburg, VA

Check-in:

How is your spirit today?

Focus Readings:

"If not for humanitarian or health reasons, then for economic and world-hunger reasons the vast population must eventually turn to vegetarianism. It is well known that the breeding and feeding of animals for slaughter uses more land than raising vegetable crops which can be eaten direct, without passing through animals’ bodies.”

~Helen Nearing (age 75) and Scott Nearing (age 96), Continuing the Good Life (1979)

“This year, my personal challenge is around being thankful for the food I have to eat. I think many people forget that a living being has to die for you to eat meat, so my goal revolves around not letting myself forget that and being thankful for what I have. This year I’ve basically become a vegetarian since the only meat I’m eating is from animals I’ve killed myself. So far, this has been a good experience. I’m eating a lot healthier foods and I’ve learned a lot about sustainable farming and raising of animals.

I started thinking about this last year when I had a pig roast at my house. A bunch of people told me that even though they loved eating pork, they really didn't want to think about the fact that the pig used to be alive. That just seemed irresponsible to me. I don't have an issue with anything people choose to eat, but I do think they should take responsibility and be thankful for what they eat rather than trying to ignore where it came from.”

~Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook)

“Don’t eat anything your great-great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food.”

~Michael Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma

Focus Questions:

1. How do your personal ethics impact your diet? Have you made modifications to your diet due to your personal ethics?

2. How do you think about the carbon footprint of your food, such as apples flown to your supermarket from New Zealand? How do you think about the conditions of the people who produce the food that you eat, such as workers who do not have the benefits of a living wage or health insurance?

3. What kinds of conversations have you had with others about ethical eating? What have been the main points where you feel you have struggled to explain your position, or to understand the position of the other person?

Check-out – Likes and Wishes:

What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different, if anything?

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

“Part of being spiritually open is simply understanding that our lives, our blood, our beating hearts, live because we are sustained by other lives. The great life force flows without interruption through everything. Being conscious of these realities deepens our thanksgiving...would that we could live without taking or using life, but we cannot. Therefore let our eating be an act of worship. Let our table stand like an altar.”

~Reverend Lilli Nye, Theodore Parker Church (Unitarian Universalist), West Roxbury, MA