

## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

### Surprised by Hope

Covenant Group Session 2009–2010 First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist

Written by Rev. Fred Small based on his 4/18/09 sermon “Surprised by Hope”

Found at <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/flexinode/table/15>

#### *Opening Words & Chalice Lighting*

By Howard Thurman

Look well to the growing edge.  
All around us worlds are dying  
and new worlds are being born;  
all around us life is dying and life is being born.  
The fruit ripens on the tree,  
the roots are silently at work  
in the darkness of the earth  
against a time when there shall be new leaves,  
fresh blossoms, green fruit.  
Such is the growing edge.  
It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung,  
the one more thing to try when all else has failed,  
the upward reach of life  
when weariness closes in upon all endeavor.  
This is the basis of hope in moments of despair,  
the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint  
and men and women have lost their reason,  
the source of confidence when worlds crash  
and dreams whiten into ash.  
Such is the growing edge incarnate.  
Look well to the growing edge.

#### *Check-in*

How is it with your spirit?

#### *Reading*

Rev. Fred Small, “Surprise by Hope,” April 18, 2010

“[T]he essence of the ecological worldview is *possibility*,” writes Frances Moore Lappé. “Through an ecological lens, ours is not a finished, fixed world of distinct identities but a relational and evolving world. . . . [N]otions of ‘fixed’ or ‘finished’ are . . . illusions. Mutually created and ever changing—that is reality. . . . Hope is not what we seek in evidence,” Lappé insists, “it is what we become in action.”

This kind of hope, of course, is less like optimism and more like faith, a spiritual practice we choose to companion us on a long and hazardous journey, because we know we’re more likely to arrive safe at our destination with it than without it.

And once we choose hope, hope expands, stretching the walls of our hearts. Once we dedicate ourselves to hope, we see it more and more all around us.

#### *Questions for Contemplation*

- What gives you hope?

- Is hope a natural inclination, a spiritual practice, whistling in the dark, or something else?
- In your life, has hope been helpful or harmful? Why? Always?

### ***Check-Out***

- What did you appreciate most about our covenant group this year? Has the experience/practice of this group changed anything for you?
- What's one thing you're looking forward to this summer?

### ***Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice***

By Deena Metzger

There are those who are trying  
to set fire to the world.  
We are in danger.  
There is time only to work slowly.  
There is no time not to love.  
Amen.

### ***Our covenant***

- To abide by the below set of covenantal statements we developed together.
- To engage in at least one service project to the congregation or larger world.
- To hold an “empty chair” so as to always welcome new members (both into the group as well as into the larger program).
- To make meetings a high priority.
- *Insert the covenant your group developed here.*