

How to Express Awe and Wonder

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. Prepared by Ginger Hobbs

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

“It can prove a transformational and mind-opening experience to put all gods, religions, and supernatural enthusiasms aside and to explore the world from the point of view of a human being who lives, dies, and is as natural as a tiger or a dove. . . . Living the atheist’s way is more than living without gods, religions, and supernatural enthusiasms – much more. It is a way of life that integrates the secular, humanist, scientific, freethinking, skeptical, rationalist, and existential traditions into a complete worldview and that rallies that worldview under the banner of atheism, choosing that precise word as a rallying cry.”

Eric Maisel, *The Atheist’s Way*

Brief Check-ins

Opening Reading –

“Contemplative spirituality is a form of deep reflection on life, on its meaning and its value. This kind of deep reflection allows room for certain things that rationalism by itself misses, such as deep love or grace, something beyond words. . . . The rational mind is unable to get its head around something and then at that very moment people receive understanding through something more intuitive, what we might call spiritual. That kind of spirituality, that form of reflection, is to be applauded rather than denigrated.”

Robert Hardies, Senior Minister at All Souls Church in Washington, DC

“I stay away from even the word spiritual. So it's not so much that I'm into demystifying meditation, as it is, as I am trying to make it so commonsensical to people that they will slap the side of their head and say, ‘Well, of course.’

. . . even the word "meditation" is freighted with so much cultural baggage and so much, really ideological baggage and sort of belief baggage that the essential beauty of it is often really not apparent to people until long after they have somehow wandered into the domain of it.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn on *Speaking of Faith*

A Moment of Silence....

Main Subject: Does the word “spiritual” express something that can be expressed no other way?

Individual communing: 6 minutes per individual, 3 minutes of group response

Are there times when you feel a deep connection to nature or to people, a feeling that is almost beyond words?

Does awe imply spirituality for you?

Do you associate the word spirituality with the supernatural?

Do you prefer to express your awe as part of the natural world?

Is that enough to express the feeling of connection?

Open Discussion (facilitated by Ginger Hobbs)

Is there another way to express awe and wonder without implying the supernatural?

Business:

Next meeting:

Meeting Plan preparer:

Closing:

“ . . . If an experience puts you in mind of your own humanness, your connection to a vast network of natural phenomena, and to mysteries that can't be solved, you can call that an existential experience, or you can call it a spiritual experience. . . . The first returns you to your path of personal responsibility, meaning-making, ethics-making, and authenticity. The second leads you down the primrose path to supernatural enthusiasm.”

Eric Maisel, *The Atheist's Way*