

SMALL GROUP SESSION
THE LAWS OF GOD; THE LAWS OF MAN
Glenn Turner, First Unitarian Universalist Church, Auburn, ME

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

The laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep that will and can;
Not I: let God and man decree
Laws for themselves and not for me;
And if my ways are not as theirs
Let them mind their own affairs.
Their deeds I judge and much condemn,
Yet when did I make laws for them?
Please yourselves, say I, and they
Need only look the other way.
But no, they will not; they must still
Wrest their neighbour to their will,
And make me dance as they desire
With jail and gallows and hell-fire.
And how am I to face the odds
Of man's bedevilment and God's?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.
They will be master, right or wrong;
Though both are foolish, both are strong.
And since, my soul, we cannot fly
To Saturn nor to Mercury,
Keep we must, if keep we can,
These foreign laws of God and man.”
A E Houseman

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “The Laws of God; the Laws of Man”

Great fiction often grapples with the struggle between the desires and wishes of an individual person and the demands of the church and the laws of the state. What is helpful in our lives about submitting to an authority outside of ourselves? When does our personal conscience takes precedent?

When should our personal preferences trump the mores of society? What are the tensions this has posed in your life?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS: “Wild Geese”- Mary Oliver

“You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things, you do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.