

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

The Movies That Made Us Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, NC, Chris Abbate, May 24, 2021

Chalice Lighting & Opening Words:

Each of us brings a separate truth here. We bring the truth of our own life, our story. We do not come as empty vessels, but rather we come as full people, people who have our own story and our own truth. We seek to add to our truths and to our stories. This room is rich with truth, rich with experience. May we recognize the truth and the story of everyone's life. ~ Penny Hackett-Evans

Check-In

Guided Meditation (moderator invites the group members to close their eyes and reads this guided meditation to them, pausing after each line):

Imagine a movie about your life. Begin with the day you were born. Think of your mother, how she felt that day as she prepared to deliver you. Think of your father and his anticipation. Think of the joy of your entire extended family as they waited for your arrival. Think of the name you would be given, as if it had been waiting just for you to carry it. As if all creation had been waiting with bated breath for you. Think of your first breath. The first sound you made. The first sensation you felt. Now think of all the days you were cared for and raised. School days. Young adulthood. Adulthood. Which days or periods of your life should the movie focus on? What were the happiest days? The most difficult? What are the prominent themes in your movie? The turning points? The accomplishments and celebrations? What were the ordinary days in between like? Think of a scene where you are laughing uncontrollably. Where you are the happiest and most content you could possibly be. Think of the people you were with at these times. What is the weather like in your movie? What are the primary colors? Are there any significant objects that reappear, that the viewer is brought back to? Who are the main characters in your movie? The minor characters who make a brief, yet impactful appearance? The people you have loved and who loved you back. Are there any memorable lines in your movie, either something you say, or something someone says to you? What is the sequence of your movie? Is it chronological or does it jump forwards and backwards in time? What is the closing scene? What should the viewer come away with? What should we understand about who you are in the deepest sense possible?

Quotes

I think cinema, movies, and magic have always been closely associated. The very earliest people who made film were magicians. ~ Francis Ford Coppola

Cinema is not only about making people dream. It's about changing things and making people think. ~ Nadine Labaki

Now more than ever we need to talk to each other, to listen to each other and understand how we see the world, and cinema is the best medium for doing this. ~ Martin Scorsese

The cinema has done more for my spiritual life than the church. My ideas of fame, success and beauty all originate from the big screen. Whereas Christian religion is retreating everywhere and

losing more and more influence; film has filled the vacuum and supports us with myths and action-controlling images. ~ John Updike

My style of songwriting is influenced by cinema. I'm a frustrated filmmaker. A fan once said to me, 'Girl, you make me see pictures in my head!' and I took that as a great compliment. That's exactly my intention. ~ Joni Mitchell

The cinema should be human and be part of people's lives; it should focus on ordinary existences in sometimes extraordinary situations and places. That is what really motivates me. ~ Claire Denis

Cinema is not about format, and it's not about venue. Cinema is an approach. Cinema is a state of mind on the part of the filmmaker. I've seen commercials that have cinema in them, and I've seen Oscar-winning movies that don't. I'm fine with this. ~ Steven Soderbergh

Questions for Discussion:

What are your favorite movies? How have these movies shaped and influenced you? Have you watched these movies again over time and if so, how was your reaction to them different?

What types of movies do you like? Why do you think you like these types of movies? Has your taste for certain types of movies changed over time?

What actors or movie characters have influenced you the most and which would you most like to emulate?

How has your life been like a movie? What would be the title of your movie? What would the screenplay be like? What would the score sound like?

What is your favorite oldest movie? What is your favorite more recent movie? Are there any movies you haven't seen, but are planning to see at some time?

Closing Thoughts:

At this moment, as we extinguish the chalice,

We pause to give thanks for this place

Where our transitions make a difference.

Spiritual life is always in transition.

Beloved community is community in transition. ~ Thomas Mickelson & Rev. Jory Agate