

Paradox

Covenant Group Session 2009–2010 First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist
Written by Rev. Fred Small based on his 11/29/09 sermon “Both/And”
Found at <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/flexinode/table/15>

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting

Live at the empty heart of Paradox. I'll dance there with you, cheek to cheek.
- Rumi

Check-in

How is it with your spirit? What did you leave behind to be here today?

Readings:

If you want to become whole,
let yourself be partial.
If you want to become straight,
let yourself be crooked.
If you want to become full,
let yourself be empty.
If you want to be reborn,
let yourself die.
If you want to be given everything,
give everything up.

- Tao Te Ching

Love means to love that which is unlovable,
or it is no virtue at all;
forgiving means to pardon the unpardonable,
or it is no virtue at all;
faith means believing the unbelievable,
or it is no virtue at all;
And to hope means hoping when things are hopeless,
or it is no virtue at all.

-G.K. Chesterton

How wonderful that we have met with a paradox. Now we have some hope of making progress.

- Niels Bohr

Questions for Contemplation

- What are some examples of paradox, or both/and thinking, in your own life? How do you deal with those paradoxes?
- Are there limits to living in a both/and world? Where would you draw the line? Is there anything in your belief system that doesn't have room for paradox?

- What kinds of paradoxes do you deal with spiritually (i.e. the presence/absence of god? Destiny vs. free will? etc.)?
- How do you wrestle with paradox around questions of identity (race, gender, sexual preference, class, age, physical ability)?
- In what ways can we become better equipped to live with paradox—our own and other people's? Is the ability to live with paradox something we come to through experiences or are there practices that can help us cultivate this ability?
- In his sermon Fred said that if your religion can't handle paradox, it's not a religion, it's anesthesia. Is our UU faith uniquely qualified to help us cultivate a comfort with paradox? Do you see places where it fails?

Check-out

Likes and Wishes

Closing Words & Extinguishing of Chalice

To live in this world, you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends upon it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go
- Mary Oliver

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.*