

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
“Patriotism”
Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist
Congregation, Davie, FL

Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

Opening Words:

A recurring question is whether it's patriotic to question one's own country. I'm not sure about other nations but certainly in the US there is no fundamental reason why questioning is unpatriotic. Like any human institution, our nation is a flawed one and it's part of the greatness of the US that we, the citizens, can criticize it. Patriotism shades in to jingoism when that questioning ceases, when the country is no longer viewed as doing things because they're right but that things are right because the country does them

- post on blog.thought-mesh.net

Check-in/Sharing

Topic/Reading:

“My dad was an immigrant. He was so grateful to be an American citizen. He loved the American flag. I don't remember our family ever being without our own flag. Our front porch always had a special holder for the flag. My dad had a special ritual, putting the flag out on every holiday commemorating the American nation – Fourth of July, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day. I learned about patriotism from my father, who was a real patriot.

He didn't talk about the war he was in, fighting the Red Army when they invaded his home country, the Republic of Georgia, in the early 1920's. He lost an eye in that war; he lost family members in the fighting and others executed by the Bolsheviks after the war; he lost his home and his homeland.

He was proud of the American ideals of freedom: Freedom of speech, of assembly; freedom of the press; freedom of religion. He never missed voting in an election, even when he became bedridden. He believed that our country, our flag, and our elected leaders deserved our respect.

During World War II, patriotism for my father demanded sacrifice, service and paying his share; he wanted to defend our ideals and freedoms and was devastated not to be permitted to fight during the Second World War. Instead, because he spoke or read several dozen languages, he worked as a code breaker.

What is to be a patriot? I knew what the word patriot meant to my father. But what does it mean today? As a feminist, I even feel awkward speaking about patriotism. It is not a gender inclusive word. It literally means love of fatherland. But I am an American patriot. I connect the word with the vision of particular men who created a vision of a new nation, who authored and fought for the adoption of the American Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the

Bill of Rights. I am aware of the limits and foibles of these men and am still able to affirm their legacy.

For me, to be an American patriot means to love our nation - its land, its people, its history, and its vision of human rights which has been expanding to encompass more and more of the human family and which has, until recently, been a model and beacon of hope to our world. To be a patriot, like supporting any great cause, requires sacrifice, service and sharing resources. It means being informed, engaged citizens. It means accepting responsibility for continuing to make real the vision of freedom of our founding fathers.

- *Mary Grigoli*

Questions for consideration:

What does patriotism mean to you? Have you gone through different stages of love for this country? Are there times when it is more difficult for you to affirm patriotism? At times like these, what reminds you of the value or the values of our nation? When is patriotism healthy; when is it idolatrous?

Likes and Wishes/Feedback

Closing Words:

True patriotism is not against the rest of the world. Patriotism, love of country is not the highest value. There are other values "One nation under God", one nation under something greater, the whole human family; but the two are not opposed. This is an important and critical time in the history of our country. It is up to us to hold, to bear, to defend the vision of our founders, the integrity of our hearts, and the future of the American dream.

- *Arvid Straube*

Amen. May you go in peace. May you live in blessing.