

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Covenant Group Session for May 2009

Play: (Sacred) Play

Johnson, Rev. Maj-Britt, Chapel Hill, NC

Chalice Lighting

As the colors of the rainbow play inside the flame, as the flame plays with the molecules in the air, as the air plays against the fibers of our skin, may the lighting of our chalice remind us to play this day like the sacred fools we were created to be. By this may we become co-creators of a transformational life.

Brief Check-in: In the spirit of play (which is our topic) we'll do a different kind of check-in today. Pause a minute to think of one word which would describe the emotion or energy that is most present in you at this moment. Then we'll stand up, one at a time and say our name and then the word. We'll do this dramatically. Use your whole body to describe the emotion or energy that is you at this moment.

Readings

1. *“To Native Americans, the path of the Sacred Clown is...considered a spiritual calling, essential to the smooth functioning of the tribe. Most every tribe had their Clowns. The Oglala and Lakota called them Heyoka (“crazy”), the Arapaho called them Ha Hawkan (“holy idiot”), and both peoples considered them religious specialists. The Salish people honor the memory of a Clown who (not so long ago) challenged a missionary. The missionary was enticing people to come to his church by handing out little mirrors to them while urging them to cover their bodies with white folks’ clothes. It is told with a smile that the Clown... walked into the church one Sunday wearing nothing but a hat and old shoes!... Nothing was sacred to a Sacred Clown. (S)he was a social critic of the highest order... The power of the Clown is the power of life itself.*

Peggy Andreas, in her article [Path of the Sacred Clown](#)

2. *“Coyote. Nasrudin. St. Francis and his order of Jesters of the Lord. Zen masters. Taoist sages. Hasidic storytellers. Clowns and performance artists. Such prophets — and all the spiritual traditions have them — encourage us not to take ourselves too seriously. They say that what we know is often not worth knowing, and what's worth knowing cannot be known through our ways. To our sensible selves, their actions seem silly, shameless, even shocking. But they have an important role in the spiritual life. They carry the banner for the spiritual practice of **play**.*

Play is the exuberant expression of our being. It is at the heart of our creativity, our sexuality, and our most carefree moments of devotion. It helps us live with absurdity, paradox, and mystery. It feeds our joy and wonder. It keeps our search for meaning down to earth.” (<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices>)

Question –How is your relationship to play these days?

Guidelines for Sharing – (leader reads these guidelines, or has another person do it)

We'll each share on either the question or whatever came up after hearing the readings, or both.

We'll each speak for about _____ minutes, with no cross talk or interruptions. It is wise to speak in the first person, "I think, I feel..."

When we are listening: Try to listen to each other as if you were listening to, or watching, your own thoughts. Let others' words simply fall down into your heart. It is not necessary to give the person reassurances that they are being heard, such as nodding or eye contact. By simply listening together we create a holding space for each speaker. That is enough.

When it is your turn to speak it is not necessary to respond to the persons who have gone before you, though you may find yourself building on what has been shared already. Find out what your own inner wisdom wants to say. Together we create a quilt of wisdom, the design is a surprise.

After everyone has shared...

Likes and Wishes – (If there is time, briefly) What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different if anything?

Extinguishing the chalice and closing words

In Jewish tradition it is said that: "At the end of life we will be asked to account for all the good things in life God gave us - which we did not enjoy fully." May we go remembering to _____ (group can fill in the blank) - Play heartily, smile often and laugh loudly, especially at ourselves.

