

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Covenant Group Session 2009-2010
Pray, Meditate, Contemplate

First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist

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Opening Words & Chalice Lighting

Hear me, four quarters of the world.

A relative I am!

Give me the strength to walk the soft earth.

Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand.

Look upon these faces of children without numbers,

That they may face the winds and walk the good road to the day of quiet.

This is my prayer; hear me.

—Black Elk

Check-in

Readings

Pray as you can, not as you can't.

—John Chapman

But genuine prayer is based on recognizing the Origin of all that exists, and opening ourselves to it. . . . One can then communicate with this Source, worship it, and ultimately place one's very center in it.

—Piero Ferrucci, *Ineffable Grace* as quoted in *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*

But when we have been in touch with the ultimate dimension, then whether our temple or our practice center burns down, whether people smear our reputation, are jealous of us, or accuse us unjustly, we can still smile and be peaceful and joyful as usual. What we thought to be success, what we thought to be the basis of our happy life, we do not need anymore. Because our happiness is already there in the ultimate dimension, it goes beyond all ideas of success and failure.

—Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Energy of Prayer*

Meditation is our support for learning to open to our discomfort. It gives us a way to move closer to our thoughts and emotions, a way to cultivate lovingkindness and compassion—the qualities of *bodhicitta*, the fully awakened heart and mind.

—James Shaheen, *Commit to Sit*

The mysteries of faith are degraded if they are made into an object of affirmation and negation, when in reality they should be an object of contemplation.

—Simone Weil

The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival.

—Aristotle

Questions for Contemplation

- Do you have a practice of prayer, meditation, or contemplation? What is it like? What is your experience with it?
- What do you see as the purposes and benefits of prayer, meditation, or contemplation? Are there any rules?
- If you pray, who, if anything, are praying to? Is prayer possible if you don't believe in God?
- What room, if any, do you see for prayer, meditation or contemplation in your UU faith?

Check-out

Likes and Wishes

Closing Words & Extinguishing of Chalice

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes.

(i who have died am alive again today,
And this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
Breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginably You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened).

—e.e. cummings

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.*