

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Chalice Circle Session - **PRAYER**
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark, March 2015, Rev. Andrew Weber

Chalice Lighting

Prayer invites God to be present in our spirits and in our lives. Prayer cannot bring water to parched land, nor mend a broken bridge, nor rebuild a ruined city, but prayer can water an arid soul, mend a broken heart, and rebuild a weakened will.

- Abraham J. Heschel

Check-In: What's going on in your life? Pray the prayer you have chosen (as a prayer, not as a reading).

Readings:

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

- John Chapman

Father Peter, the abbot of his first monastery, used to say: "Pray for miracles, but plant cabbages."

- Ken Follett, "The Pillars of the Earth"

I pray on the principle that wine knocks the cork out of a bottle. There is an inward fermentation, and there must be a vent.

- Henry Ward Beecher

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.

- Mahatma Gandhi

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.

- Søren Kierkegaard

I talk to God but the sky is empty.

- Sylvia Plath

Questions:

1. What spoke to you (or didn't speak to you) from the readings?
2. How did the spiritual practice go for you? What about the prayer spoke to you?
3. What does prayer mean for you? What does it do/not do for you?
4. Are there times you pray without noticing it (ex. an internal "thank you" for traffic ceasing or unspoken "help me" in a time of need...)
5. Is it possible to pray if you don't know what you are praying to?
6. What's the purpose of prayer?

Check-Out: One sentence on "likes and wishes" from the session.

Closing:

Go in the trust that your prayers are heard, even if they are never uttered. Go in the trust that your prayers are answered, even if all you receive is an echo. Go in the trust that prayer can both empty you and fill you. Go empty. Go full.

Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark
Spiritual Practice - **PRAYER**
March 2015

In March we are exploring the ministry theme of prayer. For me, and I think many Unitarian Universalists, prayer is not a very comfortable topic. When I think of prayer I have a vision of someone asking a divine being for favor. Whether I believe in a divine, otherworldly being or not, this is not how I would prefer our interactions. But that is only one aspect of the enriching practice of prayer. I have found the difficulties of prayer to diminish as I further my use of this spiritual practice.

The Rev. Daniel Budd has this to say about prayer, “It is a personal matter, an intimate aspect of our living, and not the public proof of our righteousness. Prayer begins in the heart, that secret place within us all. Other living traditions have taught me that prayer is an honest expression of how we are in the very depths and doubts of our souls.”

Through the month we will explore different purposes and different means of prayer, including silence, song, unison and individual words. Part of the exploration is a personal charge. The spiritual practice for March is to find a prayer that speaks to you. When you have found (or composed) such a prayer, share it with your chalice circle, or with another close friend or friends. If you need someone to share your prayer with, come on by - I will be happy to pray with you.

Some of you may already have a favorite prayer. For others this may seem a difficult or useless task. I encourage you to engage with it despite hard feelings. As a resource, use the back of our hymnal, [Singing the Living Tradition](#), and this website: www.worldprayers.org. WorldPrayers.org has prayers listed by subject, and a “prayer wheel” which produces a random prayer. Try to reflect on the question, what is the difference between a reading and a prayer?

As you delve into prayer, keep in mind Abbot John Chapman’s words, “Pray as you can, not as you can’t.”