

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session Plan

The Role of Myths

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. Prepared by Ginger Hobbs, Jan. 26, 2011

Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Mythology: **a** : an allegorical narrative : [MYTH](#), [PARABLE](#) **b** : a body of [myths](#) : as (1) : the [myths](#) dealing with the gods, demigods, and legendary heroes of a particular people in stories that involve supernatural elements <the *mythology* of ancient Greece> (2) : a body of [myths](#) arising from a situation (as an activity or a historical event).

Merriam Webster Unabridged Dictionary

Brief Check-ins

Opening Readings –

“We all know that myths and legends are powerful stuff—particularly because our minds take them in so quickly and deeply. Almost instantly, these stories mean something to us and become part of our view of the world. Of course, they don’t depend on truth or factual content for their power, and the depth of the impression they make ‘it might have been thus’—is just as powerful as—perhaps more powerful than—‘it was.’”

Robert Buckman, *Can We Be Good Without God?—
Behavior, Belonging and the Need to Believe*

“...we all believe, and we all mythologize. We communicate our most difficult and abstract concepts such as our beliefs. . . . Myths and legends serve specific and important functions in the way human minds work. . . . That’s not the problem. The problems for humankind begin when myths are taken literally.”

Robert Buckman, *Can We Be Good Without God?—
Behavior, Belonging and the Need to Believe*

. . . people have begun to take the existence of their supporting social orders for granted, and instead of aiming to defend and maintain the integrity of the community have begun to place at the center of concern the development and protection of the individual—the individual, moreover, not as an organ of the state but as an end and entity in himself. This marks an extremely important, and unprecedented shift of ground . . .”

Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By*

A Moment of Silence....

Main Subject: Does mythology have a role in modern secular society?

Individual communing: 6 minutes per individual, 3 minutes of group response

What mythology did you grow up with?

How does mythology influence your life now?

Do you think the creation of heroes is a kind of mythology?

Are myths powerful even if we know they aren't factual?

Do we need new myths to encourage social commitment to society?

Open Discussion

Can myths have a place for humanists?

Business:

Next meeting location: _____ Meeting Plan preparer: _____

Closing

“Conclusion: the structure of the human brain is such that experiences of god and heaven are hard-wired into it. Our brains lead us to readily undergo experiences that we have chosen to call god or spirituality or oneness-with-the-universe or similar words or names. If the limbic system is activated by means of the right temporal lobe, a person will have an experience of the spiritual or divine type. God is—literally—a state of mind.”

Robert Buckman, *Can We Be Good Without God?—
Behavior, Belonging and the Need to Believe*