

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry
Science and Religion
First Parish Church of Stow and Action, MA, October 2018

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

The most beautiful and deepest experience a (person) can have is the sense of the mysterious. It is the underlying principle of religion as well as all serious endeavor in art and science. He who never had this experience seems to me, if not dead, then at least blind. – *Albert Einstein*

Check-in/ Sharing: This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share.

Topic: Science and Religion

Has science made belief in God obsolete? Are there any valid science-based arguments for God? Or do religion and science inhabit two non-overlapping spheres that cannot be reconciled? Because Unitarian Universalism comes out of a long tradition of intellectual and scientific thinking, and has long been a spiritual home for humanists in particular, our faith offers something unique to this ongoing dialogue.

“Scientists are fond of asking questions, particularly those with answers...questions without answers could be important, but science tries not to tangle with them...these are the questions for the philosophers.” - *Owen Gingerich, astronomer*

"Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. When we recognize our place in an immensity of light-years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the intricacy, beauty, and subtlety of life, then that soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility combined, is surely spiritual...The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both." - *Carl Sagan*

“Today science marches on not so much via proofs as through the persuasive coherency of the picture it presents. What passes for truth in science in a comprehensive pattern of interconnected answers to questions posed to nature—explanations of how things work...though not necessarily why they work...” - *Owen Gingerich, astronomer*

"God was invented to explain mystery. God is always invented to explain those things that you do not understand." - *Richard Feynman, physicist*

"Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes." - Pope John Paul II

“If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change. In my view, science and Buddhism share a search for the truth and for understanding reality. By learning from science about aspects of reality where its understanding may be more advanced, I believe that Buddhism enriches its own worldview.”— *Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Could you share some of your early memories of learning about science (astronomy, biology, chemistry, earth science, physics...)? Could you also share early memories of learning about religion and faith?
2. Do you use science and religion for different questions or aspects or guidance in your life? Do they overlap in any areas?
3. How does your understanding of science *inform* or *interfere* with your religious/spiritual beliefs?
4. Do you believe critical thinking can or should be used in the same way for questions related to science and questions related to religion?
5. What is the relationship, for you, between science and faith? Are they mutually exclusive?
6. What “questions without answers” do you carry with you?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words:

“The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it.” - *Neil deGrasse Tyson*

Adapted from the First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist, by Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur and the Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, Maine.