

## Science and Spirituality

Covenant Group Session 2009–2010, First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist

Written by Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur based on her 4/25/09 “Science & Spirituality” sermon

Found at <http://www.firstparishcambridge.org/flexinode/table/15>

### *Opening Words and Chalice Lighting*

What we call a beginning is often the end  
and to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.

We shall not cease from exploration  
and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
and know the place for the first time.  
-- T.S. Eliot

### *Check-in*

### *Readings*

... the universe itself is continually incarnating itself in microbes and maples, in humming birds and human beings, constantly inviting us to tease out the revelation contained in stars and atoms and every living thing. A language of reverence... begins with our understanding of this story as a religious story--a vision of reality that contains within it the sources of a moral, ethical, transcendent self-understanding. – Rev. David Bumbaugh, Unitarian Universalist minister

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

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

The universe is made of stories—not atoms.  
-- Muriel Ruykeyser, 20<sup>th</sup> century poet and activist

### *Questions for Contemplation*

In a both/and world, science and religion do not have to be in opposition with one another. 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.

- What is one of your earliest memories of learning about the sciences (astronomy, biology, chemistry, earth science, physics...)?
- What are the limits, if any, of scientific knowledge, as you understand it?
- How does your understanding of science inform your faith?
- What “questions without answers” or “questions for the philosophers” are you carrying with you today?

### ***Check-out***

### ***Closing Words and Extinguishing of Chalice***

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.

- Albert Einstein

### ***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.*