

Chalice Lighting

We are here to abet creation and to witness to it, to notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house.

- Annie Dillard

Check-In:

What brought you to UUFN? What made you stay?

Topic:

Readings

I believe our identities are formed by stories told to us, about us, and around us. We are living texts, formed by multiple, interweaving, competing, and, sometimes, conflicting stories that we receive from our culture via our parents, other adults, our peers, the media, and congregational life. Stories about race, gender, theology, generational differences, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class work consciously and unconsciously to form our identity. Stories also teach us values, ethics, and meaning. Stories help us know who we are and who we are not; they create boundaries, or borders, for us. Identity development can be thought of as the process of refining, editing (redacting), and authoring one's own story in conversation with others. We find our identity in particular contexts - home, school, the marketplace, or church, to name a few. We can think of each of those contexts as a holding environment. Whereas the first holding environment is the mother's womb, we continue to develop in holding environments all along our adolescence and throughout adulthood. Individual and group identities are formed in holding environments, or containers.

from *The Power of Stories*, by Jacqueline J. Lewis

(on the other side of the paper)

- *The Invitation*, by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Questions:

1. What spoke to you (or didn't speak to you) from the readings?
2. What does it mean to have a "story"?
3. If you have done the Spiritual Practice: What was listening like for you? What came up that you didn't expect?
4. Who did you choose to interview and why?
5. Have you shared your story with someone?
6. What is part of your story that you want to share?

Check-Out:

One sentence on "likes and wishes" from the session.

Closing

The blessing of truth be upon us, the power of love direct us and sustain us, and may the peace of this community preserve our going out and our coming in, from this time forth, until we meet again.

- Rev. Duke T. Gray

The Invitation
by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.
I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare
to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.
I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool
for love, for your dream, for the adventure of
being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring
your moon.
I want to know if you have touched the center of
your own sorrow, if you have been opened by
life's betrayals or have become shriveled and
closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or
your own, without moving to hide it or fade it or
fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or
your own, if you can dance with wildness and let
the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and
toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be
realistic, to remember the limitations of being
human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling
me is true.

I want to know if you can disappoint another to
be true to yourself; if you can bear the
accusation of betrayal and not betray your own
soul; if you can be faithless and therefore
trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty, even when
it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source
your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours
and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or
how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up, after the night
of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the
bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the
children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you
came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand in the center of
the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom
you have studied.
I want to know what sustains you, from the inside,
when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself
and if you truly like the company you keep in
the empty moments.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark
Spiritual Practice - **STORY**
September 2014

As a way to very deeply engage the theme personally, we are also going to have monthly spiritual practices. These will be publicized in the Newsletter and promoted through the Chalice Circles. This will be a way for us all to engage more fully with our individual and communal spiritual growth. This may be confusing by now, so I will start us off with our first spiritual practice for the month of September.

The ministry theme for September is “Story”. The first spiritual practice is to interview someone in your life. Not an interview to be reported back on, but one where you take the time and energy to listen deeply (more listening, not talking!) You can interview a romantic partner, family member, stranger on the bus, friend... that’s up to you. In preparation for this spiritual practice of listening, I encourage you to use the model used on storycorps.com. If you need inspiration, watch or listen to a couple stories on the site. Here are some great sample questions: storycorps.org/great-questions (You don’t have to record the interview, and let’s all shoot for half an hour of listening to another’s story.)