

"TAKING TIME TO GO NOWHERE"

First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner, January 2019

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

The travel writer, Pico Iyer, found and visited with Leonard Cohen on a mountain top near Los Angeles where Cohen had spent 40 years attending a Japanese abbot. Cohen said he'd come close to finding lasting happiness in spite of life's "challenges and disruptions." "Nothing touches it." "Going nowhere as Cohen described it, was the grand adventure that makes sense of everywhere else."

"Sitting still as a way of falling in love with the world and everything in it; I'd seldom thought of it like that. Going nowhere as a way of cutting through the noise and finding fresh time and energy to share with others; I'D sometimes moved toward the idea, but had never come home to me so powerfully as in the example of this man who seemed to have everything, yet found his happiness, his freedom, in giving everything up."

"I observed the sense of attention, kindness, and even delight that seemed to arise out of his life of going nowhere - I began to think about how liberating that might be for any of us to give it a try. One could start just by taking a few minutes out of every day to sit quietly and do nothing, letting what moves us rise to the surface. One could take a few days out of every season to go on retreat or enjoy a long walk in the wilderness, recalling what lies deeper than the moment or the self..." one might be reminded, "at a level deeper than all words, how making a living and making a life sometimes point in opposite directions."

from "The Art of Stillness" by Pico Iyer

MOMENTS OF SILENT REFLECTION

Now, let's take 5 minutes to invite the experience silliness into our own minds and bodies.

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, or issues you are facing. As you prepare to speak, pause for a moment or two to collect your thoughts.

FOCUS: "TAKING TIME TO GO NOWHERE"

It seems like there are more frequent articles in the newspapers and on the internet about the importance of meditation, of taking time out for rest or relaxation, or exercise, and, a few days ago a long article on the importance of sleep for rejuvenation, add for processing learning.

READING:

"It takes courage, of course, to step out of the fray, as it takes courage to do anything that's necessary, whether tending to a loved one on her deathbed or turning away from that sugarcoated doughnut. And with billions of our global neighbors in crying need, with so much in every life that has to be done, it can sound selfish to take a break or go off to a quiet place. But as soon as

you do sit still, you find that it actually brings you closer to others, in both understanding and sympathy. As the meditative video artist Bill Viola notes, it's the man who steps away from the world whose sleeve is wet with tears for it." - Pico Iyer, "The Art of Stillness"

DISCUSSION

1. What leads you to be distracted, or compulsive in ways that take you away from yourself, that add an edge of anxiety to you, that cause you to tire, become restless, or burn out? How do you imagine that stillness might affect these situations?
2. Name the demons: what things keep our wheels spinning?
3. What are the ways you have of stepping aside, of finding space to settle, slow, or still the rat-race?
4. Can you commit time to practice stillness? Why yes or no?

LIKES, WISHES, NEW BUSINESS, DATES

CLOSING WORDS

In an age of speed, I begin to think, nothing could be more invigorating than going slow.

In an age of distraction, nothing can feel more luxurious than paying attention.

And in an age of constant movement, nothing is more urgent than sitting still.

You can go on vacation to Paris or Hawaii or New Orleans three months from now, and you'll have a tremendous time, I'm sure. But if you want to come back feeling new - alive and full of fresh hope and involve with the world - I think the place to visit may be Nowhere. Pico Iyer "The Art of Stillness"