

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session
WELLSPRINGS OF OUR RELIGIOUS VALUES
First Universalist Church, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner, Feb.15.2021

OPENING WORDS AND CHALICE LIGHTING

“We meet together each time to reflect upon and understand our lives.
We bring our pasts and share them; we bring our dreams and express them.
We use words, silence, and gestures.
Words can’t define our lives,
But they help us to reach out to each other,
that we may be renewed, connected, and unburdened.”
This is the work of our small community. - *Judy Mannheim*

MOMENTS OF MEDITATION/REFLECTION Let us pause in silence,
allowing our thoughts and feelings to settle before we begin our sharing.

SHARING/CHECK-IN Let us focus on our joys and concerns, what is troubling
us, what is inspiring us, what is weighing on our minds and calling for attention.

READINGS

I understood at a very early age that in nature, I felt everything I should feel in
church but never did. Walking in the woods, I felt in touch with the universe and
with the spirit of the universe. *Alice Walker*

I haven't been baptised. My dad's not in the church and is not a religious person.
My mum is more spiritual - she does Thai-chi and goes to Stonehenge and things
like that. I'm proud to be pagan. Finland is not really a religious country. I'm still
looking for my god. *Ville Valo*

My aunt Geraldine was the unofficial historian and storyteller. She had all the
information about family members and the gossip that came out of the church
because we were very much part of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.
At family gatherings, the older folk had the floor, had pride of place, and it was
their stories I remember. *John Edgar Wideman*

“The church exists primarily for two closely correlated purposes: to worship God
and to work for his kingdom in the world ... The church also exists for a third
purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one
another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and
teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up,
and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as
fellowship.” **N.T. Wright**, [Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense](#)

FOCUS: "WELLSPINGS OF OUR RELIGIOUS VALUES"

I think there's an assumption that the wellsprings of our religious values and ethical behavior comes from our participation in the community and belief systems of our churches. I think that's true for all of us in our small group. The concern I've heard from parents throughout my ministry is: What's happening to our children as so many of them drop away from church during or after high school? What's happening in the spiritual lives of our grandchildren when our children don't attend church as adults and therefore the grandchildren have no church experience or religious acculturation at all? Where will they get their values? What values will they get? What are the benefits and losses of an unchurched life?

Our various religions, denominations, and sects (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.) all offer community, community service, a sense of shared values, a set of ethics, history, stories, and rites and rituals. They have a rich history of stirring music, of religious education, along with their differing ways of nourishing spirituality. They have engaged us with the big questions of who we are, why we are here, and how we should act.

If that is not the road our grandchildren will travel, where will they find community, how will they nurture their spiritual lives?

Some questions:

What does it mean to be "religious?" Or, "spiritual?"

What did you learn/experience in your childhood church? Your church experience as an adult?

What are the values you hold to be most important? Were they learned in church or elsewhere?

Is church participation necessary to lead a rich, full life?

Is religious/cultural osmosis enough to sustain us?

What are the secular institutions or resources that play a similar role as the church?

LIKES AND WISHES
HOUSEKEEPING

CLOSING WORDS: We are grateful for this community, for the opportunity to listen and learn, and for the deepening of our friendship. May we support one another on our journeys.