

Multiculturalism

Rev. Maj-Britt Johnson, Community Church UU, Chapel Hill, NC, April 2012

Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting

Come in from the cold:

Make yourself a religious home,
if only for these brief moments---
in spite of time,
which shall soon bear us away from one another.

Make this a family.

Treat us as your own;

Make us a religious family---
if only in this space,
which we make sacred
by our connections here and beyond.

Come on in.

Make yourself at home.

Sing and love life.

---*Andrew Backus*

Meditation: A minute or two for silent meditation and centering

Check in:

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing. Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted for approximately ____ minutes.

Guidelines for Sharing – (leader reads these guidelines, or has another person do it, then s/he can repeat the questions again)

After we hear the story and the questions, we'll each speak for about ____ minutes, with no cross talk. In other words, no advice-giving, blaming, setting someone straight, saving, fixing. To avoid cross-talk it is wise to speak in the first person. Give yourself permission to keep the focus on yourself for this brief time.

When you are listening: Let others' words simply fall down into your heart. It is not necessary to give the person reassurances that they are being heard, such as nodding, or even eye contact. By simply deeply listening, together, we create a compassionate, holding space for each speaker. Comfort and care can be offered after the group session, but during the session may actually interfere with an individual's own discernment.

When it is your turn to speak it is not necessary to respond to the persons who have gone before you, though you may find yourself building on what has been shared already. Find out what your own inner wisdom wants to say. Together we create a quilt of wisdom, the design is a surprise.

Introduction to the topic

From the UUA website:

“Multiculturalism encompasses many aspects of identity—race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ability/disability, class, age, language and citizenship status, etc. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) takes seriously the intersection of identities; as

the work of building Beloved Community moves forward, our resources will reflect a growing understanding of the complexity of multiculturalism as personal, cultural, and institutional identity.”

Poem: What is Culture (found on the internet...be sure to change the last word in the poem if you need to in your own mind :)

What is Culture?
What we think of in Rumbek
What we think of in Jerusalem
What we think of in Moscow
All different things we think, say,
Do and make at different places at the same time
What differentiates a man from insects, birds and beasts?

If you don't have a culture
You're a housefly
If you don't keep your culture
You're a beetle or cockroach
If you adopt a culture
You're a tick
If you hate other's culture
You're a toad
If you don't hate or love other's culture
You're real man

David Aoloch Bion

Suggestion to leaders: Have the group take a few minutes to write down all the aspects of their own cultural identity, based on the UUA definition of multiculturalism (above) before addressing the questions.

Questions: Choose the one that speaks the most to you.

1. According to the UUA website, multiculturalism isn't just about “culture” per se. If that is so, then we all have complex cultural identities made up of (or several) ethnicities, a sexual orientation, a gender, a class identity, a language and citizenship status.

Q. Is this a different way of thinking about multiculturalism for you?

Q. How does it affect your thoughts and feelings about your own place in the world?

2. “Ethnic” doesn't apply only to the aisle in the grocery store where you can find Goya products, or the section of CVS where you find “black” hair products (and then only in some neighborhoods!). Everyone comes from some ethnic background, even if it's been lost to them, including people of European descent.

Q. What was, or is your culture/ethnicity? How did it express itself, or not express itself in your family, when you were growing up?

Q. How does your cultural background affect your life today?

Q. How does your ethnicity come into play when it comes to your sense of belonging and inclusion here in our congregation?

Likes and Wishes – What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different if anything?

Closing words

May unity and peace abide within us.

May wholeness and joy touch our hearts.

May kindness and compassion fill our universe
and reverence fill our days.

May we see the light that shines in all.

----*Gary Kowalski*