



UU Congregation of Phoenix

September 2018

Community



Community offers the promise of belonging, and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence. To belong is to act as an investor, owner, and creator of this place.

To be welcome, even if we are strangers.

As if we came to the right place and are affirmed for that choice. -- Peter Block

Welcoming all in building community, being and becoming a spiritual community for our time – UU Phoenix is a congregation that names community as its core purpose in both its mission and its vision. Knowing the value of belonging, UUCP works with intentionality to create and sustain community in a time when so many in our world feel isolated, dishonored, cut adrift. The call to be a welcoming, nurturing community is a mandate for this congregation in a challenging time.

We need meaningful and supportive human relationships that make it possible for us to accept people with whom we disagree, to love people despite their crochets, and to forgive them their faults as we seek forgiveness for our own. -- Conrad Wright, Unitarian historian

Living into our commitment to be a theologically diverse, radically inclusive, justice centered community, we build meaningful relationships, creating a beacon of hope that shines the light of love and acceptance into the dark and divisive forces at work around us.

We are moving through the rich time of transition in this congregation, in a nation and a world that are experiencing tumultuous change, a time of discovery and growth. This is a time in which we rely on love and community, and on the courage of our sustaining values, to be fully present to the struggle and the possibility. Now is the time when the support, the nourishment, the encouragement of our spiritual community is more important than ever. No one of us can achieve that vision of diversity, inclusion and justice on our own – it takes a community to live into a grand vision.

Making the best use of this rich and rewarding transitional time, we continue together to explore, to learn, to deepen our connections and nourish our vitality as a community based in love. We build community in the circle and around the table, sharing meals, challenging ourselves with new ideas, challenging systems of oppression and building new hope of love.

Quotes and Thoughts for Reflection Community

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The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members. - Coretta Scott King

Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of a community, we will continue to choose not to be. – Peter Block

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own. - Cesar Chavez

A true community is not just about being geographically close to someone or part of the same social web network. It's about feeling connected and responsible for what happens. Humanity is our ultimate community, and everyone plays a crucial role. - Yehuda Berg

Empathy is the starting point for creating a community and taking action. It's the impetus for creating change. - Max Carver



Together Hymn for September

#402 From You I Receive

*From you I receive, to you I give,
together we share, and from this we live.*

Story for Reflection:
The Difference Between Heaven and Hell

Long ago there lived an old woman who had a wish. She wished more than anything to see for herself the difference between heaven and hell. The monks in the temple agreed to grant her request. They put a blindfold around her eyes, and said, "First you shall see hell."

When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was standing at the entrance to a great dining hall. The hall was full of round tables, each piled high with the most delicious foods — meats, vegetables, fruits, breads, and desserts of all kinds! The smells that reached her nose were wonderful.

The old woman noticed that, in hell, there were people seated around those round tables. She saw that their bodies were thin, and their faces were gaunt, and creased with frustration. Each person held a spoon. The spoons must have been three feet long! They were so long that the people in hell could reach the food on those platters, but they could not get the food back to their mouths. As the old woman watched, she heard their hungry desperate cries. "I've seen enough," she cried. "Please let me see heaven."

And so again the blindfold was put around her eyes, and the old woman heard, "Now you shall see heaven." When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was confused. For there she stood again, at the entrance to a great dining hall, filled with round tables piled high with the same lavish feast. And again, she saw that there were people sitting just out of arm's reach of the food with those three-foot long spoons.

But as the old woman looked closer, she noticed that the people in heaven were plump and had rosy, happy faces. As she watched, a joyous sound of laughter filled the air.

And soon the old woman was laughing too, for now she understood the difference between heaven and hell for herself. The people in heaven were using those long spoons to feed each other.



Source:

The Difference Between Heaven and Hell, traditional story adapted by Elisa Pearmain
retrieved from

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session1/sessionplan/stories/109416.shtml>

Small Group Ministry Session Plan

Theme: Community

September 2018

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“Religious faith is basically an act—the act of giving one’s self into the keeping of what commands faith, to be transformed by it, and to serve it above all. More specifically, it is the act of deciding to live in the way required by the source of human good [and] to maintain association with a fellowship practicing that commitment...” - Henry Nelson Wieman

Brief Check-in

Focus Readings:

"We deceive ourselves if we think we can be grasped by life's meaning, or a sense of the holy, before we find and are found by our fellow human beings. There is no sense of the sacredness of life, no sense of the holiness of sheer existence that does not come first through another person. Human encounter is common: human acceptance is rare. Religious community is people reaching through all the facades people carefully place around them—people embracing people where they live and struggle, what Henry Nelson Wieman calls 'creative interchange.' The most radical contribution religion can make to human living is that it enables people to experience community as starkly as hunger.... Where life has a chance, we are in caring and in mutual need. When we are most alive, we are in the presence of someone or something intensely with us.... Nothing is experienced except in relation. It is participation in a religious community that stabs our consciousness into this awareness in the midst of a society that knows nothing about it." - Raymond Baughan

“No child can escape their community.... The life of the community flows about them, foul or pure; they swim in it, goes to sleep in it, and wake to the new day to find it still about them. They belong to it; it nourishes them, or starves them, or poisons them; it gives them the substance of their lives.” - From Anonymous:

Focus Questions:

- What different communities have affected you and how?
- Which communities have you felt closer to and why?
- What has been your experience of your work, school, and neighborhood communities?
- What has been your experience of this church community?
- In what way might you say your experience here is religious/spiritual?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

“A strange necessity has been laid upon me to devote my life to the central concern that transcends the walls that divide and would achieve in literal fact what is experienced as literal truth; human life is one and all [people] are members of one another. And this insight is spiritual and it is the core of religious experience.” - Howard Thurman

Source: Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA September 2004, posted on Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website