

2021 May Chalice Circle

Hymn. no. 389 Gathered Here

*Gathered here in the mystery of the hour.
Gathered here in one strong body.
Gathered here in the struggle and the power.
Spirit draw near.*

Hymn no. 1059 May Your Life Be as a Song

*May your life be as a song
Resounding with the dawn
To sing awake the light
And softly serenade the stars
Ever dancing circles in the night.*



Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, Mo.

Find Belonging

"There are no extra pieces in the universe. Everyone is here because he or she has a place to fill, and every piece must fit itself into the big jigsaw puzzle."

— Deepak Chopra

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

As surely as we belong to the universe By Margaret A Keip
As surely as we belong to the universe we belong together.
We join here to transcend the isolated self, to reconnect,
to know ourselves to be at home,
here on earth, under the stars,
linked with each other.

Song (optional) Gathered Here

*Gathered here in the mystery of the hour.
Gathered here in one strong body.
Gathered here in the struggle and the power.
Spirit draw near.*

Check-in *Briefly describe where you are in your life now.*

First Reading : Belonging: The Meaning of Membership. A Report by the Commission on Appraisal. Unitarian Universalist Association. June 2001.

There is a human need to find meaning, to make connections. Making connections is the essence of the religious experience. The connections that people seek when looking for a religious home are both internal and external. The final and most important reason why people become members of our (UU) congregations: the need for growth and transformation. Theologian James Luther Adams reminds us that for practitioners of liberal religion, "revelation is continuous." Throughout our lives we humans are learning, growing, changing creatures. Using both reason and intuition, we spend our lives seeking to enlarge our understanding of ourselves and others and the world around us. The possibility of growth and change, of transformation, is the real basis for participation in a religious community. We have all experienced losses and disappointments, pain and grief. We have been broken by life and need healing. The closest that contemporary Unitarian Universalists may come to a concept of salvation is to offer opportunities for growth and transformation, for becoming more whole. As one of the great ministers of the past century, Rev. A. Powell Davies, memorably put it, "Life is just a chance to grow a soul." *(here ends the reading)*

Musical Interlude (optional - facilitator's choice)

Second Reading : The Power of We

(3/25/19) by The Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, ninth president of the UUA

Within Unitarian Universalism, individualism has been a central unresolved tension in our theology and culture. In his essay "From Church to Beloved Community," the Rev. Fred Muir writes of the "trinity of errors" that have come to define Unitarian Universalism. They are individualism, exceptionalism, and our allergy to authority.

For now, let's consider individualism.

As an alternative to individualism, Muir offers an understanding of *individuality*. Individuality celebrates the very real differences between people, without denying our fundamental interdependence, while *individualism* understands a person as separate, dependent on no one. Individuality recognizes that each of us, varied as we are, exist within a context of mutuality, shared fate, and collective responsibility.

In practice, mission and covenant are an antidote to individualism. They remind us of the responsibilities that come with an affirmation of interdependence. In shaping General Assembly this year (2019), "The Power of We" is not just about one event, but a broader shift in our faith to move from individualism to a shared belonging to one another, to our communities, and to a larger mission.

Especially in this difficult time in the country, staying committed is a challenge, but it is also essential to our efforts to dismantle long-term unjust structures and build liberating alternatives that nurture life and dignity and embody our values. *(here ends the reading)*

Musical Interlude and Introspection:

This is the time for introspection. Take this time to center yourself.

Sharing/ Deep Listening

Please share from your experience and thoughts. Listen deeply and avoid any cross-talk. You might ponder one or two of the following questions: Being known and loved as who we are is one of the saving experiences Unitarian Universalism offers all. Do you agree with this assertion? If you are a member of UUCC, was there a specific moment when you realized that you "belonged?" Is there an event in your earlier life, perhaps your childhood, when you found yourself understanding that you didn't belong? How do you recognize what your obligations are when you are a member of a group?

Additional Thoughts

What came up for you while listening to others?

Checkout — *Likes and wishes - Final thoughts on this topic?*

Song (optional- words on back cover) **May Your Life Be Like a Song**

Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice *In this season of light, love and miracles, may we each reconnect to our Ultimate Commitment and recommit to co-creating heaven on earth, toward peace, liberty, and justice for all. May we be reminded that we are bound to the whole body of humanity.*

The Rev. David Hicks MacPherson lives in Ashland, VA and is the Minister Emeritus of The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond, VA.

Thanks to everyone who has been with us and shared your words and/or your presence today. -- Kathie Bergman, CC Team