

January 26, 2025

Monthly Topic: Do we need to find a new purpose in our life? How to do that?

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting: Reading #420 in the hymnal by Annie Dillard

“We are here to abet creation and to witness to it, to notice each other’s beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house.”

Song: Hymn # 118 This Little Light of Mine

Check-in: Participants are invited, as we go around our circle, to state your name and to share something important in your life currently. Because we are a community of care, also indicate if there is anything that you might expressly need from this group to address what you have shared. *We might need to take a significant amount of time in our check in with the goal of becoming known and knowing our fellow participants. (approx 20 -30 minutes)* **Following the check in, if necessary, the group will split into two for today’s discussion.**

Reading: Our Great Calling

By Nathan Ryan (UU Rev. Nathan Ryan is the Senior Minister of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge) June 15, 2022

“The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself.”

—Carl Sagan

I still feel stifled trying to talk about my children. Everything I can think to say about them is about how great, amazing, or wonderful they are. But then I stop myself because I know that literally every person ever born was born that perfect and amazing.

Also, I’m still not fully reconciled—nor do I think I will ever be—on the decision to have them. We made a decision to create these two people knowing that living is painful. If everything goes the way we want it to, they will love us, and then they will bury us. That’s the best case scenario. Sadly, we know that many parents weren’t given that option.

What does it mean that, while weighing this, we still decided to bring them into a world that is violent, xenophobic, racist, hateful, polluted, dangerous, and imperfect? I think we have a holy obligation to bring about paradise on this earth, and each generation helps us do that. I’ve enlisted them, without their consent, in this work. Just as every one of us was enlisted in this work without our consent.

I wanted to give them the gift of being alive. I wanted another person to experience the sheer joy, complications, and beauty of this wonderful, imperfect earth and all of its people. So now, the challenge: Can you make the world that should have been when my children were born? For some reason that's an easier challenge to articulate than the real one: make the world that you and I should have had before we were born.

You are born of the most divine particles. Make the world better because you exist. Go find the person you disagree with the most (or who bothers you the most), and go love the hell out of them. Go have a conversation, bake them a loaf of bread, love them as you love yourself (and if you don't love yourself, well, love yourself). If these past few years haven't shown us this is our great calling, I can't imagine what would.

Questions: You are invited during this time to verbalize the questions in your heart and mind that may spark discussion on our monthly theme. Participants may speak in no particular order. *The facilitator will attempt to record your questions for our consideration. (approx. 10-15 minutes)*

Quiet Reflection: Take a few minutes in silence to reflect on the reading, and the questions to consider which have been expressed. Use the back side of this paper to jot down your thoughts. (2-5 minutes)

Sharing/Listening round our Circle We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. *Please be mindful to allow time for everyone to share. (approx. 20 minutes)*

Open Discussion/reflections We will share additional thoughts on our theme, this time in no particular order. (approx 10 minutes)

Returning together: *We invite each group to provide a synopsis from your separate discussions. (approx. 10 minutes)*

Possible further information? As time allows, please share your recommendations of books, movies, writers, websites, etc. that offer more on today's theme.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice: by Tim Atkins (Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration for the First Unitarian Church in Oklahoma City)

"May we all be grounded in living our values in the coming year. May we all spread our wings to new heights in the coming year. May the fire of your commitment to your personal religious and ethical values burn brighter than before. And may we all be authentically ourselves in the coming year."

Handout: materials for further exploration of values and purposes

Next meeting will be on Sunday, February 23, 2025

Topic will be "Share how you came to your beliefs/belief system"