

ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

Themes 2010-2011

Creation

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

While I know myself as a creation of God, I am also obligated to realize and remember that everyone else and everything else are also God's creation.

Maya Angelou

Check-In How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences

Business

Revisit the Covenant

(Please go over the culture of a branches group highlighting: space inbetween speakers, popcorn style sharing, taking care of your own needs, speaking from I..no crosstalk, etc)

Are their things that need to be addressed? Starting and ending time, social opportunities before after meeting or at another date?, your service project inside and outside the church)

Claim time for Deeper Listening Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if something is going on in your life that you would like to share. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes at this time. Is there anyone who would like to claim time for deeper listening?

Centering Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes of breathing, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (1-2 minutes) Our goal would be to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

Readings (*Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between* followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

An Excerpt from *Deeper Than Words: Living the Apostle's Creed* by
Brother David Steindl-Rast

"Iris are not just flowers to me; they are friends. They are sisters to me from way back in my father's garden, when I had to stretch and stand on tiptoe to smell them, for they were taller than me. Their watery fragrance floats through my childhood memories... The iris awakened me to beauty then, and still does today.

"In seven decades the lure of these fanciful blossoms has not diminished for me, and the golden fuzz on their bearded, drooping sepals with their fingerprint-like veins invites not only the bee but my own glance deep into the sunlit wedding tent of the translucent petals. I look and look and lose myself in this looking. Time stands still when I stand before an iris. Time is no more. All is now. And in this now, the iris comes forth from 'the no of all nothing' as an ever-so-delicate, ever-so-real 'Yes!' All of Van Gogh's irises are summed up and surpassed in this single one, moving ever so slightly in the morning breeze.

"When this happens, I have long left my thoughts far behind. They cannot keep up with my awareness. It has plummeted down to the point where this iris springs forth: now and now and now it leaps from nonbeing into being – together with the firethorn bush behind it, with the rail fence, with the sky and its towering cloud, together with myself. With every breath I can say, 'I am.' With every heartbeat I can affirm being out of nonbeing. Suddenly I understand what John Cage wrote:

Each something is a celebration of the nothing that supports it.

Does this find an echo in your heart before you start to figure out what precisely it means? I personally put my faith in the process of continuous creation that this line implies. I trust that process; I entrust myself to it. It is not an impersonal process, but the deepest of all personal relationships. Can you make a connection between the Nothing that supports everything – the Un-manifest that manifests itself in all there is – and that mysterious Presence whom Jesus calls *Abba*, Father?

Creation Personified, by Rev. Tamara Lebak and Kate Starr

Creation was born in the Spring.
Her mother Epiphany bore fraternal twins: Death was born around midnight,
and Creation finally made her trip down the birth canal near dawn.
She was born with a head of curly golden hair similar to her mother's,
and Death was crowned with the ebony locks of his father Paradox.
Now with a full head of gray and skin as beautiful as when she were 20,
Creation loves to tell her birth story,
turning it over her tongue to discover what her history might foreshadow.

Creation met the love of her life in a college science lab.
Sparks literally flew
when she twirled around and accidentally bumped into Vision,
causing his chemicals to inadvertently mix with his lab partner's.
Vision laughed harder than he had ever laughed
and was dazed by the beauty of what the lab experiment became
and who had caused it to become.
His lab partner Perfection, however, has never spoken directly
to Creation again.
Even after all these years he only talks about her
to other people, usually in a voice loud enough that Creation can
overhear.

These days their children are on their own
So, Vision and Creation spend their time on
their land surrounded by adopted animals of all sorts.
Creation likes to spend time at the potter's wheel,
in the greenhouse with her array of hybrids,
or in her quilting room making jewelry from found objects -- lichen, river
rocks, shell, and bone.
Creation loves to cook but often makes dishes Vision simply won't eat.

Seeing equal potential in every ingredient, it doesn't cross her mind that one might be overpowering to another or that certain flavors might not be in harmony.

She is grateful for a career that afforded her an early retirement and so glad she doesn't have to dress for work anymore. Now you'll find her in a state of bliss with potter's clay or potting soil under her nails, an artist's smock over her favorite patchwork skirt. And looking a bit disheveled to the outside world. Creation was once a well-heeled architect who designed churches and temples all over the globe. When her children Hope and Calling were young, she built them an incredible tree house that Creation still uses as a her private getaway. Sometimes she and Vision climb up on its roof to watch Weather blow in and out again and to enjoy the nighttime sky.

Questions

What does the theme creation evoke for you?

What have you created?

In what other ways are we creators besides as artists?

What is the creation process like for you?

What keeps you from creating?

What is your creation story? Is your birth story relevant to who you are today?

If THE Creation (capital T and C) is “all that you did not create, that has ever been created”, what is your relationship to The Creation?

How do you participate in caring for God's creation? The environment? Yourself? Others?

How does creation fit into your theology?

Deeper Listening If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior) Please state your name again for the group so that we might have yet another opportunity to put faces to names.

Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this: a human creature born abnormally, inhumanely sensitive.. They must create, must pour out creation. By some strange unknown urgency they are not really alive unless they are creating.