

# ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

## January Theme Grace

### **Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting**

Experiencing grace involves the expansion of consciousness of self to all of one's surroundings as an unbroken whole, a consciousness of awe from which negative mindstates are absent, from which healing and groundedness result. For these reasons grace has long been deemed "amazing". Charlene Spretnak

**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**

**Have you thought about your service project?  
Next Branches extravaganza is January 24**

**Please spread the news! New Groups begin Tuesdays in Feb!**

**Collect names and send Jennifer Johnson an email @ [jennji@hotmail.com](mailto:jennji@hotmail.com)**

**Can you facilitate? We need 4-6 facilitators**

**Debrief last Semester  
Group Evaluations**

### **Revisit the Covenant**

**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 you have more you need to say than the initial check in. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes.

**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.)

**Grace - Sarah Voss**

Once I was lost.

I started out  
At the point where the field  
Met the woods. I went  
Into the woods. Soon  
I was in chaos. Disoriented.  
Uncertain. The slow pain  
Of panic overcame me.

I kept to the path,  
But the path twisted  
And turned  
And I did not know  
If I doubled back or went forward. If only I  
Had had a map  
To help me see the order  
In the chaos. I had no map.  
I had no sense of direction.

I decided to mark my path  
So I would at least know  
Whether I had been there before.  
I wandered in and out of prairie,  
In and out of woods.  
I wandered. I thought.  
I feared. And suddenly  
I was back  
Where I had started.  
Physically. But mentally,  
I had made a new beginning.

And that is what  
I think grace is.

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A Story by Anthony de Mello

A woman dreamed she walked into a brand-new shop in the marketplace and to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

“What do you sell here?” she asked.

“Everything your heart desires,” said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for. “I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear,” she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, “Not just for me. For everyone on earth.”

God smiled, “I think you’ve got me wrong, my dear,” he said. “We don’t sell fruits here. Only seeds.”

### Questions

1. **What does grace mean to you? If you do not find the term grace useful to you what words do you choose to use?**
2. **Frederick Buechner's definition of grace is**  
**There's nothing you have to do.**  
**There's nothing you have to do.**  
**There's nothing you have to do...**  
**Think of a time when something positive happened to you unexpectedly; or when a reward came to you without your having worked for it; or when you received an opportunity you think you did not deserve.. tell your story.**
3. **When have you experienced grace in your life? What were the circumstances?**
4. **What is the relationship between Grace and Gratitude?**
5. **Do you have methods that have assisted you in acknowledging the moments of Grace in your life?**
7. **How do you respond to what appears to be the randomness of Grace?**

**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)

**Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing**

God give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that can be changes, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other-  
Reinhold Neibuhr