

# ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

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## November Theme Gratitude

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

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. Melody Beattie

**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?**

### **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.)

Piero Ferrucci tells a wonderful story in his book *The Power of Kindness: The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life*. It goes like this:

"Once upon a time there was a man who hated his job. He was a stonemason and he had to work all day long for a miserable salary. 'What an awful way to live,' he thought. 'Oh, if only I could be rich and loaf all day!' His wish grew so intense that in the end it came true. The stonemason heard a voice saying, 'You are what you want to be.' He became rich and could immediately have things he had always wanted: a beautiful house, delicious food, great entertainment.

He was happy until one day he saw a king pass by with his procession, and he thought, 'He is more powerful than I. How I would like to be in his shoes!' Once again he heard the voice and, as if by magic, he became king. What a thrill is power! All obeyed him, all feared him. He was happy for a while, but it didn't last. Bit by bit, a wicked dissatisfaction took hold of him. 'I want more,' he thought. 'I want, I want, I want.' He saw the sun in the sky and thought, 'The sun is even more powerful than I. I want to be the sun!'

He became the sun, big, strong, and bright. He ruled the earth and sky. Nothing could exist without him. What happiness! And what importance! But then he noticed that beneath him the clouds prevented him from seeing the landscape. They were light and mobile. Instead of being a fixed shape in the sky, they could take an infinite variety of forms, and at sunset they flushed with the most striking colors. They had no cares and were free. How enviable.

His envy did not last long. Once more he heard the voice saying, 'You are what you want to be.' At once, he was a cloud. It was pleasant to be suspended in the air, mobile, and fluffy. He enjoyed taking different shapes, now thick and opaque, now rich and white, now fine as embroidery. But sooner or later the cloud condensed into raindrops and struck a rock of granite.

What an impact! The rock had been there for millennia – hard and solid. And now the little drops of water burst on the granite and flowed onto the earth, where they were absorbed to disappear forever. 'How wonderful to be a rock,' he thought.

Instantly he became a rock. For some time, he enjoyed life as a rock. At last he had found stability. Now he felt secure. 'After all, it is security and solidity I am seeking, and no one is going to move me from here,' he

thought. The raindrops struck the rock and trickled down the sides. It was a pleasant massage, a gift. The sun caressed and warmed him with its rays – how beautiful. He had attained completeness.

Well, not yet. One day, he saw a figure approaching on the horizon. It was a man, slightly bent and with a large hammer – a stonemason, who began striking the hammer against him. Worse than pain, he felt dismay. The stonemason was even stronger than he and could decide his destiny. ‘How I wish I could be a stonemason,’ he thought.

Thus he became a stonemason once again. After being everything he had wanted to be, he became again what he had always been. But this time he was happy. Cutting stone became an art. The sound of the hammer was music, the fatigue at the end of the day brought the satisfaction of a job well done. And that night, he had a wonderful vision of the cathedral his stones were helping to build. It was a magnificent revelation and he experienced a feeling that he knew would never leave him. It was gratitude."

### **Questions**

- 1. What are you the most thankful for in your life right now?**
- 2. How has your gratitude changed you?**
- 3. How do you show your gratitude to others?**
- 4. How have you been shown gratitude in the past?**
- 5. Can you remember a time in your life when you were not grateful? How did you move to gratitude?**
- 6. We begin each service with “This is indeed a day which God has made let us rejoice in it and be glad...” How has the meaning of this invocation of gratitude changed for you over your own changing life’s circumstances?**

**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**

Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful. (Attributed to the Buddha)