

- **MONDAY** Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life; Introduction to worship for the week, direct experience, mystery & wonder

Gathering Music - Stu

Welcome & Call to Worship

Oh my goddess...we're here! I'm reminded of a flight I took once on Southwest Airlines, back when they were really into having fun with the pre and post-flight announcements. The plane touched down and our flight attendant, a delicious and very funny brother, picks up the microphone and announces to the passengers, breathlessly, "Made it!"

Well, we made it! We did come back. And I don't know about all y'all but personally, given the year I've had since we last gathered, I cannot take that for granted. I have suffered devastating losses, some really unnerving uncertainty, and way too much *mishagas* to take my arrival here on Star for granted. Given the nature of our world today I imagine I am not alone. Knowing some of you as I do, I know I'm not.

I am the Rev. Shayna Appel and it is my good fortune, my blessing and my honor to be your minister of the week here on Star Island for this International Affairs Conference. I want to take this opportunity to offer sincere thanks to our IA leadership team, Kristin Laverty and Gretchen Donehower, for giving me this opportunity to serve. Thank you both! And thanks to all of you who have made the effort to join us this morning. It is good to be. It is awesome to be here. It is a blessing to be here together.

Come, let us enter into this time of worship.

Chalice Lighting Open to Unexpected Answers by Julianne Lepp [Worshipweb]

We seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts' deep questions.
As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.
May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom,
and welcoming of multiple truths.

Hymn #1011 [STJ] Return Again

Reading Our readings for the week are drawn from the work of Michael Leunig, an Australian cartoonist and illustrator who's work appears in a weekly newspaper: The Sunday Age of Melbourne. His book, *When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God*,

was published in 2006. It's a compilation of his work for the Sunday Age, which was an experiment at the time both for Michael and the newspaper. You see, Michael was hired as a cartoonist but found it difficult to be enthused drawing jokes and amusements, which he felt were already plentiful. Instead, Michael decided the newspapers ought to carry a little spiritual succor as a consolation, as a reparation if you will, for the enormous anxiety and distress the rest of their content generally causes.

In Michael's own words, "The presence of any sincere prayer in the realm of contemporary journalism was likely to create a small, embarrassing, and healthy juxtaposition, and knowing that such juxtapositions must always be attempted, I set out to write prayers for the newspaper...The nature and the words of the particular prayers in this book are perhaps not as important as the idea of prayer itself...Their creation has involved feelings of considerable vulnerability, because I understand that such things are readily and gladly misunderstood. They are my fumbling experiments, and they mostly derive from a situation of deep, personal struggle, which was difficult, wonderful and radical."

Hear now our reading for this morning by Michael Leunig, as a cartoonist talks to God.

I have drawn a simple picture of a person kneeling before a duck to symbolize and demonstrate my ideas about the nature of prayer. I ask the reader to bear with the absurdity of the image and to remember that the search for the sublime may sometimes have a ridiculous beginning. Here, then, is the story behind the picture.

A man kneels before a duck in a sincere attempt to talk with it. This is a clear depiction of irrational behavior and an important aspect of prayer. Let us put this aside for a moment and move on to the particulars.

The act of kneeling in the picture symbolizes humility. The upright stance has been abandoned because of the human attitudes and qualities it represents; power, stature, control, rationality, worldliness, pride and ego. The kneeling man knows, as everybody does, that a proud and upright man does not and cannot talk with a duck. So the upright stance is rejected. The man kneels. He humbles himself. He comes closer to the duck. He becomes more like the duck. He does things because it improves his chances of communicating with it.

The duck in the picture represents one thing and many things: nature, instinct, feeling, beauty, innocence, the primal, the non rational, and the mysterious and unsayable - qualities we can easily attribute to a duck and qualities that, coincidentally and remarkably, we can easily attribute to the inner life of the kneeling man, to his spirit or his soul. The duck then, in this picture, can be seen as a symbol of the human spirit, and in wanting connection with his spirit it is a symbolic picture of a man searching for his soul.

Special Music Welcome the Traveler Home arr. Jim Scott

Homily "Direct Experience Affirmed"

Allow me to begin this morning by giving you a quick overview of what I have planned for us this week. We have six opportunities to gather in morning worship and, conveniently, Six Sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith, so I thought we'd marry those two occurrences together and explore our UU Sources.

Most UU's are pretty familiar with our Seven Principles. Many of our congregations now cherish Eight Principles. And as many of you know, we are now in the midst of an Article II re-write offering a bold new vision of Unitarian Universalism which moves us from Seven Principles to Six Shared Values, with Love at the center of it all. This revision to Article II has been captured in the visuals both of a Shared Values Flower and a JETPIG. In the latter image, the letters J-E-T-P-I-G each represent one of those six shared values...Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence and Generosity.

(I seriously cannot wait to hear how you respond to those who are not here this morning when they ask what the sermon was about! JETPIGS, a cartoonist talking to God and some guy kneeling before a duck.)

Regardless - getting back to our Six Sources - while most UU's are pretty familiar with our Principles, we seem to be less informed about our Sources. And while I think they too are due for an update, I thought we'd take this week to explore them in their current state.

What are our Six Sources? Well, ours has been called a "Living Tradition" in which we live out our Principles aided by wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience. These are the six sources of our Living Tradition:

- 1)Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- 2)Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- 3)Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- 4)Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

5) Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

6) Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Let us begin our weeks spiritual journey with our first source; Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.

To help us, an image offered by cartoonist Michael Leunig in our reading for today. *A man kneels before a duck in a sincere attempt to talk with it.* Absurd? Maybe. But certainly no more so then, say, a JETPIG so stick with me for a bit.

The kneeling man knows, as everybody does, that a proud and upright man does not and cannot talk with a duck. So the upright stance is rejected. The man kneels. He humbles himself. He comes closer to the duck. He becomes more like the duck. He does things because it improves his chances of communicating with it.

Now, I can't say that I've ever seen a duck out here on island but God knows we have more than our fair share of seagulls...and rocks themselves. We have sunrises and sunsets, and ocean and sky and wind and rain. We have stars over us in abundance, and we have each other.

What do you suppose would happen if we abandoned our own upright positions before these things and humbled ourselves in order to get closer to them? How might coming closer to these things - becoming more like them - improve our own chances of communicating with them, and they with us?

My communications professor at Hampshire College used to have a poster on his office door. On it were two dolphins looking at each other. Below the picture this caption:

We know that humans make eye contact and emit sounds at each other. What is less clear is whether or not actual communication is taking place. (If I were a betting person, I'd bet these dolphins did their research observing a few GA's!)

Furthermore, it has been reported in many, many articles on brain function that the human brain takes in 11 million bits of information every second but is aware of only 40 of them. In other words, most of the information that is being processed by our brains goes thru the sub-conscious side of it and we are largely unaware of it. The conscious side, which possess the reasoning skills, only focuses on things which we order it to.

If you ever want to experience your sub-conscious side, sit in a quite room with your eyes closed, focus only on your breath, and count them. Odds are that you'll find

yourself distracted by the thoughts that are running in your sub-conscious mind, and the average one of us will lose count after five or six, breaths.

So, *a man kneels before a duck*. Absurd? Maybe not. If our conscious minds only focus on the things we direct them to, maybe we should be a bit more discerning about...you know...directing them.

David Foster Wallace began his book *This is Water* with a story about two young fish who were swimming along one day when an older fish happened by. "Morning," said the older fish. "Water's beautiful today, don't you think?" The two young fish swam on until one looked at the other and said, "What the hell is water?" Because, you see, as it turns out fish have no construct for water. They are born into it, they live in it, feed in it, breed in it, and eventually die in it but they have no idea it even exists.

Now, suppose kneeling before a duck isn't your thing but you decide you could get passionate about enlightening a community of fish. What you'd need to do is catch them and lift them out of the water. Trust me, the minute that fish hits air, they will understand water! *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.*

We human beings, as it turns out, are not that different from those fish. We live and breathe and have our being surrounded by transcending mystery and wonder, but also spend most of our lives completely oblivious to it. Until something happens...usually something either really, really good or something really, really bad...and suddenly, BAM! That which had been written on our hearts suddenly falls in at their breaking.

But here's the thing...we don't need to wait for the really, really good thing or the really, really bad thing to happen because transcending mystery and wonder are everywhere all the time. And all we need to do to experience it is to kneel before a duck...actually or, you know, metaphorically. We have a week together. Why not give it a try?

Meditation

Breathe with me? Let us breathe together. Sacred breath. Ruach. And allow these words to tumble into your hearts:

A person kneels before a duck to reflect upon the troubles and joys of life, and offers thanksgivings and expressions of hope. The person is praying. The mind is on its knees. This is the yearning of the spirit which leads to love and the creative world.
[Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Hymn/Special Music *Holy Now* by Peter Mayer

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

This week, as we have the chance to gather for daily worship, I wanted to include an additional enrichment opportunity for us all: A word on behalf of the Star Island Beloved Community Project [SIBCP].

Started as an organization to create a more inclusive and intentional community here on island, the Star Island Beloved Community Project seeks to help spread more empathy and understanding in the world as well.

Writing about the Beloved Community in 'A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community' Adam Russell Taylor and Corretta Scott King offered the following vision for it.

The Beloved Community is a realistic vision of an achievable society, one in which problems and conflict exist, but are resolved peacefully and without bitterness.....The Beloved Community is a state of heart and mind, a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation. At its core, the Beloved Community is an engine of reconciliation. This way of living seems a long way from the kind of world that we have now, but I believe it is a goal that can be accomplished through courage and determination, and through education and training if enough people are willing to make the necessary commitment.

May our time together on this humble rock inspire us all to reach for this vision of a world made fair, with all Her people one. Amen.

Extinguish the Chalice

As we seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts' deep questions
may our spirits be open to unexpected answers.
May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom, and welcoming of multiple truths.

Hymn #1008 [STJ] When Our Heart is in a Holy Place

Benediction

Beloveds, life is short and there is little time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So, be quick to love and make haste to be kind.

Go in peace, believe in peace, and create peace. Amen

**TUESDAY Words and deeds of prophetic people which
challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with
justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;**

Gathering Music

Welcome

Welcome to morning worship on Star Island at the Conference on International Affairs! It is good to be. It is awesome to be here. It is a blessing to be here together.

If you are just joining us today and you weren't here yesterday, I am the Rev. Shayna Appel and it is my honor, my joy and a deep privilege to be your Minister of the Week.

This week we are diving into the Six Sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith. Yesterday we covered the First Source of our Living Tradition, *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.* And, today, we'll follow with our Second Source, *Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.*

And again, if you weren't with us yesterday and/or if you missed the Sandpiper pre-arrival edition, we are drawing our readings for the week from the works of cartoonist Michael Leunig's book, [When I Talk To You; A Cartoonist Talks to God](#). Michael's work, which appeared in the **Sunday Age** in Australia, was well known for being often controversial but always appealing. I thought that alone made it pristine pairing for our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Finally, people are often interested in certain parts of the worship services offered out here on Star. Perhaps a particular reading spoke to you, or a certain hymn, but you can't recall what it was. After I preach my final service for the week I will be uploading the entire worship book, sermons and all, onto the IA website. Feel free to re-use any and all of it. Just please credit the writers I have sited. As for the sermons, if you use one and people love it, I'd appreciate the credit. If they hate it, it's all yours!

And now, let us breathe together, center ourselves and ready our hearts and minds to be brought closer to all that is sacred and holy.

Call to Worship

Out of Our Yearning

[For Praying Out Loud; A collection of prayers and advice on writing prayers that welcome whole communities and create a holy space for public events.
WORSHIPWEB]

We speak to the god, the goddess, the spirit of life, the eternal.
We speak to the mysterious thread that connects us one to the other and to the universe.
We speak to the deep wisdom at the center of our beings.
We embody the yearning of all people
to touch each other more deeply,
to hear each other more keenly,
to see each other's joys and sorrows as our own
and know that we are not alone,
unless we create solitude for ourselves;
and even then, community awaits us.

Out of our yearning we have come
to this religious community.

May we help each other to proclaim the possibilities we see,
to create the community we desire,
to worship what is worthy in our lives,
to teach the truth as we know it,
and to serve with justice in all the ways that we can,
to the end that our yearning is assuaged
and our lives fulfilled in one another.

Come, let us worship together.

Opening Hymn #187 *It Sounds Along the Ages*

Chalice Lighting Beacon of Freedom by Tracy Johnson [Worshipweb]

We kindle our chalice flame this morning
Awakening the fire of our ancestors in our hearts

Beacon of freedom held out to light the way
Light of reason illuminating the path
Spark of courage igniting our Spirits
Aglow with hope for all we endeavor to do together

Holy flame of times past, brighten this present moment
That we may be the Love that is our center and our foundation, both.
Blessed be.

Hymn #112 [STLT] *Do You Hear?*

Reading

God be with those who explore in the cause of understanding, whose search takes them far from what is familiar and comfortable and leads them into danger or terrifying loneliness. Let us try to understand their sometimes strange or difficult ways; their confronting or unusual language; the uncommon life of emotions, for they have been affected and shaped and changed by the insights they bring back to us. Bless them with strength and peace. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Choir *Think of Me* by Diamond Choir (of S. Africa)

Homily "The Prophet Cometh...Yay...NOT!"

Many of our congregations enrich their worship experience by engaging the Soul Matters curriculum. As a general rule, I love Soul Matters for a whole lot of reasons. It suggests great themes to preach about, offers a wide array of resources in word and song, and when we follow the curriculum we join with many other UU congregations who are exploring the same issues and ideas and that, I believe, builds up and strengthens the architecture of our interconnected UU web. I love having resources provided to draw from...readings, video clips, booklists and the like.

As I said, as a general rule I love the Soul Matters curriculum for a whole lot of reasons. But every once in awhile...I'll read something there that is...well...a bit cringeworthy. For example:

"Prophets," our Soul Matters Curriculum informs us, "are known for their condemnation. Images of...angry bearded m[e]n shouting and predicting God's judgement come to mind" when we think of them. "But for Unitarian Universalists, the prophetic voice has always been less about shouting "You're evil!" and more about pointing out "We're all asleep!" The prophetic message, for us, is not so much "Repent!" but "Wake up!""

I trust we all know about the importance and power of stories. This morning, I'd like to invite you to consider the less productive side of stories. Because, if the stories of our UU faith tradition can uniquely equip us "for the living of these days," they can also hobble us and keep us stuck.

A number of years ago, Frederick Muirs wrote an article for UU World called "The End of i-Church" in which he lifted up what he called a 'trinity of UU errors.' One of those errors, according to Muirs, involves Unitarian Universalist exceptionalism. Muirs writes:

We hear the inflection of UU exceptionalism from the pulpit, in newcomers' classes, from Sunday greeters, [and] from those who are earnestly trying to explain our way of religion to the uninformed. We may experience Unitarian Universalism as unique and even saving, but it is not the only way. [In telling our story], We must stay conscious of how we explain, defend, and share our perspective lest we come across as elitist, insulting, degrading, even humiliating of others... exceptionalism is a barrier to sharing Unitarian Universalism's good news.

We hear the inflection of UU exceptionalism from the pulpit, in newcomers' classes, from Sunday greeters, and in this case, we hear it in our own curriculum. "Prophets are known for their condemnation. Images of...angry bearded m[e]n shouting and predicting God's judgement come to mind. But for Unitarian Universalists, the prophetic voice has always been less about shouting "You're evil!" and more about pointing out "We're all asleep!" The prophetic message, for us, is not so much "Repent!" but "Wake up!"

Beloveds, to be clear, "wake up" is the prophetic message throughout all ages and across faith borders. And in some cases, yes, it was also "repent." But to categorically reduce the prophets of ours and other faith traditions to a bunch of angry bearded men running around the desert screaming at folks to repent is, in my opinion, both narrow minded and an unseemly example of UU exceptionalism. **AND**, it directly undermines our second UU Source which specifically points us towards the Words and deeds of prophetic people.

So, I am here to prophesy - to shine a light into that musty corridor of UU exceptionalism concerning the prophets of old. Not to denigrate in any way the good news of Unitarian Universalism, but rather to allow it to stand tall upon the ancient traditions which are our cornerstones. Today I want to lift up those prophets of old, not to bind our own prophecy to the past, but rather to allow the past to inspire our prophetic future.

So, to begin with, not all prophets were angry. The prophet Amos, for example, was fearless and outspoken, because that's what the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and...the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, called for. During his lifetime unusual prosperity brought a collapse of moral standards and an alarming rise in idolatry. In light of all this, Amos had some heavy prophetic lifting to do! Moses was reticent and humble due to a slight speech impediment. Jonah, having been told to wake up the tawdry folks of Nineveh, was frightened because in Nineveh, killing Jews was done for sport and way too often. Yet, he went...albiet only after having been barfed up on the beach from the belly of a whale, but he went, bless his little prophets heart. Isaiah, the most prolific of the Hebrew Prophets, was actually probably three different people, and yeah they could be crabby at times but they were in exile, so really, who can blame them. Jeremiah? Yep. One angry dude to be sure. But give him a break. God was threatening to wipe out entire cities until Jeremiah woke the people up, which inspired God to changed God's mind. Incidentally, where did that leave Jeremiah? Having to overcome the reputation of being a false prophet!

And how about the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him? He wasn't angry. He was an orphan, raised by his uncle Abu Talib, and prone, as a young man of 30, to spend days at a time meditating in a nearby cave. At the age of 40, he received his first revelation from God but in the first three years of his ministry he gained only 40 followers. Despite his slow start, his teachings none-the-less irked those who wish[ed] to preserve, at all costs, their own contentment in early Mecca, resulting in heavy persecution for the Prophet and his followers. First taking the form of mockery, this

persecution soon turned into open violence and members of the small movement were stoned, covered in dirt as they prayed, beat with sticks, thrown into prison and refused service by merchants. (Sad, how little has changed in 1400+ years.)

So no, not all prophets were angry. And neither were they all men! The Hebrew Scripture records the stories of seven female prophets. Miriam, the older sister of Moses and Aaron, who lead the women with timbrel and dancing in what might be described as the first mass critical incident stress intervention following the crossing of the Red Sea and the witnessed annihilation of Pharaoh's troops. Sarah, wife of Abraham, once known as Sari but also as Yiskah (Jessica), meaning "Seer" because she was a prophetess and had the ability to see the future. The Talmud reports that Sarah's prophetic ability was superior to Abraham's. Deborah was the forth judge to rule over the Jewish people following the death of Joshua. Hannah, whose very name means "gracious," is described is a beautiful example of how the most unpleasant and untoward circumstances can produce a character blessing the world. Abigail, who's timely plea kept King David from wiping out the entire house of Nabal. Huldah, a relative of the prophet Jeremiah, held perhaps the earliest school for woman in Jerusalem. And then there was Esther, who replaced Vashti as queen and who, at great risk to herself, saved the Jewish people from annihilation at the hands of Haman.

And let us not forget the prophetess Anna, the only named prophetess in the Christian Scriptures. She concludes the sextet of named, pious Israelites surrounding the birth of Jesus as recorded in Lukes gospel, and so takes her place among the likes of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph and Simeon. As a prophetess, Anna receives insight into things that normally remain hidden to ordinary people; she recognized who the infant Jesus was and told of his significance to selected people in Jerusalem. Her actions affirm Amos 3:7: "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets."

According to Judaism 101, Many people today think of a prophet as any person who sees the future. While the gift of prophecy certainly includes the ability to see the future, a prophet is far more than just a person with that ability.

A prophet was, in ancient times, understood to be a spokes[person] for G-d, a person chosen by G-d to speak to people on G-d's behalf and convey a particular message or teaching. Prophets were role models of holiness, scholarship and closeness to G-d. They set the standards for the entire community.

The Hebrew word for a prophet, navi...comes from the term niv sefatayim meaning "fruit of the lips," which emphasizes the prophet's role as a speaker.

The Talmud teaches that there were hundreds of thousands of prophets... But most of the prophets conveyed messages that were intended solely for their own generation and were not reported in scripture so the scriptures, as they were canonized, identify only 55 prophets of Israel...

A prophet is also not necessarily Jewish. The Talmud reports that there were prophets among the gentiles (most notably Balaam)... And some of the prophets, such as Jonah, were sent on missions to speak to the gentiles.

According to some views, prophecy is not a gift that is arbitrarily conferred upon people; rather, it is the culmination of a person's spiritual and ethical development. When a person reaches a sufficient level of spiritual and ethical achievement, the Shechinah (Divine Spirit) comes to rest upon them. Likewise, the gift of prophecy leaves the person if that person lapses from his or her spiritual and ethical perfection.

Finally, and this may be among the most important points I make today, The Talmud states that the writings of the prophets will not be necessary in the World to Come, because in that day, all people will be mentally, spiritually and ethically perfect, and all will have the gift of prophecy.

'In the last days, God says in the Book of Acts, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy [Acts 2:17-18].

'In the last days', by the way, refers not to creation's final gasp, but, I believe, to the moment when the last vestiges of inhumanity, exploitation and injustice vanish and a new world order is ushered in - a world order in which no one and no thing is left out or left behind!

Here's the rub. That new world order isn't going to arrive on its own. It is going to be on us to build it. And for that, we'll need some present day prophets. Post-biblical seers who hold a vision of a world made fair, with all her people one. People like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Sitting Bull, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. People like Karen Silkwood and Malala Yousafzai. Folks like Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullers and Opal Tometi, the three women of color behind Black Lives Matter. Or, perhaps, people like our own Unitarian Universalist Youth who, at General Assembly in 2015 had the good sense and the vision to compel the rest of the denomination to sign on in support of Black Lives Matter. Or maybe the current members of the Article II Revision task team who have worked diligently to craft a vision of Unitarian Universalism to carry us into the future.

Present day prophets are all around. You don't really have to look all that far for examples. But as Michael Luenig points out in our reading for today, it helps if we *try to understand their sometimes strange or difficult ways; their confronting or unusual language; the uncommon life of emotions, for they have been affected and shaped and changed by the insights they bring back to us.*

Throughout history and herstory there have been prophets and prophetesses calling those with ears to hear and eyes to see to wake up! That is not unique to Unitarian

Universalists. And yes...as Christopher Hitchens writes in our Soul Matters curriculum, these messengers of discomfort and sacrifice will, in all likely hood, forever be stoned and pelted by those who wish to preserve at all costs their own contentment. This, says Hitchens, is not a lesson that is confined to the Testaments. And therein lies the blessing and the curse.

Is there a message, a vision, that has been given to you? Or are you more inclined to be a hearer of the message revealed through someone else? Both require a response. This is the time. Here is the place. Let us join hearts and minds to build a church that is not terminally unique, but one that is wide awake in a Living Tradition.

May it be so. Ashay and Amen.

Meditation

It is timely that we give thanks for the lives of all prophets, teachers, healers, and revolutionaries, living and dead, acclaimed and obscure, who have rebelled, worked, and suffered for the cause of love and joy.

We also celebrate that part of us, that part within ourselves, which has rebelled, worked, and suffered for the cause of love and joy. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Hymn/Special Music *Sing People Sing* © 2014 Pat Humphries and Sandy O.

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

The Star Island Beloved Community Project is a journey the Star Island Corporation has been on as an organization since 2018 to create a more inclusive and intentional community, to help spread more empathy and understanding in the world, and to become a more welcoming place for all people. This week as we gather together each morning to worship, I thought it would be good for us to hear a word about SIBCP.

The piece you are about to hear is an excerpt from “It Is Time Now: Offerings from the Beloved Community Project”, an educational resource produced in 2019 as part of Star Island’s Beloved Community Project.

I can tell a bit of why
And share some who
But the what
And the how
are being manifest even
as we lean into each other
with holy curiosity
The possibility of living

with self-differentiated, undefended hearts
brings songs flaring forth
like solar wind
Alive with the kinetic energy
of re-remembering
respect, kindness, hope
A vast love blooming
In spirit, muscles, blood, and bones

Alive

Many storms—named and unnamed—etched
in our nervous systems
Barrels of pain stored
in our collective memories
Friends,
We are aching for the
forgiveness
Only possible when
the harm
has stopped
Thousands of years
of suffering and surviving and thriving
Daydreaming a whole and holy liberation

Tender solos rising up from choral strength
Sorrows held so, so gently
Joy reflected, like mirrors reflecting mirrors,
unto infinity
wonder tendered with trust
rituals created/re-created to hold
all that our words cannot
Each time we meet
In body or in spirit
my heart is stitched
by another thread of love
To your heart
And yours
And yours
And yours

And yours...
Choosing to be and do differently
Than how we have
done been conditioned to be and do
Oh, how we co-create

together
With courage, faith, and wisdom
a love net
to hold us in the healing now
of
(even when it is not yet)
Beloved community.

Extinguish the Chalice Flame in Our Hearts by Vanessa Titang

Like the flame of the chalice,
may the flame in our hearts burn,
remaining unextinguished.
May it ignite our energies, our drive, our resolve,
to dream, to build, and live into the world
that good which exists, for now, only in our imaginings.

Hymn #1028 [STJ] *The Fire of Commitment*

Benediction

**WEDNESDAY Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical
and spiritual life;**

Gathering Music

Welcome & Call to Worship

Welcome beloveds to day three of Morning Worship! If we haven't yet had the chance to meet, let's please do so! I am Rev. Shayna Appel, your minister *de la semaine*, which

doesn't roll off the tongue as eloquently as *minister du jour*, but I'll be here all week and not just for today so *de la semaine* it is!

Fun fact, my last name is Appel, from the French/Austrian 'Appelle' which means 'to call.' Thus *Je m'appelle* means 'I am called'...so, I am literally the Rev. I Am Called. Some would call that destiny...others simply a minute of their lives they will never get back.

Regardless, no matter who you are, where you are on your faith journey or what you thought about this mornings fun fact, you are welcome here! We are focusing this week on our Six UU Sources. They are often found printed along with our Principles but seem to be the less known cousin of the two, so I thought they'd make an interesting framework for our time together this week.

And, in the interest of adding a little color and fun to this exploration, we are using, as a primary source for readings, a book by Australian cartoonist Michael Leunig called [When I Talk To You: A Cartoonist Talks to God.](#)

Lastly, should you be interested in any particular reading or sermon or song choice, at the weeks end I will be posting the entire worship book onto the IA Website. Feel free to use any and all of it as will serve our great faith, but please credit those authors I have listed. And, again, feel free to use sermon material as well. If folks love it, I authored it. If they hate it...good luck with that!

And now, let us enter into worship together.

Chalice Lighting People of Memory by Kinberlee Ann Tomczack Carlson [Worshipweb]

We are a People of Memory.
As inheritors of our ancestors' legacy, we hold their stories tenderly.
Gleaning wisdom from diverse journeys; united in hope for the future.
Guide us to trust in love as we kindle this flame together.

Hymn #188 [STLT] *Come, Come, Whoever You Are*

Reading

Dear God,

We celebrate spring's returning and the rejuvenation of the natural world. Let us be moved by this vast and gentle insistence that goodness shall return, that warmth and life shall succeed. Help us to understand our place with[in] this miracle. Let us see that as a bird now builds its nest, bravely, with bits and pieces, so we must build human faith. It is our simple duty; it is the highest art; it is our natural and vital role within the

miracle of spring: the creation of faith. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Choir Ukuthula African Song for Peace

Homily "Let's Do It Our Way"

On Monday I drew upon a story by David Foster Wallace from his book This is Water (which was originally a commencement speech offered at Kenyon College in 2005). The story is about two young fish who were swimming along one day when an older fish happened by. "Morning," said the older fish. "Water's beautiful today, don't you think?" The two young fish swam on until one looked at the other and said, "What the hell is water?" Because, you see, as it turns out fish have no construct for water. They are born into it, they live in it, feed in it, breed in it, and eventually die in it but they have no idea it even exists.

There are so many good analogies to be drawn from that short illustration it could be difficult to know where to start, but this morning we're talking about our third UU Source, *Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life*, so that should help!

Think with me, if you will, about culture...about our UU culture, yes. But also, more broadly, about culture in general...American Culture as seen through the lenses of our own lived experience. Now, imagine, for a moment, that culture as water and imagine we are the fish.

My podcast partner, Rev, Chris Owen, has a great working definition of culture. He defines it as "patterns of thought and habits of behavior." "Patterns of thought and habits of behavior." Not matters that are well researched and thought through but rather patterns that emerge over time, for better and for worse, paired with behaviors which become habitual over time...habitual and considered 'normative'. Like the songs of the sirens in Greek mythology which caused so many to unthinkingly jump from the safety of the ship into the murky and dangerous waters, culture has a way of imposing values and behaviors on us, which cause us to unthinkingly jump into the murky and dangerous waters of values not our own.

Like fish who are born into water but have no construct for it, we are born into cultures which we are often seriously blind to. Those of you who have participated in any anti-racism or DEIJ work over the last five years or so will no doubt be familiar with this idea as it pertains to acknowledging dominant cultures in order to de-center them.

Faith, on the other hand...religion in particular...is another matter all together. Faith must, in the end, be chosen. And, in my opinion, questioned...vigorously. So, not at all about patterns of thought and habits of behavior we can remain complacent within. Though all too often religion can become that, but that is subject matter for another day.

Our third UU Source in this Living Tradition we share points to *Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life*. Why might that be important? Because without the ability to center ourselves in something bigger than us, we run the very high risk of falling into patterns of thought and habits of behavior that, too often, fail to guide us in ways that reflect our highest values, ethics and aspirations.

In Greek mythology, sailors would lash their captains to the masts of their ships when they entered waters where sirens were thought to be. This was to prevent the captain from jumping overboard at the sirens call and ensuring the safety of the ship. Well, sirens are abundant in our culture today, calling us hither and yon to matters that often vacillate between the unwholesome and the utterly absurd.

I mean, think about it for a moment. Our culture right now in these so-called United states is a hot mess. Racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism...*realism* that is anything but...laissez faire capitalism which values wealth over and above everything, not the least of which is *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*, the health of our democracy or the sustainability of our precious planet...rampant consumerism which drives far too many people to try and live well beyond their means and leaves them drowning in debit. I could go on, but I think you get the gist. Our culture right now in America is a hot mess, and maybe it always has been to some extent, but agin, that's a sermon for another day.

If the culture we are born into, live in, breed in, feed in and die in is the water, and we are the fish, then we are being constantly manipulated by forces we did not choose, and right now those forces are anything but benevolent.

What does any of this have to do with faith...with *Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life*, and why might we want to subscribe to it?

As I noted on Monday, the only way to enlighten a fish is to lift it out of the water. The minute that fish hits air, it fully understands the construct of water. This is what that *wisdom from the worlds religions* can do for us. Lift us from those patterns of thought and habits of behavior we are unconscious to so that when we re-enter the water, we do so as enlightened beings, able to resist the headlong tumble from one unconscious thought or behavior to the next, and maybe, just maybe, bring a few other fish along with us. In this way, *wisdom from the worlds religions* not only inspires us in our *ethical and religious lives*, but in all the other parts of our lives as well.

All of which sounds pretty good, yes? BUT...there's a catch. Think about that fish getting itself hauled out of the water for a moment. The minute it hits air, yes, it knows water...it also knows it is beginning to suffocate! Often, the wisdom we seek...the wisdom we need...involves sacrifice...enduring a bit of discomfort...in order to glean it. In the United Church of Christ we refer to this as *the cost and joy of discipleship*.

Like the caterpillar who crawls into her chrysalis and allows herself to be dissolved into some sort of primordial ooze in faith that she will emerge on the other side of the process 'more than' she was at the beginning, faith is what enables us to endure the hardship and discomfort that is a necessary part of being a people of faith...a people of transformation.

Let's look at this from another angle. We UU's like to think of ourselves as people committed to social justice. That commitment assumes that there exists social injustice, and correcting that injustice requires change. We like to think of ourselves as agents of that change. But as author, theologian and teacher Peter Steinke reminds us, "Leading change brings out both **reactive** forces and **responsive** ones."

The first, reactive forces, occur when we become extremely defensive. We often refer to this as instinct, the "lower brain," or the "reptilian brain." We sense danger and anxiety kicks in as an automatic reaction to a threat, whether the threat is real or imagined. We all know this, right? When we feel threatened there's no time to take a survey! Everything within us is screaming. There's no time to think! Just do something!

But leading change can also produce something else; responsiveness. Responsiveness emerges when we are reflective. The key here is that responsiveness in the face of change, or challenge, is learned behavior. Writing for 'Zabreview,' theologian Eugene Peterson notes that, when we are in the reflective zone, "We are free to exercise reason and creativity and imagination. We're free to explore possibilities..."

So, leading change produces **reaction** and **response**, and, to be clear, both are necessary for human life. Without a "knee-jerk reaction," we wouldn't pull our hands out of the fire. And I think it goes without saying but, as a former firefighter I can tell you with certainty that, when any part of the body is on fire, assembling a focus group and brainstorming how we might weigh the options is not the best way forward!

Wisdom from the worlds religions teaches us how to discern the difference between discomfort and disaster, between change and calamity, between the pain that gives us life and the pain that will certainly bring us death. Wisdom from the worlds religions can build capacity in us for **reflection**...even and especially when those around us are descending into **reaction** over something that truly does not threaten life or limb.

In our opening reading for today, cartoonist Michael Leunig draws our attention to the natural world and he asks us to consider the arrival of spring and the hope that blessed season brings to so many. But he doesn't stop there. He asks us to allow ourselves to be moved by it, moved enough to seek our place within this vast mystery as people have done since the beginning of time. In other words, to be reflective in light of that season of fulfilled promise, in the hope that we might discover therein our simple duty, our natural and vital role within the vast miracle of life, the highest art, of building human faith. It's a tall order, to be sure. Thank God/ess we have some blueprints in the wisdom of the worlds religions.

Meditation

We pray for another way of being - another way of knowing...[may we be lead] where, side by side we may feel the embrace of the common soul....[may we be lead] to the slow path; to the joyous insights of the pilgrim; another way of knowing — another way of being. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

God/dess bless. Ashay. Namaste and Amen.

Choir *Draw the Circle Wide* by Mark Miller

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

A number of years ago, a congregation I was leading at the time was revisiting its' covenant. We had finally re-written our mission statement to something shorter than fifty words no one could remember. The new statement read, simply, that we exist to build beloved community within and beyond our doors. We wanted this sentiment reflected in our covenant but received some ...resistance...from some among us who felt that the word "beloved" was unnecessary. "Why isn't "community" enough?"

Some of you may be wondering the same about the Star Island Beloved Community Project so I offer you this.

Community is very often what emerges out of lots of organizations, like the Elks, the Rotary, community choirs, community athletic teams, etc. Beloved community is the work of people of faith. It requires more than, "I'm here because I like the people," because, let's be honest, we don't always like all the people we're in church with. In fact, if you think about it for a moment, were it not for our faith communities, how many of the people in yours would you likely cross paths with? If you're like many of us, the answer comes back, "Not many."

When we think of diversity, we often think of things like race, class, sexual identity, gender identification, physical ability, and many of our congregations do not reflect a whole lot of diversity in those particular areas. But that shouldn't lead us to conclude that we are more alike than we are, (and if you have ever been to a General Session at GA, you know what I'm saying here IS the gospel truth!).

Beloved Community is a special animal. It asks us to remain responsive when every fiber of our beings is screaming to react. It asks us to allow ourselves to be lifted from the comfort of the water in which we live. It calls us to bind ourselves each to each and each to all DESPITE our differences and to ground our relationships with one another, and our larger world, in a love that knows no boundaries, a love that seeks forgiveness and reconciliation no matter what, a love beyond our comprehension, but to which we bind ourselves none-the-less.

It ain't easy! It is why we extract vows from those who would lead us in these sacred communities, and why we covenant with one another.

May we all be found worthy of the title as both builders and members.

Extinguish the Chalice The Work We Share by Krista Taves

It is our work, shared with each other in covenant,
That creates and sustains this beloved community.
We extinguish this chalice, but its light lives on
in the directions we have chosen today.
The light of this faith lives on in us, together,
in our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits.
Amen and Blessed Be.

Benediction

Choir *Siyahamba* (Congregation exits during song)

- **THURSDAY** Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

Gathering Music

Welcome & Call to Worship

For those of you joining us for the first time, I am The Rev. Shayna Appel, your minister of the week and it is my joy to bid you welcome to morning worship on Star Island. I hope you've been finding joy, fun, relaxation and renewal during your time here on Star.

Our worship series for the week has been focusing on our Six UU Sources. Thus far we've covered Direct Experience of Transcending Mystery and Wonder, (or Ducks and

Fish), Words and Deeds of Prophetic People, (not all of whom were angry bearded men, Jewish or, men), and Wisdom from the Worlds Religions (which has the capacity to lift us, like those fish, from patterns of thought and habits of behavior we might not otherwise choose). So today we arrive at our forth Source, Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Additionally, we are using as a primary source for readings this week a little book called When I Speak to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God, by Australian cartoonist Michael Leunig.

If you are interested in anything we have gone over, or will go over in the next few days, please know that the weeks worship book, with all readings, writings, sermons, etc., will be posted on our conferences website **BUT**... not until the end of the week! So, of you need something sooner, please just come see me and I'll get it to you.

Prelude *Invocation* by Beth Bartlett Armstrong

Chalice Lighting A True Story by Li Kynvi

This chalice is for the living,
the changing,
the becoming.

This chalice is for losing the script of your life,
the chapters about who you are
in other people's stories.

This chalice is for the lost GPS
that was supposed to show you how to get
where they expected you to go.

This chalice is for skipping the directions,
coloring outside the lines,
painting—not by number—but by silence,
by wild abandon,

with a brush you made yourself
from light deep inside.

Startling.

Vivid.

A new voice
that already knows you.

Finally, a true story.

Hymn #209 [STLT] O Come, You Longing Thirsty Souls

Reading

Let us pray for wisdom. Let us pause from thinking and empty our mind. Let us stop the noise. In the silence let us listen to our heart. The heart which is buried alive. Let us be still and wait and listen carefully. A sound from the deep, from below. A faint cry. A weak tapping. Distant muffled feelings from within. The cry for help..

We shall rescue the entombed heart. We shall bring it to the surface, to the light and the air. We shall nurse it and listen respectfully to its story. The heart's story of pain and suffocation, of darkness and yearning. We shall help our feelings to live in the sun. Together we shall find relief and joy. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Homily "Who Is My Neighbor"

In the story of The Good Samaritan, which appears in Luke's gospel [10:25-37], a Lawyer approaches a young Rabbi wanting to discuss some vital issues. Maybe he wanted to one-up the young Rabbi by demonstrating the depth and breadth of his own intellect. He asked, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And the young Rabbi asked if he knew what was written in the Law, the Torah. The Lawyer replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

The young Rabbi told the Lawyer that he had responded correctly and that he should go forth, into the world, and do just that. But the Lawyer wasn't finished with the Rabbi. He had another question for him; "Who is my neighbor?" he asked. Now, he was probably looking for a legal definition in case the matter was raised at a later time. Something along the lines of; "A neighbor (hereinafter referred to as the party of the first part) is to be construed as meaning a person of Jewish descent whose legal residence is within a radius of no more than three statute miles from one's own legal residence unless there is another person of Jewish descent (hereinafter referred to as the party of the second part) living closer to the party of the first part than one is oneself, in which case the party of the second part is to be construed as neighbor to the party of the first part and one is oneself relieved of responsibility of any kind whatsoever."

The Lawyer **may** have been looking for a legal definition, but that's not what he got. Instead, the young Rabbi told a story about a lone traveler who was ambushed on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A road so dangerous it came to be known as 'The Bloody Pass' in Jesus' day. It is curvy, it is windy, and it drops from 1200 feet above sea level in Jerusalem to 2200 feet below sea level at Jericho, some 18 miles down the way. It's steep. Very steep. "Trucks test your brakes" level of steep!

The young Rabbi tells the Lawyer a story about a lone traveler on that dangerous road who fell in among thieves, was beaten, robbed and left for dead. A priest and a Levite came upon the man but when they saw him they crossed to the other side of the road and continued on their way.

In his speech, 'I Have Been to the Mountain Top', delivered April 3, 1968 - the night before he was assassinated- the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King recalled this story of the Good Samaritan and he speculated on what it was that may have driven the priest and the Levite to walk past the man. King postulated that perhaps, "they were busy going to a church meeting, an ecclesiastical gathering, and they had to get on down to Jerusalem so they wouldn't be late for their meeting" or, perhaps, "there was a religious law that "One who was engaged in religious ceremonials was not to touch a human body twenty-four hours before the ceremony." Maybe, said King, they were going down to... Jericho...to organize a "Jericho Road Improvement Association." That was a possibility. "Maybe they felt that it was better to deal with the [Jericho Road] problem from the causal root, rather than to get bogged down with an individual effect."

But Dr. King also had another take on this old story that he wanted to impart to his audience that evening. The same audience who would hear him say, shortly thereafter, that he had seen the promised land but might not get there with them. The same audience who would hear of his assassination the very next day. Dr. King wanted to impart to that audience another interpretation of the parable, and that was simply the possibility that the Priest and the Levite walked past the man who was in need because they were afraid. Perhaps they looked over at that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Maybe they were afraid that the man was merely faking his injuries and that if they stopped to offer help they would fall prey to him.

King wanted those present that evening, who were themselves locked in the heat of the Civil Rights movement, who had experienced violence at the hands of the police and white racists, and who were thus well acquainted with the feeling of fear - to look beyond the fear, beyond what might encourage them to keep walking past the one, or the many, who were struggling and in need. And so Dr. King illustrated for them the problem with the thinking that wound up casting the priest and Levite into such an unflattering light.

The problem, according to Dr. King, was that when the priest and the Levite encountered the man who was in need, both centered their own experience in that critical moment. They asked, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But the Samaritan reversed the question and de-centered his experience long enough to ask the question, "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

A Lawyer approached a young Rabbi wanting to discuss some vital issues. He was likely looking for a legal solution to his dilemma, but instead, Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the point of which seems to be that our neighbor is to be defined as anybody who needs us. The Lawyers response is left unrecorded.

At first glance, the story of the Good Samaritan is rather straight forward. When you encounter someone who is in need, help them. And I bet when most of us read it, we immediately identify with the Good Samaritan. After all, who among us would actually abandon someone beaten and bleeding on the side of the road? At the very least, we'd make a phone call and get him some help.

But, as is true with so many stories in Jewish and Christian traditions, peel back a layer on this parable and the complexity of what is being asked of us gets revealed. Think of it this way...how would our lives and our communities look different if we were to practice de-centering our own experience, thoughts, comfort, safety and opinions once in awhile?

As some of you may know, I volunteer with a number of local fire departments serving as Department Chaplain. Every single one of those departments, and indeed, every volunteer department across the State of New Hampshire, is hurting right now for volunteers. According to the National Volunteer Council, volunteers make up about 65% of firefighters across the United States. In New Hampshire, that number is a bit higher at about 70%. But we live in a time wherein people weigh the benefit of joining a volunteer fire department against the back drop of the question, "If I join this department, what will happen to me?" "How many nights sleep, birthday parties, graduations and other celebrations will be disrupted? How much time will this volunteer position ask of me? Am I really willing to put myself in harms way for another? Am I really able to deal with all the loss I will experience?"

These are all reasonable questions, to be sure. The problem is, too few of us are asking the more critical question Dr. King and the story of The Good Samaritan point us to; "If I do not volunteer for my local fire department, what will happen to it and all those who are in need of it?" Reporting for New Hampshire's own WMUR, Tim Callery noted in July of 2019 that "as departments struggle to retain volunteer firefighters, safety concerns mount."

This example of volunteer service in our local fire departments is, of course, only an example, and could just as easily be replaced with service in any volunteer organization. Food banks, Habitat for Humanity, help for those who live without homes...or maybe even our own local churches?

What will happen to me if I do? What will happen to others if I don't? Let's move our exploration of these two poles a little closer to home?

People now have busy lives and little time to give to volunteerism. Let's face it, we are more inclined to ask how agreeing to serve on a Committee or Task Team will impact our own lives than we are to ask the question of what will happen to our congregation and all those who may be in need of her if we do not serve. The decline in volunteerism is an easy connection here, but let me reach past that to another place where the need for us to be able to de-center our own experience is of critical importance.

As some of you know, the UUA and member congregations have always sought to be welcoming communities. However, a number of years ago, we discovered that systemic racism within our own organization was rife. Members of BIPOC communities, (Black, indigenous, people of color), were grossly underrepresented in positions of leadership and similarly overrepresented in support staffing. This painful realization caused us to recommit in earnest our efforts to dismantle white supremacy.

But, we wanted to do that differently than it had been done before because, too often, when DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) practitioners and anti-racism educators are brought into institutions, the core curriculum typically centers around helping white people learn about and understand racism. It is not uncommon in these settings for the curriculum to be toned down in order to avoid topics that will make white people uncomfortable, but change will not come through comfortability. Comfortability is what has sustained decades of anti-racism work that has resulted in very little actual progress.

So, if we were going to tackle this anti-racism initiative with fresh focus and any possibility for real success, we were going to have to begin by de-centering whiteness and centering the lived experiences of those at the margins - those in the BIPOC, Disability and LGBTQ communities, for starters.

The work has been painfully slow and frustratingly stuck in the quagmire of white heterosexual experience and dominant culture. Starting at GA in 2015 where an Action of Immediate Witness was brought to the floor to support Black Lives Matter. Immediately, white people began to speak to the BLM platform, offering to re-write it, pointing out what was wrong with it and why white people would have a hard time supporting it. This discussion went on and on, as discussions will at GA, and as I scanned the faces of our BIPOC folk in the room, their pain and frustration were painfully evident. Finally someone rose to the microphone and explained that the Action of Immediate Witness wasn't asking us to re-write elements of the BLM platform, it was simply asking us to support it. We did ultimately vote to do so but not before taking such an awkward and confusing tour through Robert's Rules of Order the GA Chaplains called for a time out and a moment of prayer so that we could re-center our support of BLM. During this last GA there were similar covenantal breakdowns around our Trans siblings and around article II.

My friends, if you are white, cis-gendered, straight, economically secure and without any obvious mental health or physical/emotional disabilities, and english is your first language, there is something important that you need to know. Almost everything in American culture affirms who you are and that your perspectives, experiences, thoughts and beliefs should not only be important to you, but they should matter to all those around you. In that light, if you happen to come across one who has been beaten and left for dead, and it is inconvenient for you to stop and render assistance because of what could happen to you, you are excused. Because if there is another person of UU descent (hereinafter referred to as the party of the second part) living closer to the party of the first part than one is oneself... the party of the second part is to be construed as neighbor to the party of the first part and one is oneself relieved of responsibility of any kind whatsoever."

But, if you want to truly be an agent of transformation, if you are committed to tearing down the walls that divide us, each from each and each from all, you will begin centering the voices and lived experiences of the poor, the marginalized, the disabled, BIPOC and LGBTQIA people.

We will begin slowly, of course, perhaps starting with one another. Perhaps learning to shelve our own experiences, thoughts and opinions until we have really heard the thoughts, experiences and opinions of the one we are engaged with. We will, as we discussed on Monday, abandon the upright posture for one that enables us to be more like those we are in community with who do not represent the dominant culture. We will cultivate a Holy curiosity with one another, which generally causes us to ask more questions. We will honor and respect those who are leading meetings and/or discussions by staying focused on the subject at hand rather than succumbing to the urge to enlighten those in attendance with every witty or insightful thought that occurs to us. We will THINK before we speak. Is what we are about to say Thoughtful, Helpful, Insightful, Necessary and Kind? If not, maybe we just don't say it!

In short, if we want to flip the existing paradigm of white power and privilege, of dominant culture, on its proverbial head, we will learn to put others first. We will learn to flip the question of "what will happen to us if we do," to the more righteous concern of "what will happen to them if I don't."

Let this work begin - however imperfectly - but for the love of justice and righteousness, let this work begin.

So may it be, blessed be, and amen.

Meditation

We give thanks for places of simplicity and peace. Let us find such a place within ourselves. We give thanks for places of refuge and beauty. Let us find such a place within ourselves. We give thanks for places of nature's truth and freedom, of joy, inspiration, and renewal, places where all creatures may find acceptance and belonging. Let us search for these places in the world, in ourselves and in others. Let us restore them. Let us strengthen and protect them, and let us create them.

May we find this outer world according to the truth of our inner life and may our souls be shaped and nourished by nature's eternal wisdom. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Hymn/Special Music There's a Spirit of Love in this Place by Mark Miller [Arr. Adam Tavolaro]

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

As we are all aware, the Star Island Staff holds responsibility for setting "rules" in order to keep us physically safe while we are here on island. But responsibility to foster beloved Community belongs to all of us. Behaviors and attitudes on island, and off, cannot be dictated by rules. They must rather be lived into by us because we have an

authentic investment in being as inclusive and self-aware as we can be - forever becoming better versions of who we are as individuals and as a community.

So, the next time you hear that a cherished island tradition is being let go of, or something new is coming into being for this or that reason, take the time you need to honor your own feelings about that - just don't get stuck there. The change that's taking effect may well not be about you.

In other words...ask not what will happen to you if the change is made, ask what will happen to your neighbor, or the one who is not yet your neighbor, if we don't make the change!

Extinguish the Chalice The Flame of Fiercest Love by Phoenix Bell-Shelton Biggs [Worshipweb]

As we extinguish our sacred flame once more, we do so having...called to question our doubts, our fears; having been reminded of who and whose we are, as God calls upon us to: "Do everything in love" - 1 Corinthians 16:14; as we "Do justice, love mercy and tread humbly" - Micah 6:8.

Beloveds, our sacred flame is now extinguished but inside of us all burns a flame bright and true. That flame, the flame of the Fiercest Love that is our promise of universal salvation, can never be extinguished.

Hymn #215 [STLT] Praise to the Living God

Benediction

- **FRIDAY** Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

Gathering Music

Welcome & Call to Worship [Call by Gwen Matthews, "You Contain the Holy."WORSHIPWEB]

Good morning and welcome to day 5 of morning worship and our journey within the 6 Sources of Unitarian Universalism. I am still the Rev. Shayna Appel, your minister of the week, and it is still good to be here together again. Just out of curiosity, so I can get a sense of who's with us this morning, how many of you have been coming to morning worship regularly since Monday? Wonderful! Thank you! How many of you have been here more than once? Beautiful! And how many of you are here for the first time this week? Excellent! Welcome one and all!

We are taking a trip this week through our 6 Sources of Unitarian Universalism. While these Sources are often printed right along side our 7 or 8 Principles, they seem to be the lesser known cousins of our Living Tradition. And I think that's...unfortunate. I mean, it's one thing to know what we're aiming for, and another thing entirely to have some means to help us get there!

I think it was Freddy Buechner who once wrote that "shadows are the midwives of mystery." If this is true, and I suspect it is, then perhaps our UU Sources serve in like manor, giving the many faiths we hold in this tradition of ours a depth and breadth beyond what we could ever make them on our own.

Thus far we have covered sources one thru five; direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder, words and deeds of prophetic people, wisdom from the worlds religions and Jewish and Christian teachings, bringing us to the Source du Jour; Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

As we settle into worship together, hear these words by Gwen Matthews:

Whoever you are,
Wherever you are from,
Whomever you love,
Whatever it is you have done,
You are welcome here.

You are welcome to this time, this space, this moment
that we carve out of often busy and chaotic weeks.

You are welcome to this time for collective breaths,
for words, for music,
for lighting candles,
and for us to simply exist here, together.

And you are invited into worship this morning with these words from Ta-Nehisi Coates*:

"I believed, and still do, that our bodies are our selves, that my soul is the voltage conducted through neurons and nerves, and that my spirit is my flesh."

Our bodies are our selves.

My soul is the voltage conducted through neurons and nerves.

My spirit is my flesh.

Wow, okay, yes. Yes to all of that.

The essence that is you—that spark of life,
is in your body;
is of your body;
and it is—you are—divine.

In other words, you contain the holy within you right now.

And now, I invite you to take a breath as we enter into this time of worship in body,
mind, and spirit.

Special Music Summer of My Dreams by Dave Mallott [Beth & Robin]

Chalice Lighting Blessed is the Fire That Burns Deep in the Soul by Eric A Heller-
Wagner [Worshipweb]

Blessed is the fire that burns deep in the soul. It is the flame of the human spirit touched into being by the mystery of life. It is the fire of reason; the fire of compassion; the fire of community; the fire of justice; the fire of faith. It is the fire of love burning deep in the human heart; the divine glow in every life.

Hymn #287 [STLT] Faith of the Larger Liberty

Reading

God bless the lone tunnelers, those rare individuals whose joy and passion it is to dig mysterious tunnels beneath the surface of the earth; who share the soulful purpose of moles and worms; who labor gleefully beneath our feet while we bask in the sun or gaze at the stars; whose pockets and cuffs are full of soil; who dig faithfully in darkness, turning left and turning right, not knowing why or where, but absorbed and fulfilled nevertheless. Under houses; under roads and statues; beneath and among the roots of trees; on elbows and knees; carefully, steadily pawing at their beloved earth; sniffing and savoring the rich odor of dirt; dreaming and delighting in the blackness; onward and onward, not knowing the day or night; unsung, unadorned, unassuming, unrestrained. Grimy fingernails angels of the underworld - we praise them and give thanks for their constant, unseen presence and the vast labyrinth they have created beneath our existence. We praise them and give them thanks. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Homily “Digging Deep”

Perspective is...a complicated and multivalent thing. But it's important that I be transparent about my own here this morning so...a little about me!

I had been a UU for about five or six years when I got my call to ministry. Which is to say, there was a lot about Unitarian Universalism I didn't know when I applied to

seminary. What I did know, or what I thought I knew, was that we were basically a big tent under which people practiced faith from a number of traditions. I was also aware that many UU's hailed from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds but left those faith traditions either because of injury they suffered there or just some deep differences in belief.

Now, I'm culturally Jewish and ethnically Brooklyn...and I'm a bit older than many people think. When I was growing up, schools got out for "Christmas" and "Easter" vacations, but if we wanted to take off for Yom Kippur...well, we were expected to make up the classwork. During the winter holidays my neighborhood and every other neighborhood seemed to be awash in Christmas lights, and the television broadcast Christmas Specials and commercials about buying all things Christmas. When I visited a local Hallmark store there were racks and racks of Christmas cards. The Chanukah section, on the other hand, was decidedly more limited. And no one, at the time, was producing chocolate covered matzoh's for Passover. This bred in me a somewhat toxic brew of jealousy and disdain for all things Christian.

Then I went to college. And while I was in college I became active in work to expose and resist the KKK, a so-called 'white Christian' hate group. Armed with all those experiences, and zero actual knowledge about Christianity, I became a devout Christophobe.

Fast forward to my call to the ministry. I wondered, how would I be able to honor and pastor with those who hailed from this dreaded faith tradition? At best I would probably just dismiss them, but I was seriously concerned about the harm I might do from the framework of my abject ignorance.

So, I did something which was probably a little nuts, but which made perfect sense at the time...I applied to and was accepted at a Christian seminary...Andover Newton Theological School, (or ANTS for short), in order to overcome my fear of all things Christian. And I did it because I truly believed that being a good Unitarian Universalist required me to, at the very least, be able to tolerate the worlds religious traditions...to understand them and to have some expertise in locating universal values within them.

Long story short, I overshot the mark a bit and six years later was ordained into Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ. A few years after that the UUA was gracious enough to give me standing as well and here I am, and there you all are, and that is pretty much that.

I share all of this with you in the hope it will enable you to understand, from my perspective, the utter amazement I felt upon my return to the UU fold wherein it was made very clear to me - you know, in the way we UU's can be crystal clear - that, not only was my Christian faith not welcomed here, but pretty much any serious discussion about religion...you know...in general was not going to happen.

I was confused, because when I got my call to ministry and began speaking with those in our faith tradition who know a thing or two about the process of becoming a UU minister, I was directed to seminary because a Masters of Divinity was a requirement for those of us wishing to minister here. No alternative path was offered. One could not minister a UU congregation with a Law Degree, or a Masters in Philosophy or Social Work degree. The degree required at the time if one wished to be a minister in this beloved denomination was a Masters in Divinity.

How does one acquire such a degree? Glad you asked! One attends an accredited seminary or theological school. What do we study there? Another great question. Theology! *Theos logos*...literal translation: a conversation about God, which, interestingly, is also a conversation about humanities deep thoughts over the millennia. And yeah, we study pastoral care and church history, ethics and preaching, but at the end of the day, we are trained to be religious professionals.

So, how was it, I wondered, that I had done all this work, acquired my degree, jumped through, like, a gagillion hoops in order to get ordained in the UCC and then earn standing in the UUA, and then find myself in a congregation in which I bore the title appropriate to my training - Parish Minister - only to be told that my beloved flock had little to know interest in, or any actual use for, the knowledge base I was required to acquire in order to be there?

I'll tell you what...I was never more grateful to have the training I had in that moment and in those early days with my new congregation. Instead of reacting to their criticism/warnings, by nurture and no small amount of grace, I went into a place of deep reflection. I consciously decided to try and get them into a place of holy curiosity with me, and once there we began a journey together that is, to this very day, one of the truly great blessings of my life. And when I think back on that congregation I do so confident that we were really good for one another and I love them all deeply to this day.

So, what was the stumbling block?

I began by asking them what they were there for? And, of course, the answer was? Community. "Right, right. I get that." I said, "But you can find community elsewhere. Why have you chosen to find it here?"

"Well," they'd say, "we like the people here. And we like the (former) minister."

I knew all that, or at least I had figured as much. After all, I had a Masters in Divinity and was an ordained minister. It's not like I didn't know why some folks went to church! But I asked them to dig a little deeper with me, and as we explored together what made this community different from other communities, we started getting into some really sweet discussions...deep and meaningful conversations about our hopes and desires, about our highest ideals and the challenges to living them out, about the things that exist right at the edge of our knowing as well as the things that remain mysterious. In

short, we began engaging in religious discussion, covering topics of faith humans have wrestled with since the recording of history and, I imagine, even well before that.

One day, after I had been there awhile and had a general but pretty sure sense they were no longer threatening the Search Team who had brought this Judeo/Christian into their midst, I worked up the courage to ask them the question I was still wrestling with.

“Why are you all so resistant to anything that carries even a whiff of anything religious?” I asked.

“Because we’re Humanists,” came the response.

“Well, for the love of God, or, you know, not, what does that have to do with it?”

“We don’t believe in God,” came the reply. “Some of us are just not sure about God but mostly we don’t believe in God.”

“Well,” say I...that makes you UU Atheists or UU Agnostics, but tell me more about your understanding of Humanism.”

What followed was enlightening and, I confess, a little disappointing. Most of those who identified as Humanists had come to Unitarian Universalism from other traditions with which they had a significant falling out. They came to Unitarian Universalism seeking another way, but soon found that seeking a new way wasn’t really required until the stories eventually morphed into - and tell me of this sounds familiar - we came here to leave all that there. In truth, they really had no idea what a Humanist was. It had become code for, “I have no interest in anything religious.” When, in truth, they had plenty of appetite for matters of religion so long as that religion wasn’t inextricably tied to ancient creeds and doctrines which seemed, to them, out of place in a post-modern society.

Well, the first Humanists felt the same way. And they articulated as much in the first Humanist Manifesto in 1933 when they wrote:

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience.

Ever wonder where the idea of a Living Tradition came from?

But they were not anti-religious. In fact, the first Humanist Manifesto was, in the words of its authors, intended to be *a new statement of the means and purposes of religion*. They wrote that, while their age owed a vast debt to the traditional religions:

...it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

...and they went on to set forth fifteen affirmations that defined this new faith tradition.

By 2003 when the third iteration of the Humanist Manifesto was written, Humanists had largely moved away from religious language in favor of more philosophical language. They wrote:

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

I love that! And I give thanks to God, (as is my right as a UU), for the Humanist branch of our UU tree. They warn us against *idolatries of the mind and spirit* and encourage us not to bind ourselves to the past, but rather wrestle with the ever unfolding truths before us. Humanism may largely be credited for the fact that ours **is** a Living Tradition. And that Living Tradition is now giving rise to a re-write of Article II of our constitution which, I may have made light of during Monday's service but that was pure jest on my part because in truth I believe the re-write is critical to our future.

But, in the end, Unitarian Universalism is not a Humanist faith. Humanism is a faith tradition that takes its place among the many other faith traditions that make up the very large tent of Unitarian Universalism. I appreciate that fact, I appreciate all that Humanism has and continues to contribute to this great faith of ours. I would just ask that those same Humanists might

...bless the lone tunnelers, among us...those rare individuals whose joy and passion it is to dig mysterious tunnels beneath the surface of the earth; who share the soulful purpose of moles and worms; who labor gleefully beneath our feet while we bask in the sun or gaze at the stars; whose pockets and cuffs are full of soil; who dig faithfully in darkness, turning left and turning right, not knowing why or where, but absorbed and fulfilled nevertheless.

Meditation

God, help us to change. To change ourselves and to change our world. To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it. To feel the joy of it. To undertake the journey without understanding the destination. The art of gentle revolution. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Special Music Spirit Come Be With Me Now by Marcia Taylor [Beth to Lead]

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

Every youth group I have ever worked with begins its time together by covenanting, and that was no different out here on Star when Adam and I were leading Youth Con's. One year, in which the covenant had come together fairly easily due to the extraordinary leadership of some of the older kids, one of said older kids came forward at the end of the process to add a little punctuation to the covenant. He took the marker and turned to those gathered and said, "Listen guys. This really isn't all that complicated." Then he turned to the piece of paper hanging on the wall which now bore our covenant and wrote across the bottom of it: Don't be a dumbass!

Personally, there are days when that admonition seems harder for me than others. But they are simple words to live by, memorable and concise. And I can't help but believe that if we committed to simply not be dumbasses, we'd be well on our way to building beloved community.

So may it be!

Extinguish the Chalice Daring Vision by Maureen Killoran [Worshipweb]

Daring Vision

We extinguish this chalice flame,
daring to carry forward the vision of this free faith,
that freedom, reason and justice
will one day prevail in this nation and across the earth.

Hymn #158 [STLT] Praise the Source of Faith and Learning [Choir & Adam]

Benediction

- **SATURDAY** Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Gathering Music

Welcome & Call to Worship Good morning and welcome to our final morning worship service for IA 2024. What a week we've had, and it ain't over yet!

I am the Rev. Shayna Appel and it has been a JOY to be minister of the week with you all. Thanks to those of you who have sung in our choir. Thanks Beth, Stu, Adam and Robin for bringing so much beautiful music to our gatherings. And thanks to all of you who have faithfully attended these services. As I said on Tuesday, without you, these gatherings would be simply rehearsals! But together, we have made this space hallowed...sacred. And I hope you know how much your presence here has meant to me. My heart is full and my Spirit renewed for whatever the mainland may serve up for the next year, until, God/ess willing, we are together again!

But, right now we have a service to engage! So, sit back, make sure seats and tray tables are in their upright positions, fasten your seatbelts and let's get this puppy airborne!

Hymn #1064 [STJ] Blue Boat Home

Chalice Lighting Alive in All Creation by Shari Woodbury [Worshipweb]

Spark of the spirit
cupped in earth's embrace,
Light of love
alive in all creation,
As we kindle this flame,
we rekindle our connection
to the sacred web of life.

Reading

Across the difficult terrain of our existence we have attempted to build a highway and in so doing have lost our footpath. God, lead us to our footpath; lead us there where in simplicity we may move at the speed of natural creatures and feel the earth's love beneath our feet. Lead us where step by step we may feel the movement of creation in our hearts. And lead us where side by side we may feel the embrace of the common soul. Nothing can be loved at speed. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Hymn #21 [STLT] For the Beauty of the Earth

Homily "Nothing Can Be Loved At Speed"

Our Sixth Source in this Living Tradition we share points us towards the *Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.* And I don't believe the importance of this can be overstated because, as Michael Leunig points out in our opening reading, "*Across the difficult terrain of our existence we have attempted to build a highway and in so doing have lost our footpath...and Nothing can be loved at speed.*" So our sixth Source calls us to turn our hearts and minds and intentions to Earth-centered traditions in order that we might be reminded of nature's rhythms.

If you were lucky enough to catch Dr. Lisa's 'Timely Topic' then you heard about the importance of connection in our lives. And one practice she spoke about for cultivating our capacity for connection involved 'nature baths' - the practice of putting ourselves into a natural environment while intentionally becoming mindful of the sights, sounds and feelings we are experiencing. The practice originated in Japan and is called shinrin yoku and it has been shown to produce states of deep relaxation which, as anyone who has been time on this rock knows, is great and fertile soil for connecting to others.

Dr. Lisa also talked about opening to the sense of awe and wonder which, as it happens, can help us become right-sized, (in other words, not the center of our universe), and more socially inclined. She spoke about an experiment in which one group of students were lead to a grove of eucalyptus trees and another group was lead to some tall buildings. Needless to say, those standing in the eucalyptus grove experienced something more than did the group staring at a tall building.

As students were lead back to their class rooms, they encountered a human 'plant' who would drop a bunch of pencils, seemingly by mistake. Researchers noted that, in every trial, the students who had encountered awe in the eucalyptus grove were much more likely to help the human pencil dropper gather the felled pencils than were the group who had not encountered awe. They concluded that experiences of awe bring us closer to and involve us more deeply in the architecture of our interdependence

I was thinking about Dr. Lisa's Timely Topic when it dawned on me that many of us had a collective experience of awe on the way out to this island last Sunday. How many of you saw the juvenile humpback whale in the mouth of the river while we were aboard the Thomas Leighton? Pretty cool, right?

And then what happened? In our excitement to be together again and to be on our way out to Star Island, might we have gone back to our discussions with one another? Perhaps those of us who had responsibilities when we landed on island shifted our attention there? Maybe your cell phone dinged and brought you back to this world or maybe it was word that our President, Joe Biden, was suspending his campaign?

Well, I didn't leave that moment of awe quite so quickly. I mean, I got back to all that stuff eventually, but Earth Centered traditions, specifically indigenous American traditions that have played an important role in my own faith formation, called me to linger at the edge of awe for a few more moments, wondering what the appearance of that whale might be trying to say to us.

How many of you have heard of 'Animal Medicine'? The practice embraces an awareness, a wisdom if you will, that reveals itself when a certain animal crosses our path. The word "medicine" in Indigenous practice and in the custom of animal medicine refers to the healing aspects that a particular animal brings to our consciousness. This would mean anything that supports, strengthens, restores, empowers, or revives the spiritual body, as well as the physical body. The theory being that, once we are aware of what a certain animal represents, then we can take the necessary steps to create changes in our life according to that awareness.

So, a deer, for example, represents gentleness. It asks us to wonder how or if we are being gentle enough with ourselves and others. Otters represent curiosity and intelligence, and an embodied playfulness. If one happens into you life perhaps you are being called to honor that impulse within you to just let go of all your worry and anxiety and just be in the spirit of play for a bit.

And because we're swimming in a sea of them out here, I had to look up muskrats! Turns out Muskrat power enables us to swim through emotional waters to return home. This teaches us that we should be ready to face any challenges that may come our way but still home is the best. When we face problems and challenges, we should not be discouraged but we should continue working hard towards achieving our goals in life. Muskrat encourages us to be able to control our emotions and to remember the importance of having good relationships with those around us.

Let's get back to that whale for a moment. According to the tradition of animal medicine, the whale, the world's largest mammal, teaches lessons in vibration and sound. Whale Medicine is all about hearing the faint soft voices, the low-frequency messages, and maintaining remote bonds that are real and strong, even when they are far away. As a majestic and awe-inspiring creature, whales often represent a sense of spiritual guidance, power, and wisdom. Dreams of a whale spirit may signify a call to explore deeper aspects of one's consciousness, encouraging the dreamer to delve into their emotions, intuition, and inner wisdom.

Among the most recognized modern tales of the whale as a teacher is that of Captain Ahab's pursuit of the gigantic Sperm Whale, known as Moby Dick. In that novel superstition, the sea as a transformative vessel, and an examination of the massive mammal as a creature of undefined greatness live large. The whale is symbolic of that which cannot be easily vanquished — just as a person's inner truth, voice, and creativity cannot be easily silenced or subdued.

The whale is symbolic of that which cannot be easily vanquished. Think about that for a moment and recall our whale sighting. What had happened moments before? Do you remember? President Joe Biden suspended his campaign.

So, what might the presence of that juvenile humpback mean for us? What message might it have been bringing? And, look, before y'all write me off as a total flake, let's recall together our first Source. *Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.*

"A man kneels before a duck." Absurd? Maybe not. On Monday we discussed how abandoning the upright position before something might allow us to be more like it...to understand it in a different way...and you all were willing to try it! So why not wonder about the mystery of the whale and what it might come to teach us, or remind us of, or exhort us to?

Beloveds, sadly - so sadly - this is our final service of worship this year. And, in addition to being so full of gratitude for you all, I am also acutely aware of what we are returning to on the mainland. Our former UU President, Rev. Susan Frederick Grey, used to like to remind us that, "This is no time for a tepid faith." Our current President, the Rev. Dr. Sophia Betancourt, has said, "Hope is a spiritual discipline, not a mood."

If this is no time for a tepid faith, and hope is a spiritual discipline not a mood, what will you be doing when you return from this place of our Spirits home to be purveyors of peace, hawkers of hope, carriers of compassion?

I'll tell you what...we better start with us! Dig in, stay curious, go deep and then shine light. How? Continue to plumb these six sources of our Living Tradition. We've barely scratched the surface here this week and there's gold in them thar hills! But it's up to us

to mine it. Why? Because there is sustenance there for our souls, and while none of us knows what the future brings, based on all that was happening when we left the mainland, our souls are gonna need a bit of sustenance to get through whatever is coming next.

The late poet Mary Oliver once wrote, "This is the first, wildest and wisest thing I know, that the soul exists, and that it is built entirely out of attentiveness." We live in a time and culture which discourage us from paying attention to the soul or true self, and in a time which cries out for us to live deeply from the soul and the true self.

Pay attention. Nurture your souls. Remember the sources are here to help. Find your footpath and remember...nothing can be loved at speed.

Meditation

God help us to live slowly
To move simply
To look softly
To allow emptiness
To let the heart create for us.
Amen. [Leunig. When I Talk to You; A Cartoonist Talks to God.]

Special Music #1068 [STJ] Rising Green

A Word On Behalf of the SIBCP [Star Island Beloved Community Project]

And now, a final IA '24 message on behalf of the SIBCP.

Last summer Adam and I worked as end of season Pelicans. And God help me this is a true story.

Adam was working Cute Crew...the Pelican designation for Conference Services...and he was called to meet a conferee at Lawrence Hall for some undefined problem. So Adam scurried on over to Lawrence where he was met by said conferee who informed him that a seagull had made its way into Lawrence Hall and they weren't sure whether or not the seagull should be in there so they closed the door...securing said seagull in Lawrence.

In the interest of supporting our beloved Island Pelicans, we need to be clear that seagulls on Star are prohibited from entering any building, any time, ever, for any or no purpose whatsoever.

Your support will mean a great deal to island Pelicans who are always grateful not to have to mop another floor, again, on changeover day!

Thank you for your support!

Extinguish the Chalice A Blessing of Darkness and Light by Amy Zucker Morganstern
[Worshipweb]

Blessed is the dark, in which our dreams stir and are revealed.
Blessed is the dark of earth, where seeds come to life.
Blessed are the depths of the ocean where no light shimmers: the womb of all earthly life.

Blessed is the light into which we awake,
the light that sparkles on the waters:
that calls the tree forth from the seed,
and calls the shadow forth from the tree.

Blessed are we as we move through darkness and through light.

Special Music Wherever I Go by Marcia Taylor

Benediction