

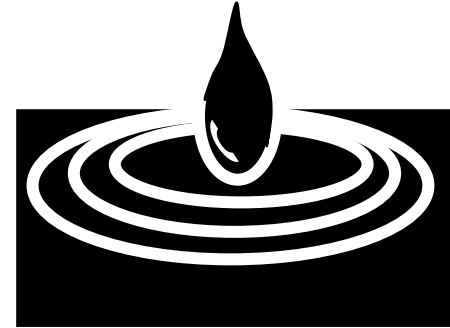
Parting thoughts: A Sufi Story

Once upon a time there was an old woman who used to meditate on the bank of the Ganges. One morning, finishing her meditation, she saw a scorpion floating helplessly in the strong current. As the scorpion was pulled closer, it got caught in roots that branched out far into the river. The scorpion struggled frantically to free itself but got more and more entangled.

She immediately reached out to the drowning scorpion, which, as soon as she touched it, stung her. The old woman withdrew her hand but, having regained her balance, once again tried to save the creature. Every time she tried, however, the scorpion's tail stung her so badly that her hands became bloody and her face distorted with pain.

A passerby who saw the old woman struggling with the scorpion shouted, "What's wrong with you, fool! Do you want to kill yourself to save that ugly thing?"

Looking into the stranger's eyes, she answered, "Because it is the nature of the scorpion to sting, why should I deny my own nature to save it?"



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

What Does It Mean To Be Human?

For all people of religious faith, being human means, and must mean, to see each other's humanity. In other words: I am human not only because I have been given the ability to listen, to speak, to feel pain and joy, but also and perhaps because others have been endowed with the same ability. It is the others' humanity that shapes my own.

- *Elie Weisel.*

This experience of our own humanity and relatedness is fundamental to all western religious development. It is also central to both Unitarianism and religious humanism. Our view of humanity has everything to do with how we do religion, how we raise our children, how we share our ideas, and why we work for social justice. Our religious process is one of affirmation and discovery. This is a pedagogy of freedom. Ours is the way of freedom. We are a liberating faith.

- *the Rev. Jim Eller*

Preliminaries

Get volunteers to light the chalice and read the opening. Announce church events.

Opening/Chalice Lighting
- Sue Ayer
(adapted)

I kindle the single flame of this chalice:
as a symbol of shared unity amid the richness of our human diversity, and
as an emblem of that divine spark which animates and guides us toward
the highest aspirations of our common humanity.

Check-in

Please take minute or two to share briefly what's been on your mind lately.

Readings from the Common Bowl

Going around the circle, read aloud the slip you have drawn from the bowl. Continue around the circle as many times as necessary to read all the quotations. If desired, you may also read the quotations on the front of this program.

Sitting in Silence

Sharing/Deep Listening

Please share your thoughts on the preparation for this session.

Discussion

This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Singing
#318, Singing the Living Tradition

We would be one as now we join in singing
Our hymn of love, to pledge ourselves anew
To that high cause of greater understanding
Of who we are, and what in us is true.
We would be one in living for each other
To show to all a new community.

We would be one in building for tomorrow
A nobler world than we have known today.
We would be one in searching for that meaning
Which binds our hearts and points us on our way.
As one, we pledge ourselves to greater service,
With love and justice, strive to make us free.

Closing/Extinguishing the Chalice

- Jack Mendelsohn,
1997 UUMA
Worship
Materials
Collection

Join hands or link arms as you read the closing words together:

Here we invite the spirit of our own humanity and the healing powers under, around, through and beyond it, to give us the nerve and grace, the toughness and sensitivity, to search out the truth that frees, and the life that maketh all things new.

