

- Maria Harris,
Fashion Me A
People

Although the church has always championed the integrity of each of its members (at least in theory), the outcome of this support has often been more in the direction of individualism than of personalism...At the extreme, this ideal of the mature person often became someone capable not only of individualism, but of "rugged" individualism; someone able to make decisions and judgments autonomously, alone; someone who could always be totally rational in all situations, even if being rational was inappropriate...In contrast to individualism, personalism emphasizes the understanding that all (not just each) human beings have equal dignity and that all (not just each) human beings have the right to the abundant gifts of the Creator...

The greatest contribution of personalism, however, has been the exploration of what it means to be a human person and the discovery that to *be* as a person means to *be with*. That is to say that we are only fully persons when we are in community and in communion with one another...Thus, [one] tension influencing our...vocation [as a spiritual community is the tension between] the personal and the communal. Maintaining the tension, rather than collapsing it, is critical. I need to emphasize this because often in the church we find ourselves taking sides and choosing investment in either one or the other, but not both. In our rush to celebrate each person, we feel we must downplay persons-in-relation, or relations with the nonhuman world: animals, plant life, earth. Or in contrast, when we realize that no one can be whole, or blessed, or happy until all are whole, blessed, and happy, we stress community and begin to downplay the genuine needs, hopes, and dreams of each person in this community...

The point to make here is that both are necessary. The [church] is alert and alive when it holds on to both poles at the same time. But maintaining this tension is possible only when the [church] itself is seen as personal and communal.



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

Person or Independent Web?

"All of us, even in our diversity of gifts, cultures, and experiences, must come together seeking the one thing most needed. At the core of our being, all of us are hungry. We long for completeness as individual selves and as members of a larger whole."

- Michael I. N. Dash, et. al.
Hidden Wholeness: An African American
Spirituality for Individuals and Communities

Preliminaries Announcements, opening reading, chalice lighting, excerpted reading.

Opening
- Hymnal, #651,
Norman Cousins
I am a single cell in a body of four billion cells. The body is human kind. I am a single cell. My needs are individual but they are not unique. I am interlocked with other human beings in the consequences of our actions, thoughts, and feelings.

Check-in
Going around the circle, take a moment to share your joys and concerns, what's happening in your life, what you are going through.

Reading
(excerpt; full text on the back)
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Sitting In Silence
If you would like, take this opportunity to read through the full text from Fashion Me a People again. Then relax your body. Breathe slowly and evenly. Reflect on any new insights that the reading may have given you regarding the tension between our first principle and our seventh principle.

Exploration
Please share your responses to the questions you answered prior to this session. You may wish to share an insight, or to address questions which this issue has raised.

Singing
- Hymnal #298,
Wake Now My Senses
Wake now my senses, and hear the earth call;
Feel the deep power of being in all;
Keep with the web of creation your vow,
Giving, receiving as love shows us how.

Wake, now, compassion, give heed to the cry;
Voices of suffering fill the wide sky;
Take as your neighbor both stranger and friend,
Praying and striving their hardship to end.

Wake, now, my vision of ministry clear;
Brighten my pathway with radiance here;
Mingle my calling with all who will share;
Work toward a planet transformed by our care.

Unison Reading / Extinguishing the Chalice
- Hymnal #434
May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations, and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again that
we are not isolated beings
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community,
and to each other.