

Some days dark tremors sweep across our lives. Troubling events accost us. We have grown accustomed to such things, and often we have fenced off our natural sympathies with the thought: this belongs to somebody else.

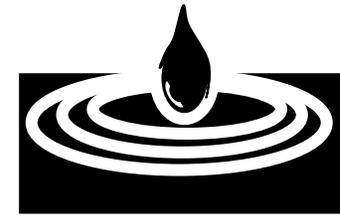
But now a crisis of life brushes close to us, touches us, befalls us and those we love. We want, now, to know: how, and what, and why? We want an explanation, though we know that all our explanations put together do not finally explain. They but fend off worry, anger, and grief. The mysteries of evil and innocence remain. The darkness of being at a loss remains, and in this abyss of the heart we can but pray for light.

This is when I pray, and this is my prayer.

Let me be patient of all these feelings that drive me hither and yon. May I be at peace, more patient with myself. Let me live within the questions that promise no answers but only signal the mystery that gave them birth. Let me turn from every pettiness of the heart, willing to see and accept that the world does not revolve around me. Let the grief, the pain, and the nameless trouble that overcomes me also open me to feel what others have felt.

Giver of being and freedom, unbind my compassion for all beings about me, and again set free the child of grace within me. Amen.

~ *George Kimmich Beach. UUA Worship Web*



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
OF SAN JOSE

Evil

Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies - or else? The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation. ~ *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Unitarians often have a sunny view of human nature, but there is unquestionably evil in the world and in each of us, and we must accept and deal with it. ~ *FUCSJ congregant*

I do not like the term "Evil". Sends feelings of fire and brimstone up my spine. ~ *FUCSJ congregant*

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root. ~ *Henry David Thoreau*

Is this an either/or (good or evil) thing or a both/and (both good and evil) thing? What makes someone or something evil? When I think about evil, I think about what people do that harms themselves or others (or their environment, which is really the same thing). I think evil is often caused by "negative" emotions - fear/anxiety, sadness, anger. It separates or divides us from our "best selves." When we fall easily into the trap of judging others or being ruled by our negative emotions, I think we are at the greatest risk of doing harm or behaving in a way that could be described as "evil." If good is "life-giving" then is "evil" "life taking?" ~ *FUCSJ congregant*

Preliminaries *Get volunteer to light the chalice. Choose 2 readers for the long readings.*

Centering *See Leader Notes.*

Opening / Chalice Lighting *(Read aloud together)*
We fire our chalice in determination:
~ James Joyce
“Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated consciousness of my people.”

Check-in *How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now?*

Reading #1
Victoria Safford serves as the minister of White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church. Mahtomedi, MN
Sometimes I use a very subjective, almost subconscious barometer when reading the news of the day and deciding whether some action bears the weight of the word evil. It's not the magnitude of an event, nor the cold-heartedness of those involved, nor even the historical impact. It's the degree of heartbreak that I feel: beyond sorrow or horror, a sense that something has been blasted apart, a shattering of hope, the collapse of what I thought or wished were true about the world and human nature. There are some truths, some news, that break the heart—not permanently, but utterly, for a while, as the realization forms perhaps for the thousandth time: this, too, is part of our humanity.

Evil is the capacity, within us and among us, to break sacred bonds with our own souls, with one another, and with the holy. Further, it is the willingness to excuse or justify this damage, to deny it, or to call it virtue. The soil in which it flourishes is a rich compost of ignorance, arrogance, fear, and delusion—mostly self-delusion—all mingled with the sparkling dust of our original, human being.

Reading #2 *On the back of the order of worship*

Sitting in Silence

Sharing/Deep Listening *Speak the thoughts and feelings that arose as you did the preparation for this session. Sharing should be about five minute per person. Deeply listening, without response or thought of response at this time, is the gift we give and receive as we share our thoughts.*

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

Singing
#131, Singing the Living Tradition
Love will guide us, peace has tried us,
Hope inside us will lead the way
On the road from greed to giving.
Love will guide us through the hard night.

If you cannot sing like angels,
If you cannot speak before thousands,
You can give from deep within you.
You can change the world with your love.

Repeat first verse.

Closing/ Extinguishing Chalice
~ Adrienne Rich
Join hands or link arms as you read the closing words together.
My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed.
I have to cast my lot with those who age after age,
perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.”