

ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH

February Theme Love

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

Wild Geese
by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting □
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Check-In How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences

Business

Revisit the Covenant

Claim time for Deeper Listening Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if you have more you need to say than the

initial check in. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes.

Centering Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes of breathing, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (1-2 minutes) Our goal would be to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

Readings (Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

To Love is Not to Possess
James Kavanaugh

To love is not to possess,
To own or imprison,
Nor to lose one's self in another.
Love is to join and separate,
To walk alone and together,
To find a laughing freedom
That lonely isolation does not permit.
It is finally to be able
To be who we really are
No longer clinging in childish dependency
Nor docilely living separate lives in silence,
It is to be perfectly one's self
And perfectly joined in permanent commitment
To another—and to one's inner self.
Love only endures when it moves like waves,
Receding and returning gently or passionately,
Or moving lovingly like the tide
In the moon's own predictable harmony,
Because finally, despite a child's scars
Or an adult's deepest wounds,
They are openly free to be
Who they really are—and always secretly were,
In the very core of their being
Where true and lasting love can alone abide.

Love by Roy Croft
I love you

Not only for what you are,
But for what I am
When I am with you.
I love you,
Not only for what
You have made of yourself,
But for what
You are making of me.
I love you
For the part of me
That you bring out;
I love you
For putting your hand
Into my heaped-up heart
And passing over
All the foolish, weak things
That you can't help
Dimly seeing there,
And for drawing out
Into the light
All the beautiful belongings
That no one else had looked
Quite far enough to find
I love you because you
Are helping me to make
Of the lumber of my life
Not a tavern
But a temple.
Out of the works
Of my every day
Not a reproach
But a song.
I love you
Because you have done
More than any creed
Could have done
To make me good.
And more than any fate
Could have done
To make me happy.
You have done it
Without a touch,
Without a word,
Without a sign.
You have done it
By being yourself.

Questions

1. **What do you love? Whom do you love? How do you know when it is love?**
2. **What would you have to do to do as Mary Oliver suggests to “let yourself love what it loves?” Why would you want to? Or not?**
3. **Do you remember your first love? Tell the story.**
4. **Are you judicious with using the word love? Why or why not?**
5. **What is the difference between love for family and love for a chosen family?**
6. **Has your love changed over time? The way you experience the love of others?**
7. **What does “Love is the spirit of this church mean to you?”**

Deeper Listening If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior)

Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

Love at first sight is easy to understand; it's when people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle. ~Amy Bloom