



December Monthly Theme

PEACE

the practice of spreading light

The intention of the themed year is to help Unitarian Universalists build a robust spiritual and ethical vocabulary. The themes are points of departure for religious liberals seeking to think, speak and act theologically, prophetically and prayerfully. The themes reclaim religious language, casting old terms in a new key to deepen spiritual grounding and sharpen moral reasoning. More at: wbuuc.org/themes or sign up for a circle at wbuuc.org/classes.

QUESTIONS

Where, or how, do you experience inner peace?

How do you lean toward spreading light when the world and news is dominated by brokenness?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You must not only refuse to shoot a man, but you must refuse to hate him." How do you overcome internal violence of the spirit?

QUOTES

"Sometimes I have loved the peacefulness of an ordinary Sunday. It is like standing in a newly planted garden after a warm rain. You can feel the silent and invisible life."

- Marilynne Robinson, Gilead

Give light and people will find the way.

- Ella Baker

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

- Edith Wharton

I have learned through bitter experience the one supreme lesson: to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmitted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmitted into a power that can move the world.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

- Jesus of Nazareth

POETRY

you can take it with you

2 little girls who live next door
to this house are on their trampoline.
the window is closed, so they are soundless.

the sun slants, it is going away;
but now it hits full on the trampoline
and the small figure on each end.

alternately they fly up to the sun,
fly, and rebound, fly, are shot
up, fly, are shot up up.

one comes down in the lotus
position. the other, outdone,
somersaults in air. their hair

flies too. nothing, nothing, noth
ing can keep keep them down. the air
sucks them up by the hair of their heads.

i know all about what is
happening in this city at just
this moment, every last

grain of dark, i conceive.
but what i see now is
the 2 little girls flung up

flung up, the sun snatch
ing them, their mouths rounded
in gasps. they are there, they fly up.

- Josephine Jacobese

Making Peace

A voice from the dark called out,
 'The poets must give us
imagination of peace, to oust the intense, familiar
imagination of disaster. Peace, not only
the absence of war.'

But peace, like a poem,
is not there ahead of itself,
can't be imagined before it is made,
can't be known except
in the words of its making,
grammar of justice,
syntax of mutual aid.

A feeling towards it,
dimly sensing a rhythm, is all we have
until we begin to utter its metaphors,
learning them as we speak.

A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed
long pauses . . .

A cadence of peace might balance its weight
on that different fulcrum; peace, a presence,
an energy field more intense than war,
might pulse then,
stanza by stanza into the world,
each act of living
one of its words, each word
a vibration of light—facets
of the forming crystal.

- Denise Levertov

Holy Light

Where Life like a candle burns
In the darkness of the night,
Moth-like my lost spirit yearns
Nearer in his circling flight.

Luringly her beauty draws
Onward with each shuddering Breath,
Till I flutter, till I pause
In the radiance of death.

I am flaming, I am fled—
All around you reigns the night;
But my agony has fed
You a moment, holy light!
- John Hall Wheelock

READINGS & EXCERPTS

Advent is of a different spiritual hue: It is a time of waiting, of expectation, of hope in the darkness. The blue candles symbolize the color of the sky right before dawn, that time when the deepest dark is just infused with hints of light. Blue holds the promise that the sun will rise, and that even after the bleakest, coldest, longest night, the light will break forth, as the new day arrives. Blue may be the color of sadness, but blue is also the color of hope.

Many faiths and religious traditions have sacred days or times of waiting, of anticipation, of the expectation of enlightenment — that light breaks through the night. Diwali, Bodhi Day, Hanukkah, winter solstice, Advent. And those sorts of holy days are celebrated when darkness surrounds, when all seems lost. When we hurt and think we have been abandoned, when all promises seem broken. When we light candles against the night, trusting and believing that a greater light will arise. When a single flame becomes a conflagration of compassion and justice.

We are waiting for light, for God to renew and heal the world, a promise that we understand to have been mysteriously embodied in a baby born in a manger. Advent recognizes a profound spiritual truth — that we need not fear the dark. Instead, wait there. Under that blue cope of heaven, alert for the signs of dawn. Watch. For you cannot rush the night. But you can light some candles. Sing some songs. Recite poetry. Say prayers. Make mine a blue Advent this year.

- Diana Butler Bass *Forget red and green: Make it a blue holiday instead*, Washington Post, November 2016.