



May 2017 Monthly Theme

SUBMISSION

the practice of claiming power

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

When have you submitted to something beyond your control, and how did it affect your life?
How can submission empower us to create change in our own lives and the world?
When are we called to resist rather than to submit? Can you do both?

QUOTATIONS

Instead of blaming our discomfort on outer circumstances or on our own weakness, we can choose to stay present and awake to our experience, not rejecting it, not grasping it, not buying the stories that we relentlessly tell ourselves. This is priceless advice that addresses the true cause of suffering - yours, mine, and that of all living beings.

- Pema Chodron

I'm really interested in passivity as a type of action - sort of allowing the situation to change you, choosing to give in being an act of agency rather than an act of submission.

- Alexandra Kleeman

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

- Marianne Williamson

POETRY

Submit to a daily practice.
Your loyalty to that is a ring on the door.
Keep knocking and the joy inside
will eventually open a window
and look out to see who's there.

- Rumi

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

- Reinhold Neihbur, *a poem regularly used in addiction recovery groups.*

Dirge Without Music

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,—
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

- Edna St. Vincent Millay

READINGS & EXCERPTS

The benefits of non-attachment are many. It opens the door to unconditional love. It implies deep faith and trust in life that allow relationships and events to unfold without interference or control. It is not to be confused with indifference or lack of caring, nor is it a deficiency of commitment. Instead, it is the practice of compassionate acceptance, even in the face of strong desire or strong aversion. Through non-attachment we feel honored, respected, and free to be ourselves.

Non-attachment to outcome is central to real satisfaction and acceptance. Nothing suffocates the life force more thoroughly than trying to control what is happening. Rather than trying to assert control over relationships, health, work, or any other aspect of life where we do not trust, we need to know that in the situations that are important to us, we have planned and prepared well. Then we can be open to possibilities and outcomes that we may not have contemplated.

As we release critical judgments, we can honestly accept our circumstances rather than merely resign ourselves to them. This surrender into our own life allows us to release our beliefs about what we think our lives should be.

- From *The Second Half of Life* by Angeles Arrien

What if it turns out that faith is truly existential — not a Kierkegaardian leap of faith, which is actually a leap to belief, but a reality already there for us to notice and accept? I think this is true, and that faith is most intimately and essentially related not to doctrine but love. In my experience, faith is more a function of being than belief.

This means that we can speak from out of the whirlwind too. You might say that God made us in his own mysterious image — mysterious not like human riddles and conundrums, but in our capacity to energetically participate in the creative, existential mystery of whatever the world is up to with us. At the eye of the storm we can know peace, strength, and a faith that passes understanding, finding ourselves at home with true mystery.

- *Revelation in the Whirlwind of Existence* By Paul Martin

To dwell in the here and now does not mean you never think about the past or responsibly plan for the future. The idea is simply not to allow yourself to get lost in regrets about the past or worries about the future. If you are firmly grounded in the present moment, the past can be an object of inquiry, the object of your mindfulness and concentration. You can attain many insights by looking into the past. But you are still grounded in the present moment.

- *Excerpts from The Art of Power* by Thich Nhat Hanh

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for God's grace to enter
and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

- Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw