



February 2018 Monthly Theme
DISRUPTION
the practice of being fully present

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

- What is the relationship between disruption and discomfort?
- What makes disruption different from distraction?
- When is it necessary to disrupt? When is it necessary to be disrupted?
- How do we disrupt our own complacency?
- How does being fully present disrupt the messages of dominant culture?

ORIGINS

Disrupt(ion): to break apart, to throw into disorder, to interrupt the normal course.
From **Latin** *disruptus, disrumpere*: *dis* (“apart, asunder”) + *rumpere* (“to break”)

QUOTATIONS

It’s an act of rebellion to be a whole person. ~ Courtney E. Martin

[God] is the name by which I designate all things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans, and intentions and change the course of my life for better or for worse. In accordance with tradition I call the power of fate in this a positive as well as negative aspect, and inasmuch as its origin is out of my control, “God,” a “personal god,” since my fate means very much myself, particularly when it approaches me in the form of conscience as *vox dei*, with which I can even converse and argue. ~ Carl Jung

The pursuit of truth, as a form of political action, is inherently disruptive, anti-authoritarian, and dangerous to those content with the way things are. ~ Nancy Snow

POETRY

Versions of Ghalib: Ghazal I (Everything sings, in each moment) by Ruth L. Schwartz. Text as published in *Dear Good Naked Morning* (Autumn House Press, 2005). Ghalib was a 19th-century Urdu poet. These versions were developed from the prose translations provided by Aijaz Ahmad in *Ghazals of Ghalib*.

i

Everything sings, in each moment, a song—and is,
in the very next moment, unsung.

It's no use being a mirror which sees both sides;
both sides are wrong.

What you claim to know will fail you; so will
what you venerate. Drink up. Refill your cup.

Deliberately love kicks up dust
to irritate the eye between two worlds.

ii

Each song loves and hates itself.
If there's a mirror which tells the difference, don't look.

Forget what you know; don't bother to believe.
Not-knowing is the only cup which can hold the world.

Where love has been and gone, the world grows honest.
Each thing sings: I am essential. I do not exist.

All you think you know is wrong. So is all you worship.
No matter how much you drink, there's more in the cup.

iii

Praise the futility of song. Accept that the shine in the mirror
is wrong. You are not important.

What's a mirror, anyway? Who looks back from that bright glass?
It's love again, come to save us, or drive us mad.

The more you know, the less you see;
faith can't be drunk, though it fills your cup.

Love's like a dust which settles on all things
and clings like skin. Even the sky bows down to it.

READINGS & EXCERPTS

Excerpted from Bringing Home the Dharma: Awakening Right Where You Are, by Jack Kornfield. Copyright © 2012 by Shambhala.

In some form, the vision of the bodhisattva is celebrated in every culture. We revere the figures of Saint Francis and Kwan Yin, and we take public inspiration from the medical mission of Albert Schweitzer in Africa and Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.

But following the bodhisattva way does not require us to become a monk like Saint Francis or to work in Central Africa like Schweitzer. It is based on the truth that we can transform our own circumstances into a life of inner and outer service. To do this without being overwhelmed, the bodhisattva creates a life of balance.

This is eminently practical. If we want to act wisely in the world, the first step is to learn to quiet the mind. If our actions are born from anger, grasping, fear, and aggression, they will perpetuate the problems. How many revolutions have overthrown oppressive regimes, to then turn around and become the oppressors? Only when our own minds and hearts are peaceful can we expect peace to come through the actions we take.

To understand this integration of inner and outer, we can again look at the life of Gandhi. Even during the most turbulent years, when he was dismantling the British Empire's control of India, Gandhi spent one day a week in silence. He meditated so that he could act from the principles of interdependence, not bringing harm to himself or another. No matter how pressing and urgent the political situation, the day he spent in silence allowed him to quiet his mind and listen to the purest intentions of his heart.

If you want to live a life of balance, start now. Turn off the news, meditate, turn on Mozart, walk through the forest or the mountains and begin to make yourself a zone of peace. When I return from a long retreat or from traveling for months, I'm amazed that the news is pretty much the same as when I left. We already know the plot, we know the problems. Let go of the latest story. Listen more deeply.

Remember the story Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh told of the crowded refugee boats. "If even one person on the boat stayed calm, it was enough. It showed the way for everyone to survive."

When we react to terrorism with fear, we worsen the problem, we create a frightened, barricaded society—a fortress America. Instead, we can use courage and compassion to respond calmly, with both prudent action and a fearless heart.

The quieting of our mind is a political act. The world does not really need more oil or energy or food. It needs less greed, less hatred, less ignorance. If we have inadvertently taken on the political bitterness or cynicism that exists externally, we can stop and begin to heal our own suffering, our own fear, with compassion. Through meditation and inner transformation, we can learn to make our own hearts a place of peace and integrity.

Each of us knows how to do this. As Gandhi acknowledged, "I have nothing new to teach this world. Truth and nonviolence are as old as the hills." It is our inner nobility and steadiness that we must call upon in our personal and collective difficulties.

When the mind is at rest, we are lifted out of time into the eternal present. The body, of course, is still subject to the passage of time. But in a sense, the flickering of the mind is our internal clock. When the mind does not flicker, what is there to measure change? It's as if time simply comes to a stop for us, as we live completely in the present moment. Past and future, after all, exist only in the mind. When the mind is at rest, there is no past or future. We cannot be resentful, we cannot be guilt-ridden, we cannot build future hopes and desires; no energy flows to past or future at all.

Past and future are both contained in every present moment. Whatever we are today is the result of what we have thought, spoken, and done in all the present moments before now - just as what we shall be tomorrow is the result of what we think, say, and do today. The responsibility for both present and future is in our own hands. If we live right today, then tomorrow has to be right.

~ Eknath Easwaran

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids by Eline Snel and Myla Kabat-Zinn

What Does It Mean to Be Present? by Rana DiOrio (Author), Eliza Wheeler (Illustrator)

Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music by Margarita Engle, Rafael Lopez

These Hands by Margaret H Mason

A Is for Activist by Innosanto Nagara

Fred Korematsu Speaks Up by Laura Atkins, Stan Yogi and Yutaka Houlette

In times of widespread chaos and confusion, it has been the duty of more advanced human beings--artists, scientists, clowns and philosophers--to create order. In times such as ours, however, when there is too much order, too much management, too much programming and control, it becomes the duty of superior men and women to fling their favorite monkey wrenches into the machinery. To relieve the repression of the human spirit, they must sow doubt and disruption.

~ Tom Robbins