

## **Our Living Tradition**

### **Worship and Learning Focus**

Exploring “Our Living Tradition” is the worship and learning program year focus for 2008-09. This year we will take time to dig deeper into our religious heritage to rediscover the theological and philosophical treasures that help us live lives of spirit and integrity. Each month a specific theme related to our focus will guide us as we worship, learn and grow together as a community of faith. Suggestions for spiritual practice, reflection and deepening are available in the Sower newsletter, our Sunday orders of service, and in materials from our education ministry. All are encouraged to make use of these themes and practices in ways that are most meaningful to you in your home, work and personal life.

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### **October Theme: Awakening**

*The great end in religious instruction is ...to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish the spiritual life.--William Ellery Channing, 1780-1842*

*Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures which moves us to the renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces that create and uphold life. – From our UUA Principles and Purposes*

Awakenings are insights into the meaning of life. These moments of awareness can be experienced in a flash, or as a slow dawning of wonderment and understanding into the sacred, the real and the true. To be awake is to be fully alive to the present as you discover new meaning in the unfolding moments of your life.

Awakenings can be about casting off an old self and putting on a new. They can be about seeing things in a different light and being open to new possibilities and new ways of thinking about yourself, God or the sacred.

Spiritual masters such as, Lao Tzu, the Buddha, Abraham, Jesus and Muhammad are considered by many as awakened beings. As Unitarian Universalists we can learn from them because they have fully realized the promise of their humanity and, as such, they can serve as guides on the journey. Our religion encourages us to be open to the ongoing process and mystery of life so that we too might be awakened in body, mind and spirit.

#### **Reflections:**

When and what was your first significant religious experience? What other kinds of awakenings have shaped your understanding of what religion and living a life of spirit and integrity means? How do these awakenings give you hope and affirmation?

#### **Spiritual Practices:**

Close your eyes and slowly breathe in and out several times. Imagine yourself as a beautiful gemstone being polished through friction; know that through all your trials and difficulties you are being made to shine. Precious stones and crystals are transparent to the light; it shines through them. What awakens you and lights up your life? What makes you feel more alive? Allow the light to warm you and hold you in its presence. Breathe...smile...breathe...

Draw a "Spiritual Map." Include events you now recognize as transformational points leading to where you are now as well as images that mark significant milestones on your journey. Share your discoveries with others.

As you go through your day pay attention to those things of everyday life that might signal an understanding or revelation about the deeper meaning of life.

**MOVIES:** *American Beauty*, "Tsotsi," *Phenomenon*, *Down in the Delta*, *The 11th Hour*, *The Willow Tree*, *Groundhog Day*, *Fearless*

**Movies for Children:** *The Little Mermaid*

**BOOKS:** *Eat, Pray, Love*, by Elizabeth Gilbert; *The Gift of Grief: Finding Peace, Transformation, and Renewed Life After Great Sorrow*, by Matthew D. Gewirtz; *The Pilgrimage*, by Paulo Coelho, *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, by Dan Millman; *Lost Horizon*, by James Hilton; *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, by Thornton Wilder; *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World*, by Bill Plotkin

**BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:** *How Does God Listen* by Kay Lindahl