

Covenant Group Session for June, 2017
Follen Community Church, Lexington, MA

PILGRIMAGE

CANDLE LIGHTING AND OPENING WORDS

“To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf’s hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and then on for a mile or more.

Very puffed he was, when he got to Bywater just on the stroke of eleven, and found he had come without a pocket-handkerchief!”

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

SILENCE

Check in:

1. Have you done something unplanned this month?

or

2. What is draining your spirit or lifting up your spirit?

or

3. Tell us about your experience with this month’s spiritual exercise. (See below)

Spiritual Exercise for June:

We are lucky to live in a place where so many spiritual Unitarians and Universalist ancestors once lived, and where so many elements of our UU history happened are happening now. In some ways, the Boston area is the UU “Mecca”! Take a pilgrimage to one of these places, or another one you know of, and---do a little research on why they matter: Walden Pond (Henry David Thoreau);

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s house (Concord, MA);

The Alcott house (Concord, MA);

The UUA (24 Farnsworth St., Boston);

The statue of William Ellery Channing (Arlington St., Boston); King’s Chapel (Boston—oldest still-active church in America); Margaret Fuller house (Cambridge, MA);

UU Urban Ministry (Roxbury, MA)

SILENCE

MAIN READINGS

A.

“I walked, all one spring day, upstream, sometimes in the midst of the ripples, sometimes along the shore. My company were violets, Dutchman's-breeches, spring beauties, trilliums, bloodroot, ferns rising so curled one could feel the upward push of the delicate hairs upon their bodies. My parents were downstream, not far away, then farther away because I was walking the wrong way, upstream instead of downstream. Finally I was advertised on the hotline of help [*], and yet there I was, slopping along happily in the stream's coolness. So maybe it was the right way after all. If this was lost, let us all be lost always. The beech leaves were just slipping their copper coats; pale green and quivering they arrived into the year. My heart opened, and opened again. The water pushed against my effort, then its glassy permission to step ahead touched my ankles. The sense of going toward the source.

I do not think that I ever, in fact, returned home.”

Mary Oliver, *Upstream*

**Mary's panicked parents must have called authorities to report her missing.*

B.

“I felt in need of a great pilgrimage, so I sat still for three days, and God came to me.”

Kabir, *15th century Indian mystic poet*

QUESTIONS

1. If you had all the resources and time, all barriers removed, where would you go and why?
2. Is there somewhere you need to go, or something you **need** to do?
3. Have you experienced what Kabir described?
4. How did the Spiritual Exercise extend, deepen or relate to the main reading?

AFFIRMATIONS

This is a time for the whole group to consider quietly what was experienced or spoken, to describe what might have shifted for you or someone else, or to express gratitude or appreciation for something that you or another person revealed or expressed. The purpose of this section is to reflect silently on what was moving or meaningful, and then to offer a single comment into the circle without further response or conversation.

CHECKOUT – Like/Wish/Wonder:

This is a time to consider the experience we have had together, and share gratitude, appreciation, concerns, or ideas. Try to start your sharing with “I like...” “I wish...” or “I wonder...”

CLOSING WORDS

(Traditional Irish parting prayer)

May the blessings of light be upon you,

Light without and light within.

The blessed sunlight shine on you

And warm your heart

Till it glows like a great peat fire.

And in all your comings and goings,

May you ever have a kindly greeting

From them you meet on the road.

Until we meet again, let us go forth, sharing the gifts of Sacred Listening.

The light within me honors the light within you. Go in peace.