

February Theme 2020
Diversity: The Practice of Abundance

Abundance is a dance with reciprocity, what we can give, what we can share, and what we receive in the process.
Terry Tempest Williams

A fundamental element to life in all its forms, diversity not only provides an organism the ability to withstand environmental stressors, but actually promotes the heartiness necessary for existence itself to continue and flourish. Beyond our own genomes, our species (and many others) depend on biodiversity for everything from adequate nutrition to natural medicines to regulating a hospitable habitat. Indeed, global health challenges will depend on how well we respond to the environmental crisis which is an immediate threat to our world's basic biodiversity. The wisdom of our seventh Unitarian Universalist (UU) principle that calls us to "affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" may not only be a matter of morality and principle, but one of survival.

By understanding the necessity of diversity in nature, we can choose to view our personal differences too as inherent and vital to our growth. In a practice of abundance, we embrace social diversity (race, class, gender, etc.) with an open mind and a compassionate heart. Practicing the fullness of abundance is a humble acknowledgment that each of us has a unique story and collectively, we make something greater- the human story. Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, and economists show that socially diverse groups are more innovative than homogenous groups. A rich variety of perspectives leads to a mélange of ideas, with new ways of seeing and responding to challenges. We begin to notice how blessings expand when everything belongs.

Practicing diversity and inclusion is not always easy; social diversity in a group can cause discomfort and a lack of trust stemming from fear of the "Other." Fearing, or even hating others, simply because they look or sound different from oneself and one's community is not unique to this century. There are those, in every era of history who, out of fear, greed, ignorance or a desire for power would erect border walls or imagined boundaries out of a "scarcity mentality," failing to ask what riches are sacrificed in the process. We can stand with those who are being marginalized, we can speak the truth clearly and quietly and we can try to educate through our own lived example.

Remember we can always begin and practice anew. And it's good to start small. We can wonder at the changing nature of cloud formations, the variety of snowflakes :), or how our morning walk always offers a different landscape. And then we widen our scope to listen to understand instead of reacting to different beliefs, practices or ways of being in the world. Diversity is a gift that is all around us if we only stop to notice it and the wonderful abundance of riches that it holds.

Questions to Explore:

This month's theme was composed by Jess Jonas and the Worship Associates.

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1. How does the word 'diversity' make you feel?
2. What parts of diversity do you find comforting?
3. What challenges does diversity bring? Is there a downside of diversity?
4. What opportunities does diversity bring?
5. How do you practice diversity? How do you practice abundance? What gets in the way of you practicing diversity and abundance?
6. Do you feel that your life is abundant right now? Have you felt abundance in the past?
7. Wayne Dyer wrote that "Abundance is not something we acquire- it is something we tune into." Do you believe that abundance is a state of mind?
8. Is there a downside of abundance? If so, what?
9. How does fear get in your way of your practice of abundance?

Quotes:

"Isn't it amazing that we are all made in God's image, and yet there is so much diversity among his people?" ~Desmond Tutu

"Plant seeds of happiness, hope, success, and love; it will all come back to you in abundance." ~Steve Maraboli

"Abundance is not a number or acquisition. It is the simple recognition of enoughness." ~Alan Cohen

"When you are grateful, fear disappears, and abundance appears." ~ Anthony Robbins

"Abundance is a form of gratitude, a generosity, a modesty, a bow toward others what we can give, what we can share, rather than what we can take." ~Terry Tempest Williams

"Abundance is rooted in community, not individualism. Abundance is what is before our eyes, but we cannot see when we are blinded by greed." ~Terry Tempest Williams

"Abundance is, in large part, an attitude." ~Sue Thoele

For more on this month's theme go to: <http://uuac.org/worship/themes-for-spiritual-practice/>

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