



JOURNEYS

Theme Packet for June 2015

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

Beauty

Swan

Did you too see it, drifting, all night on the black river?
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air, an armful of white blossoms,
a perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned
into the bondage of its wings: a snowbank, a
bank of lilies,
biting the air with its black beak?
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling
a shrill dark music, like the rain pelting the
trees,
 like a waterfall
knifing down the black ledges?
And did you see it, finally, just under the
clouds -
a white cross streaming across the sky, its
feet
like black leaves, its wings like the stretching
light
 of the river?
And did you feel it, in your heart, how it
pertained to everything?
And have you too finally figured out what
beauty is for?
And have you changed your life?

~ *Mary Oliver*



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WONDERINGS *on the theme of* BEAUTY

I admire those who can set a beautiful table, arrange a luscious appetizer tray, or create a simple but stunning centerpiece. I am frightfully practical...utilitarian...and while I deeply appreciate beauty, I don't usually give it the time/attention it deserves...whether creating it or experiencing it.

There's a lovely story about a man in Ohio who lost his wife and set about trying to bring some color back into his life. He started by painting a simple fire hydrant as a distraction from his grief - but then it turned into giving homes and local businesses a fresh coat of paint too, all free of charge. He made his way through his town painting, and as he did, other residents joined him and began volunteering their time and materials to help spruce up the town. What began as a distraction from grief, morphed into the beautification of a community.

Perhaps this man was simply obeying the laws of nature. "The [ultimate purpose] of the universe," said process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, "is directed to the production of Beauty." For Whitehead, realized beauty is the divine aim in all process, and to create and enjoy beauty is the final cause and purpose of every society.

How do we understand beauty? The Rev. Dr. Galen Guengerich, Senior Minister of All Souls

Unitarian Church in New York City, has written this :

beau • ty
byoōdē/

1. the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind
2. a beautiful person or a thing, especially a woman, or a piece of art
4. something that is beautiful in nature or in some natural or artificial environment.
5. *Informal.* a particular advantage: One of the beauties of this medicine is the freedom from aftereffects.
7. *used ironically:* something extraordinary: My sunburn was a real beauty.

"When people ask me whether I believe God exists, my answer is yes. I believe God exists in a way similar to the way beauty exists, but not in the way a person or an apple exists. . . .

"God, by contrast, is an experience, akin to our experience of beauty. Beauty itself never appears to us, but we find the idea necessary to account for our delight in the symmetry and form of certain objects and experiences: sunsets, symphonies, and sculptures by Degas. While different in many other respects, beauty and God are both qualities of our experience...

"When I say I believe in God, I'm saying that I believe in an experience that transcends myself in this place and this moment. I believe in an experience that intimately and extensively connects me to all that is - all that is present, as well as all that is past, and all that is possible. It's the biggest conceivable experience - than which none greater

can be conceived, to paraphrase Anselm - well worthy of being called divine."

What is beauty? Is it something to pursue? Can it be life-giving? Can it startle the soul back to reality? Are the concepts of 'god' and 'beauty' interchangeable? What if beauty is a thing that can heal, inspire, transform? Let's explore these questions together this month.

~ Rev. Julie



STORIES *about* BEAUTY

The Most Beautiful Heart

One day, in a heavily crowded place, a young man was shouting at the crowd. "People look at me; I have the most beautiful heart in the world."

Many people looked at him and were stunned to see the beautiful heart in a perfect shape, no little flaw, which looked quite amazing. Most of the people who saw his heart were mesmerized by the beauty of his heart and praised him.

However, there came an old man and challenged the young man, "No my son, I have got the most beautiful heart in the world!"

The young man asked, "Show me your heart, then!"

The old man showed his heart to him. It was very rough, uneven, and had scars all over the heart. Also, the heart was not in shape, appeared like bits and pieces joined together in various colours. There were some rough edges, some parts of the heart were removed and filled with other pieces. The heart of the old man simply looked like various pieces of heart joined together and formed as a heart.

The young man started laughing at his heart, "My dear old man, are you mad? See, my heart! How beautiful and flawless it is. You cannot find even a bit of imperfection in my heart. See, yours. It is full of scars, wounds and blemishes. How can you say your heart is beautiful?"



"Dear boy, my heart is just as beautiful as your heart is. Did you see the scars? Each scar represents the love I shared with a person. I share a piece of heart with others when I share love and in return I get a piece of heart, which I fix at the place where I had torn a piece!" said the old man.

The young man was shocked.

And the old man continued. "Since the pieces of heart I shared were neither equal nor in the same shape or size, my heart is full of uneven edges and bits and pieces."

"My heart is not in shape because sometimes I never get the love in return from those I gave it. So where do you see the real beauty? Your heart which looks fresh and fuller with no scars which indicates you never shared love with anybody. Did you?"

The young man stood still and never spoke a word. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He walked to the old man, tore a piece of his heart and gave the piece to the old man.



The story of Narcissus (Greek Mythology)

Narcissus was a youth that knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. At the spot where he fell, a flower was born, which was called the Narcissus.

When Narcissus died, the goddess of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears.

"Why do you weep?" the goddess asked.

"I weep for Narcissus," the lake replied.

"Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus," they said, "for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand."

"But... was Narcissus beautiful?" the lake asked.

"Who better than you to know that?" the goddesses said in wonder. "After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!"

The lake was silent for some time. Finally it said:

"I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected."



QUESTIONS *for reflection on* BEAUTY

- Where do you find beauty? Just as with laughter - where we asked ourselves what we find funny - we ask ourselves now, what do we find beautiful. It can tell us a lot about our personalities - and each other.
- What does beauty feel like for you? What does your body feel like when you experience it? What emotions happen for you? Do you ever get a glimpse of feeling connected to something larger than yourself? Gratitude? Awe?
- What has beauty helped you to fall in love with? The designer, Louie Schwartzberg, in his TED talk on Nature, Beauty, and Appreciation, suggests that beauty and seduction are nature's way of protecting itself. After all, he says, we protect what we fall in love with. What have you fallen in love with because of its beauty? And are you protecting it?
- When has beauty helped to repair your heart? When we feel broken, depressed, lost - often times beauty can break through to us and catch our attention - reminding us that there is more to this life than the pain we are feeling. When has beauty caught your attention and brought you back to life? When has noticing or creating or participating in beauty helped to repair your heart?
- When have you seen beauty awaken us to the broken places in this world, and start to heal them? Whether at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. or in the Rugerero Genocide Survivors Village in Rwanda, survivors of great tragedies have healed not only their hearts, but brought attention to the devastation of the world through creating something beautiful. Perhaps nature does the same thing.



STORIES *about* BEAUTY

For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror which we are barely able to endure, and it amazes us so because it serenely disdains to destroy us.

Every angel is terrible. ~ Rainer Maria Rilke

I wonder how it is we have come to this place in our society where art and nature are spoke in terms of what is optional, the pastime and concern of the elite?

~ Terry Tempest Williams, *Leap*

Beauty before me, I walk with.
Beauty behind me, I walk with.
Beauty above me, I walk with.
Beauty below me, I walk with.
Beauty all around me, I walk with.

~ Navajo Night Chant

"I always find beauty in things that are odd & imperfect- they are much more interesting."

MARC JACOBS

Life is full of beauty. Notice it. Notice the bumble bee, the small child, and the smiling faces. Smell the rain, and feel the wind. Live your life to the fullest potential, and fight for your dreams.

~ Ashley Smith

It is better to be beautiful than to be good, but it is better to be good than to be ugly.

~ Oscar Wilde

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy.

~ Anne Frank

It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.

~ Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*

You are imperfect, permanently and inevitably flawed. And you are beautiful.

~ Amy Bloom

Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.

~ Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*

Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.

~ Confucius

Dwell on the beauty of life. Watch the stars, and see yourself running with them.

~ Marcus Aurelius

A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul.

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.

~ Frederick Buechner

Summer afternoon – summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.

~ Henry James

You were given life; it is your duty (and also your entitlement as a human being) to find something beautiful within life, no matter how slight.

~ Elizabeth Gilbert

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes..."

~ George Gordon Byron

The power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes home happy and life lovely.

~ Louisa May Alcott

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

~ John Keats

Do I love you because you're beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?

~ Richard Rodgers, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella*

It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.

~ Maya Angelou

Beauty surrounds us.

~ Rumi

Beauty is whatever gives joy.

~ Edna St. Vincent Millay

Beauty is not
in the face;
beauty is a light
in the heart.

Kahlil Gibran

The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with joy are goodness, beauty, and truth.

~ Albert Einstein

The beauty of the world...has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder.

~ Virginia Woolf

Beauty is unbearable, drives us to despair, offering us for a minute the glimpse of an eternity that we should like to stretch out over the whole of time.

~ Albert Camus

When people see some things as beautiful, other things become ugly. When people see some things as good, other things become bad.

~ Lao Tzu

Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears.

~ Edgar Allan Poe

Practicing BEAUTY

Option A: Paint the town beautiful

Look around your neighbourhood. What might you do to make it more beautiful? Paint a mural, pick up trash, plant some flowers. Invite your family and neighbours to join you. Reflect on how this changes how you feel.



Option B: Make a beauty calendar. For example...



June 1 – Step outside your door in the morning and breathe, appreciating the beautiful air, your beautiful lungs, and the simple miracle of breath.

June 2 – Find a short time-waiting in line, between tasks, just before sleep—to pay attention to what's immediately around you and appreciate the beauty.

June 3 – Make a meal of beautiful foods and arrange them on your plate in a beautiful way.

June 4 – Have a wabi-sabi moment...appreciate the beautiful in the imperfect....Etc, etc...

Option C: Beauty around You

Seek to surround yourself with beauty. Discover beauty and inner peace by making order out of chaos. De-clutter your space. Place flowers or other found objects of beauty on your kitchen table. Find the beautiful in the ordinary. Using the Navajo Night Chant found in the 'inspirations', describe what beauty lies before you, behind you, below you, above you.



Option D: A Beauty Date



Once a week, take yourself on a beauty date. Set aside a chunk of time - two hours? - in which you do something that immerses you in beauty. Something frivolous. Something that doesn't result in anything. It could be time to go to a museum, to take a walk in the woods, to finger paint with your grandkids or the children. It could be cooking or eating an amazing meal, going to a concert, or closing your eyes and listening to your favorite songs on your headphones. The only requirements are that this time just for you, that you have no goals of accomplishing anything, and that you immerse yourself in beauty.

See what happens- and come tell us all about it. Maybe bring something back from one of your Beauty Dates to share with the group. Tell us how you surrounded yourself with beauty. Show us what beauty looks and feels like to you.





Resources on BEAUTY

ON THE WEB

How Beauty Feels, Richard Seymour, designer
http://www.ted.com/talks/richard_seymour_how_beauty_feels.html

Art as a spark for social change by Terry Tempest Williams - author of *Mosaic*
<http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/006516.html>

Remember Dove's ad campaign about real beauty? Here are some reminders and updates on that campaign.
<http://realbeautysketches.dove.ca/> and
<http://adage.com/article/news/ten-years-dove-s-real-beauty-aging/291216/>

For beauty's role in healing, see "In Celebration of a Scar: 25 Amazing Mastectomy Tattoos"
<http://www.babble.com/mom/in-celebration-of-a-scar-25-amazing-mastectomy-tattoos/>

MOVIES

Disney's Beauty and the Beast (1991 - G)
Belle, a bright young woman, finds herself imprisoned in the castle of a mysterious beast. A delightful and tender romance develops between these two unlikely friends and Belle soon learns the most important lesson of all – that true beauty comes from within.

American Beauty (1999 - R)
Lester Burnham, a depressed suburban father in a mid-life crisis, decides to turn his hectic life around after developing an infatuation for his daughter's attractive friend.

Life Is Beautiful (1997 - PG13)
When an open-minded Jewish librarian and his son become victims of the Holocaust, he uses a perfect mixture of will, humor and imagination to protect his son from the dangers around their camp.

Little Miss Sunshine (2006 - R)
A family determined to get their young daughter into the finals of a beauty pageant take a cross-country trip in their VW bus.

To Wong Foo Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar (1995 - PG13)

Three drag queens travel cross-country until their car breaks down, leaving them stranded in a small town.

The Beach (2000 - R)

Twenty-something Richard travels to Thailand and finds himself in possession of a strange map that it leads to a solitary beach paradise. (Watch it for the scenery!)

The Motorcycle Diaries (2004 - R)

The dramatization of a motorcycle road trip Che Guevara went on in his youth that showed him his life's calling.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (2013 - PG)

When his job is threatened, Walter embarks on a global journey that turns into an adventure more extraordinary than anything he could have ever imagined.

Children's Books on BEAUTY

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

I Like Myself! by Karen Beaumont

Wabi Sabi by Mark Reibstein

The Shape of My Heart by Mark Sperring

Wild Rose's Weaving by Ginger Churchill

Stanley's Beauty Contest by Linda Bailey

When I First Held You: a Lullaby from Israel

by Miri 'k Senir

Mama, I'll Give You the World by Roni Schotter

Dog Eared by Amanda Harvey

Morning has Broken by Eleanor Farjeon

Chalice Lighting on BEAUTY

Rise up, o flame, by thy light glowing.
Show us beauty, vision, and joy.

—*Singing the Living Tradition, Hymn #362*



Table Grace *on* BEAUTY

As we gather around this bountiful table:
May the love that gives to life its beauty,
the reverence that gives to life its sacredness,
and the purposes that give to life its deep
significance
be strong within each of us and lead us into
ever deepening relationships with all of life.
Amen. ~ George G Brooks (adapted)

MUSIC

Everything is Beautiful, Ray Stevens

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a45z_HG3WU

Beauty and the Beast, Celine Dion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n_5xo9YpmQ

The Ugly Duckling, Danny Kaye

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq8ABdKCb dU>

True Colors, Cyndi Lauper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPn0KFlbqX8>

Good Morning, Baltimore, from Hairspray

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLaM1d383eg>

The Beauty Is, from Light in the Piazza

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iy34AFVxkWs>

Oh, What a Beautiful Morning, from Oklahoma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LdIL5WCso8>

For the Beauty of Earth, John Rutter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaMkj4_H8WM

For the Beauty of Earth, Mormon Tabernacle Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbXvCZfiOVM>

Next year's themes:

STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS!

Email your ideas for themes, or suggestions for
resources to share in this packet to uurevjs@gmail.com

BOOKS

Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

Gilbert explored the art of pleasure in Italy and the art of devotion in India, and then a balance between the two on the Indonesian island of Bali.

Finding Beauty in a Broken World by Terry Tempest Williams

"Shards of glass can cut and wound or magnify a vision," Tempest Williams tells us. "Mosaic celebrates brokenness and the beauty of being brought together."

The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women by Naomi Wolf

This bestseller presents a provocative and persuasive account of the pervasiveness of the beauty ideal in all facets of Western culture, and shows how this myth works against women by encouraging their complicity with an impossible standard of beauty.

Beauty: The Invisible Embrace by John O'Donohue

Beauty is a gentle but urgent call to awaken. O'Donohue opens our eyes, hearts, and minds to the wonder of our own relationship with beauty by exposing the infinity and mystery of its breadth.

Living Wabi Sabi: The True Beauty of Your Life by Taro Gold

Imperfection is sometimes the source of the greatest insights and growth. Wabi Sabi celebrates the appreciation of the value and beauty of imperfection.

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
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The content for these packets is a group effort. Service leaders and Covenant Group Facilitators work with Rev. Julie to incorporate the theme into our programming and services.

Thanks to all who helped by suggesting resources and providing feedback. Your artwork and original writing is also most welcome! We subscribe to "Soul Matters" a curriculum from Rev. Scott Taylor.