



commUNITY

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UNITY CHURCH—UNITARIAN

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Blessing

Each month worship, religious education, community outreach ministry, covenant groups and Wellspring Wednesday programs will offer opportunities to contemplate, consider, contend with and discuss an intergenerational curriculum based on monthly themes. Our hope is that this approach will bind us more closely together and inform our lives in effective and positive ways. May's theme is...Blessing.

We could all use a little blessing right about now.

With unemployment rates rising and markets falling, we watch anxiously for assurances that all will be well. With the earth suffering so many maladies, we strain our ears for sounds of healing – for waters running clear and trees filled with birdsong. With the war raging on, we hunger for signs of peace – for the outstretched hand, for weapons laid down, for hearts turned in repentance.

Who wouldn't welcome such blessings if they would but come our way? Who would turn away from them? The truth is, though, we all do. As much as we long for its promises of bounty and beauty and wellness, we all turn our backs on *blessing* more often than we know.

What is it that we mean when we talk about *blessing*? Whether it's something we count or something we do, *blessing* refers to the abundance and wholeness of life. It acknowledges the holiness shining throughout this world, nestled within each of us and all around us. The act of blessing peers beneath the surface of the ordinary, removes "the dust of custom," cracks open the brown husk of our lives to reveal the bright and extraordinary seeds of love and wisdom nested in each day.

As others have written, a blessing awakens our unborn goodness. It draws a protective circle of light around us. It offers safe passage from here to there, bridges all distance, opens all time, uncloaks our hidden wholeness.

But blessing is not a one-way street.

Blessing rises from the two-way traffic of right relationship, from the caring heart and the trust we invest in one another. It abounds in beloved community. The power to bless cannot be claimed but rather is granted when we meet one another with integrity and love.

We grant one another the power to bless whenever we open our hearts to each other and when we bring our whole selves into our shared community. When we bring our wounds as well as our gifts, when we reveal our brokenness as well as our strength, when we speak our doubts and fears as well as our convictions, we are making room for blessing to occur.

The Hebrew word for blessing and benediction is rooted in the word for knee, suggesting that we receive blessing by kneeling down, by making ourselves small, humble, receptive. But our own proud cultural preference is for standing tall. We are a self-reliant bunch and our pull-yourself-up-by-your-boostraps mentality can make it difficult for us to receive the very blessings for which we long. In the blessed circle of *this* community of faith, then, one of our tasks may just be to learn and practice a greater openness to blessing, with *all* that it offers and *all* that it demands.

May we then, together, receive and generously share the blessings that await us. May we kneel down with one another and together rise up blessed. May we find, in the losses and vulnerabilities of our time, a tenaciously woven web of relationship that will catch our every fall. May the earth's suffering cries guide us toward more gentle living; may we tread more lightly, use more wisely, replant more quickly. And may the unborn peace within us all begin to stir and turn

us from our ways of war.

So may we be blessed. And so may we bless the world around us.

— Karen Hering,
Assistant Literary Minister

Worship Theme Resources

BOOKS

Gilead by Marilynne Robinson

Plain and Simple: A Woman's Journey to the Amish by Sue Bender

The Soul is Here for Its Own Joy: Sacred Poems from Many Cultures, Robert Bly, editor

Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner

Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience by James Carse

FILMS

Fiddler on the Roof

Tevye the Milkman is a Jewish peasant in pre-Revolutionary Russia, coping with the day-to-day problems of 'shtetl' life, his Jewish traditions, his family (wife and daughters), and state-sanctioned pogroms.

The Color Purple

Celie (Whoopie Goldberg) and Nettie (Akosua Busia) sing to one another—you and me must never part—but time and tide will not allow. Their lives lead them along an arduous path.

The Wrestler

Randy "The Ram" Robinson is hanging up his spurs. He is leaving the life of professional wrestling but it is not as easy as he had imagined. Along the way, he finds hardship and blessing.

Families!
Read about summer
blessings on page 13.