



June 2, 2016



What Does it Mean to be a People of Revelry?

The following is an introduction from the Soul Matters Ministry

This month’s theme, the last for our 2015-16 UU program year, invites us to *revel* – to celebrate rousingly and raucously this precious and fragile, which we have been given. That’s not to say life is easy or without pain; struggle and hardship are also givens in our human existence. But if we seek to live a life of spiritual depth and meaning, we are challenged to step back from time to time and—in the words of a beloved hymn—“*see all as a gift, which we are called to use to build the common good, and make our own days glad.*”

Our faith rightly reminds us of our duty to ease the burdens of others and to bend the moral arc of the universe toward justice. But it also reminds us that we have a responsibility to experience joy, too—and even plain old “useless” fun, which, of course, is not really useless. Joy, celebration, play, and revelry are an essential means of spiritual replenishment. We will have nothing to give others and our world if we don’t find ways to fill our spiritual coffers.

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From the standpoint of *revelry*, this life of ours is the equivalent of being invited to the best party in town. If we are to fully experience it, we must continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It's all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done and we are also called to look around and see all of life's gifts.



This month, we hope you will consider accept revelry's invitation. Our task is to pay attention and notice all there is to revel in!

2016-17 Spiritual Theme Wrap-Up

Thank you so much for coming on this year's journey of spiritual themes. Together, we explored: *Relationship, Embodiment, Story, Possibility, Time, Grace, Passion, Resilience, Faith*, and now *Revelry*. We will soon be announcing our themes for the upcoming program year, which will take us from **September 2016** through **June 2017**. If you joined a **Theme Circle** this year, we thank you for your participation, and hope you will share with us your feedback (an opportunity to do so will be forthcoming!) so we can strengthen and improve this new program in the coming year. If you haven't yet partaken, we hope you will consider joining up next year, for either the fall or spring sessions or both! **Theme Circles** are a wonderful way to deepen your connection to the month's theme, enrich your own spiritual practice, and bond with a small group of other First UU folks over the course of 5 gatherings.

Self Care on the Spiritual Journey

If we're doing our job as a faith community well, then the spirituality territory we cover in our worship services, educational experiences, and social witness should be deeply relevant in our own individual lives. After all, one of the core purposes of congregational life is to inspire us to lives of meaning and purpose, but also to help us navigate "all that is our life," including the joys and the struggles, by being a community of wisdom, challenge, care, and mutual spiritual support.

When we go deeper into spiritual exploration together and individually, as theme-based ministry and our related Theme Circles are designed to encourage, however, we might encounter some tender spots in our own souls and/or find ourselves revisiting challenging times in our life histories. Therefore, it is important, when doing deep spiritual work, to have trusted companions and adequate support on the journey, and to know you are welcome to care for yourself and your spirit along the way, engaging in the theme only to the level that's comfortable for you.

Likewise, please know that Rev. Mara (revmara@uusociety.org) and our first UU staff are here to offer support if you find yourself struggling with something surfaced by the monthly theme.



Our Spiritual Exercises

We invite you to choose a spiritual exercise or two to engage in throughout the month of June. If you are in a Theme Circle, bring your related experience to your next gathering to share with your group.

Option A:

Bring It To Others!



Revelry is not just something we are called to do but something we are called to share. And all of us have the ability to do it. This month, figure out how you can invite others into revelry. It might be something gregarious, like this:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65

Or it may be of a subtler kind: joke-telling, story-telling, appreciation of nature.

Simply put: take someone by the hand and lead them toward revelry!

Option B:

Revel in Diversity

June is the month when many UU congregations celebrate Flower Communion. We have celebrated it in years past at First UU. At its core, this ritual is a celebration of diversity. There is something in the human spirit that hungers to live in the midst of diversity, to be surrounded by the sacred joy of otherness. To honor this, do something this month that immerses you in diversity or increases the amount of diversity in the world.

You can learn more about the UU Flower Ceremony here:

<http://www.uua.org/worship/holidays/flower-ceremony>

Option C:

Promise to Play This Summer

Summer is traditionally a time of letting go of some responsibility and to adopt a slower pace. Come to your group with a plan to play this summer, a plan to truly let go of “work” and make room for *a new level* of play, fun and immersion in “uselessness.”



Spiritual Exercises and Questions

Your Question

Here are some queries for your exploration. If you are in a Theme Circle, you might choose a question or two that engages you, then come to your meeting prepared to share that journey with your group. (Don't feel you have to respond to all of them.)

- Can you honestly say you have recently been guilty of “revelry”? Think of the synonyms: boisterous, rejoicing, debauchery, fun. What source of revelry is tempting you right now?
- What did you learn as a child about giving into revelry? About letting go and giving into joyful abandon? Are those lessons feeding your life right now or holding it back?
- How is restraint calling you to revelry? Sometimes connecting to joyful abandon requires not just letting go, but a bit of holding back. For instance, when life is too full of responsibility, there's not much room for anything else. What do you need to get control of in order to make room for revelry?
- When was the last time you did something “useless”?
- Has revelry increased or decreased as you've aged? Grown deeper? Changed in form?
- Is too much revelry your challenge? Is your life asking you to look at?
- What ritual or tradition regularly calls you back to revelry?
- When was the last time you experienced revelry in a spiritual or religious context?
- Who is currently your best “teacher” when it comes to revelry?
- What's your question? Your question may not be listed above.

As always, if the questions above don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it!

Credits

This edition of The Path draws on archival material from the Soul Matters Collective, of which First UU is a member.



Related Resources

Revelry (n.)

1. reveling; boisterous festivity
2. noisy partying or merrymaking

Synonyms: celebration, carousel, conviviality, rejoicing, debauchery, fun, jollity

Wise Words:

At This Party by Hafiz

I don't want to be the only one here

Telling all the secrets -

Filling up all the bowls at this party,

Taking all the laughs.

I would like you

To start putting things on the table

That can also feed the soul

The way I do.

That way

We can invite

A hell of a lot more

Friends.

"A busy executive was speaking to her six-year-old niece at the end of a particularly frustrating day. She had spent the better part of the day trying to get a new printer installed. Nothing had worked, and she was exhausted and very frustrated. On the phone with her young niece, she described in general terms how frustrated she was. Her niece asked, Did you try hard? Yes, she replied. Did you try really, really hard?

Yes I did. Well then, said the six-year-old, now it's time to go out and play!"

--Margaret Wheatley in *Perseverance*



"Revelry prepares you for surrender. Increases trust in life. Puts you in a state of openness. Reminds you that it's worth letting go, that there's something more out there beyond the stiffness of self protection."

— Soul Matters participant

"Laughter is a holy thing. It is as sacred as music and silence and solemnity, maybe more sacred. Laughter is like a prayer, like a bridge over which creatures tiptoe to meet each other. Laughter is like mercy; it heals. When you can laugh at yourself, you are free."

— Ted Loder

"Play exists for its own sake. Play is for the moment; it is not hurried, even when the pace is fast and timing seems important. When we play, we also celebrate holy uselessness. Like the calf frolicking in the meadow, we need no pretense or excuses. Work is productive; play, in its disinterestedness and self-forgetting, can be fruitful."

— Margaret Guenther in *Toward Holy Ground*



Peace is wonderful,
but ecstatic dance is more fun, and less narcissistic;
gregarious He makes our lips.

On a day when the wind is perfect,
the sail just needs to open
and the love starts.

Today is such a day.

— Rumi

“Once in a while joy throws little stones at my
window, it wants to let me know that it's waiting for
me.”

— Mario Benedetti

“We all grow up with messages that being an adult
is about being serious—that being silly or goofy or
playful are childish. But what if that's just not true?
The antidote: find a way to play, everyday. Go flap
your wings in the park, or find a patch of grass to
roll around on, and just give a big grin to anyone
who gives you a strange look. Interrupt a normal
conversation to talk like Elmer Fudd for a bit, and
see if you can get your friends to join in. Twust me,
it's hiwarwious.”

— Soul Matters minister

The Last Rites of the Bokononist Faith

(excerpt)

God made mud.

God got lonesome.

So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!"

"See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the
sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and
look around.

Lucky me, lucky mud.

I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had
done.

Nice going, God.

Nobody but you could have done it, God!

I certainly couldn't have.

I feel very unimportant compared to You.

The only way I can feel the least bit important is to
think of all the mud

that didn't even get to sit up and look around.

I got so much, and most mud got so little.

Thank you for the honor!

Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep.

What memories for mud to have!

What interesting other kinds of sitting-up mud

I met!

I loved everything I saw!

Good night.

— Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Cat's Cradle*

Videos & Online:

The Liberators: Funky Friday

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458>

(other links to the Liberators

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/theliberatorsinternational)

[theliberatorsinternational](https://www.facebook.com/theliberatorsinternational)

& <http://www.theliberators.com.au>)

Revelry through Dance

“Happy” Urban Dance Camp

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92)

[v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92)

Competitive Revelry

Classical musician joyfully competing with their
love of music

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65)

[v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65)



Play, Spirit and Character

Krista Tippett's interview of Stuart Brown

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/stuart-brown-play-spirit-and-character/transcript/6359>

Play is More than Just Fun

A TED talk of Stuart Brown and his enlightening research on play

<http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart-brown-says-play-is-more-than-fun-it-s-vital?language=en>

Articles:

When Pigs Fly

by Meg Barnhouse

Do we try too hard to grasp joy when it comes?

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/296811.shtml>

Play Doesn't End With Childhood: Why Adults Need Recess Too

by Sami Yenigun

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/08/06/336360521/play-doesnt-end-with-childhood-why-adults-need-recess-too>

On Revelry

A parent's take on learning from their kids about how to revel

<http://juneandbear.com/2014/03/31/on-revelry/>

Disco Ball and Candlelight

by Kimberly French

The importance of a congregation that knows how to revel!

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/280833.shtml>

Movies:

Waking Ned Devine

Best in Show

Bruce Almighty

The Bucket List
Despicable Me
Life is Beautiful
Patch Adams
Toy Story

Books:

Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life
by James Martin

Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul
by Stuart Brown

The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun
by Gretchen Rubin

How to Live in the World and Still Be Happy
by Hugh Prather

Jesus the Holy Fool
by Elizabeth-Anne Stewart

I Hear God Laughing
by Hafiz (trans. Daniel Ladinsky)

The Happiness Makeover: Teach Yourself to Enjoy Every Day
by M.J. Ryan

From our UUA's Beacon Press:

[House of Light](#)
by Mary Oliver

This collection of poems by Mary Oliver once again invites the reader to step across the threshold of ordinary life into a world of natural and spiritual luminosity.

Creative Space

Use this section to write, doodle, and create!

AHA! Moments

Notes

