



What Does It Mean To Be a People of Reverence?



December 2019

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What do you associate with the experience or practice of reverence? For some it might be nature, writ large or small. For others, it might be scientific discovery or civic institutions (when they are functioning in just and equitable ways). And for still others, it might be God, the universe, or divine mystery by these or other names. Our reverence can be oriented in many different directions, but the heart-opening experience of it can offer us common ground if we let it.

“Reverence runs across religions and even outside them through the fabric of any community, however secular,” writes Paul Woodruff in his thoughtful and beautiful book, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (listed at the end of this packet). “We may be divided from one another by our beliefs, but never by reverence.”

If reverence does not depend on a belief in God, though, it does run into barriers among those who believe only in themselves – and value only others like them. How can we experience reverence if we are unwilling to humbly draw near, to cross the differences and distances that divide us today?

The early 19th century Unitarian William Ellery Channing, whose praise of human goodness gave shape to the emerging theology of our faith, said, “I do and I must reverence human nature.” But his reverence began with a close up, clear-eyed view of both our best and worst possibilities.

“I shut my eyes on none of [humanity’s] weakness and crimes,” he noted. “But injured, trampled on, and scorned as our nature is, I still turn to it with intense sympathy and strong hope. And I thank God that my own lot is bound up with that of the human race.” For Channing, reverence was a call into relationship with humanity’s goodness and its failures too. Perhaps this is also what we discover in our challenging but reverent pursuit of Beloved Community – when our own lot is bound up with the whole human condition, both the beautiful and the broken, we may awaken deep sympathy as well as great hope.

This approach to reverence is explored in the cover reflection of this month’s church newsletter available on-line at: https://www.unityunitarian.org/uploads/6/1/0/3/6103699/december_2019.pdf. (Printed newsletters are in the brochure stands at church.)

Many other perspectives on reverence are included in the practices, questions and resources that follow in this packet. Wishing you rich explorations and discoveries as you consider this theme in the month to come.

Karen Hering
Associate Minister

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A: Listing Reverence

We live in an irreverent culture, where jokes and memes—making fun—are the norm. We make light. In this environment, finding avenues to reverence, or even understanding what reverence means, can be a challenge. Making reverent lists is one way to find a way to deeper meaning. Over the course of the month, set aside time—every day if possible—to make a list related in some way to reverence. Give it a title and assign yourself ten lines, or so. Or allow the list to expand until you think you're done, then take give it another minute—surprises may occur.

Some lists to try that might help reveal what you revere and how it affects your life:

- Moments That Have Mattered
- What I Hear When I Listen
- What Light Does
- What Opens my Heart
- People Who have Changed my Life
- Moments I have Felt Awe
- What I've Learned from Children
- What I Know Now
- When the Spirit Speaks
- When to Seek Solitude
- When I Have Been Given Grace
- What to Protect

As you listen to what matters, what you respect and hold dear, create your own prompts. And as you make your lists, pay attention to patterns and repetitions. Where do your lists of reverence lead you? What do they reveal? Come to your group ready to share your insights and your thoughts, your concerns and your ideas.

Option B: Noticing as a Reverent Practice

Start by looking. Especially in this busy season of holidays and gift buying, we can forget to stop and pay attention to the wonder that surrounds us. As often as possible, set aside a time to look closely at nature.

Next, write what you see. Spend at least ten minutes simply describing a natural object—a rock, tree bark, melting snow, Christmas tree pine needles, your cat’s fur. Nothing is too trivial or second class for reverence. Don’t stop writing, and don’t move from description to reflection or memory or association. Just stay with what you see.

Example:

I’m looking at the bark on the pine tree. It’s brown, or actually several shades of brown layered on top of one another. The outer layers are dryer, verging on grey. At the seams each piece is jagged. Ants crawl between the layers. On the shady side there are tufts of moss. . . etc.

In the course of writing, you’ll find yourself observing subtler variations of shade, texture, temperature, evidence of weather, erosion, animal habitation and the like. Notice what you notice. Ponder how paying attention to the tiniest of details might evoke a sense of reverence in you. Look for the sacred in the small. Honor it with your time.

If you do not have time to write every day, try to find a particular natural object that evokes a sense of reverence in you. Perhaps the moon. The icicle forming on the eaves. Or your dog’s face. Carve out space each day to return again and again to seeing. Come to your group ready to discuss how this felt, and what, if anything, changed for you as you reverently noticed nature for the month.

Option C: Reverent Vows

Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy writes about the power of vows to encourage reverence, but says that our vows “should not number more than the fingers and thumb of one hand,” that we need to be able to hold and respect our vows. Macy’s vows of her hand are:

I vow to myself and to each of you:

To commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.

To live on Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products, and energy I consume.

To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth, the ancestors, the future generations, and my brothers and sisters of all species.

To support others in our work for the world and ask for help when I need it.

To pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart,
and support me in observing these vows.

Use this month to consider the vows of your own hand. Take time to write down your vows. What actions and beliefs do you commit yourself to? What do you hold sacred? What evokes a sense of reverence in you?

Once you have developed your vows, find time each day to say them out loud. Count them off on your thumb and fingers. Pay attention to any changes your vows create in the way you approach each day. Come to your group ready to share your vows and the experience of creating them.

Option D: Reverence and Humility

Some argue that reverence begins humility. In Unity's partner Unitarian church in Homorodszentpeter, Romania, the doors leading into the sanctuary are small enough that even the shortest among us will bow their head to enter. These doors are reminiscent of the even smaller entrances into a typical Japanese tea house, where guests almost have to crawl through to join the space and ceremonial rituals inside, both intended to cultivate reverence. The very small tea-house door not only requires guests to lower their heads. Historically, in the days of the samurai, it also required removing their swords and hanging them on a hook outside so the guests could fit through the door.

What might your doorway to reverence require that you leave outside as you enter? Are there postures, beliefs, attitudes, identities or defenses that (consciously or unconsciously) keep you from experiencing reverence? What practices might cultivate greater humility – perhaps even vulnerability – that could increase your experience of reverence?

Make a list of what gets in the way of experiencing reverence. Each morning, choose one barrier on your list in the morning, and practice noticing whenever it arises throughout the day. (This can be the same barrier to reverence each day or you can work with a different one daily.) Whenever you notice this posture, belief or attitude, try setting it aside and simply paying attention with a heart open to whatever is happening and whomever you are encountering. At the end of each day, reflect back on your experience. Was your experience of reverence influenced by this practice? What did you learn – about your understandings and experience of reverence, about its relationship to humility, and about what gets in the way of it?

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate and reflect on the list and then pick the one question that speaks to you most. The goal is to figure out which question is "yours." Which question captures the call of your inner voice? Which one contains "your work"? What is it trying to get you to notice? Where is it trying to lead you?

1. Can reverence be cultivated? Or is reverence spontaneous, unplanned, and unexpected? Is reverence a practice or a feeling?
2. If reverence recognizes and honors the presence of the sacred in everything — our bodies, other people, animals, plants, rocks, the earth, and the waters — how can we act in ways that reflect our reverence? How does reverence inform our work for social justice?
3. What stands on the opposite side of reverence? Functionalism? Ennui? Disrespect? Cynicism? Something else? What, for you, gets in the way of being reverent?
4. Reverence sometimes involves supplication or submission—kneeling in prayer, bowing in respect, removing a cap. How do you feel, emotionally, spiritually, and physically, in such moments? Does reverence require humility? Does it sometimes include fear?
5. Are reverence and awe synonymous? How about reverence and respect? How do these concepts converge and diverge for you?
6. Does privilege or lack of privilege get in the way of reverence? Consider the advantages you have had or have been denied: your class, your race, your gender, your sexual identity, your family stability, your educational background, your health, and the like. Do these sometimes keep you from reverence?
7. Are there sounds or songs that you associate with reverence – or silence? What music would be on your personal "reverence" play list? What does that tell you about your understanding of reverence?
8. What helps to make a space or experience worthy of awe or reverence? What experiences, if any, do you consciously create in your day so that you feel a sense of reverence?
9. Can you be reverent without being in relationship with what you revere? What kind of relationship grows from reverence?
10. Are there people whom you revere? What qualities do they possess that bring forth reverence in you?
11. Is reverence an important element of your spiritual life? How does being at Unity relate to your experience of reverence?

12. People often speak of revering the past, of honoring our ancestors. How do remember your own past and your own forebears with reverence? How might we also revere the future?
13. Do the holidays encourage or discourage reverence for you? Where do you find space for reverence in these sometimes overwhelming times?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. We will not analyze these pieces in our group. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of Reverence.

Word Roots

Reverence: from the late-13th century, Latin *reverentia* “awe, respect,” from *revereri* “to stand in awe of, respect, honor, fear, be afraid of; revere”

Wise Words

One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, “What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?” ~ Rachel Carson

In order to be a writer, you have to learn to be reverent. If not, why are you writing? Why are you here? Let’s think of reverence as awe, as presence in and openness to the world. The alternative is that we stultify, we shut down. Think of those times when you’ve read prose or poetry that is presented in such a way that you have a fleeting sense of being startled by beauty or insight, by a glimpse into someone’s soul. All of a sudden everything seems to fit together or at least to have some meaning for a moment. This is our goal as writers, I think; to help others have this sense of—please forgive me—wonder, of seeing things anew, things that can catch us off guard, that break in on our small, bordered worlds.

~ Anne Lamott

I know to love is to respect. And reverence is the nature of my love. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Our holiday food splurge was a small crate of tangerines, which we found ridiculously thrilling after an eight-month abstinence from citrus.... Lily hugged each one to her chest before undressing it as gently as a doll. Watching her do that as she sat cross-legged on the floor one morning in pink pajamas, with bliss lighting her cheeks, I thought: Lucky is the world, to

receive this grateful child. Value is not made of money, but a tender balance of expectation and longing. ~ Barbara Kingsolver

If every moment is sacred, and if you are amazed and in awe most of the time when you find yourself breathing and not crazy, then you are in a state of constant thankfulness, worship and humility.
~ Bernice Johnson Reagon

Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.
~ Henry David Thoreau

Bowing is a very important practice for diminishing our arrogance and egotism. It is not to demonstrate complete surrender to Buddha, but to help get rid of our own selfishness. ~ Shunryu Suzuki

What a blessing would it be to us, one and all, could we but really wake up to the glory of this Creation, in which we live! Most humans are actually asleep for their lifetime in this vast and magnificent world. Mighty changes are going on around them, fitted to entrance their souls in wonder and thankfulness; and yet they are moved no more than if they were shut up in a mill, seeing only the ... clatter of machinery.
~ William Ellery Channing

At some point in life the world’s beauty becomes enough. You don’t need to photograph, paint or even remember it. It is enough. ~ Toni Morrison

I am in awe of the maker of galaxies and geese, stars and starfish, mercury and men [and women]. Sometimes it is rapturous awe; sometimes it is the numinous dread Jacob felt. Sometimes it is the humble awe of knowing that ultimately I belong to God, to

the maker whose thumb print is on each one of us.
And that is a blessing. ~ Madeleine L'Engle

Reverence is a specific attitude toward something that is precious and valuable, toward someone who is superior. It is a salute of the soul, an awareness of value without enjoyment of that value or seeking any personal advantage from it.
~ Abraham Joshua Heschel

The Tibetans have reverence for those who have passed along to them the priceless gift of the wisdom to live well. Perhaps this means having reverence for all of life, the ant and the hawk, the enemy and the friend, the lover and the parent and the child. All have offered us the opportunity to know ourselves and to know life. The chance to befriend life. This is true of our wins and losses, our illnesses, our celebrations, our joys and sorrows. All offer us wisdom. Bless them all. ~ Rachel Naomi Remen

We are at our best when we worship we realize that what we have, what we are, what we can do is all offered in the service of something, someone, greater than we are. Thus to our profession belong such words as reverence, awe, majesty, beauty, and inspiration: those are our words, and understanding what they mean suggest that we too are holy, and that the work we perform is holy. ~ Rev. Peter J. Gomes

Poetry

Joy Harjo, Eagle Poem

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear;
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know

I learned reverence from my father. For him, it had nothing to do with religion and very little to do with God. I think it may have had something to do with his having been a soldier, since the exercise of reverence generally includes knowing your rank in the scheme of things. From him I learned by example that reverence was the proper attitude of a small and curious human being in a vast and fascinating world of experience. ~ Barbara Brown Taylor

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up. When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."
"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ~ Exodus 3:2-6

That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We are truly blessed because we
Were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,
Like eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.
We pray that it will be done
In beauty.
In beauty.

Wendell Berry, Prayer after Eating

I have taken in the light
that quickened eye and leaf.
May my brain be bright with praise
of what I eat, in the brief blaze
of motion and of thought.
May I be worthy of my meat.

Lorna Dee Cervantes, Starfish

They were lovely in the quartz and jasper sand
As if they had created terrariums with their bodies
On purpose; adding sprigs of seaweed, seashells,
White feathers, eel bones, miniature
Mussels, a fish jaw. Hundreds; no—
Thousands of baby stars. We touched them,
Surprised to find them soft, pliant, almost
Living in their attitudes. We would dry them,
 arrange them,
Form seascapes, geodesics . . . We gathered what
 we could
In the approaching darkness. Then we left
 hundreds of
Thousands of flawless five-fingered
 specimens sprawled
Along the beach as far as we could see, all massed
Together: little martyrs, soldiers, artless suicides
In lifelong liberation from the sea. So many
Splayed hands, the tide shoveled in.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Everyday

I like to walk alone on country paths,
rice plants and wild grasses on both sides,
putting each foot down on the earth
in mindfulness, knowing
that I walk on the wondrous earth.
In such moments, existence is a miraculous
and mysterious reality.

People usually consider walking on water
or in thin air a miracle.
But I think the real miracle
is not to walk either on water or in thin air,
but to walk on earth.
Every day we are engaged in a miracle
which we don't even recognize:
a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves,

the black, curious eyes of a child—
our own two eyes.
All is a miracle.

Jeanne Lohmann Praise What Comes

surprising as unplanned kisses, all you haven't
 deserved
of days and solitude, your body's immoderate good
 health
that lets you work in many kinds of weather. Praise
talk with just about anyone. And quiet intervals,
 books
that are your food and your hunger; nightfall and
 walks
before sleep. Praising these for practice, perhaps

you will come at last to praise grief and the wrongs
you never intended. At the end there may be no
 answers
and only a few very simple questions: did I love,

finish my task in the world? Learn at least one
of the many names of God? At the intersections,
the boundaries where one life began and another

ended, the jumping-off places between fear and
possibility, at the ragged edges of pain,
did I catch the smallest glimpse of the holy?

Mark Nepo, Between the City and the Sea

An old president died just hours after a young
man from Idaho was shot in his sleep in Iraq, and
now in the Sundarban east of the Himalayas, a tiger
licks the eyes of its newborn yet to see, and further east
in Vietnam, a young woman who has worked very
 hard
to learn how to read is reciting a sutra from Buddha,
in awe how presence moves through words across
the centuries. At the same time, an unwed mother
in Chicago thinks about stealing a blanket as
winter stiffens, and moments after this, a
manta ray in Ecuador wakes because of the
sun's heat on its back and its sweep over coral
startles the moray back into its nook, and as the
old president's body cools, a sergeant finds the

boy from Idaho. And just now, in Chile, a tired couple re-see each other and make love in the afternoon while clouds come in from the Pacific. And just now, you stir, the dog stretches, and far away, two stars collide, a new world forms, and somewhere between the city and the sea, a child is born with an untempered capacity to love. In time, he or she will want to love us all. Remember their face, though you have never seen it. Speak their name, though you have never heard it. Mistake everyone for them. Love everything in the way.

Heid E. Erdrich, Intimate Detail

Late summer, late afternoon, my work interrupted by bees who claim my tea, even my pen looks flower-good to them. I warn a delivery man that my bees, who all summer have been tame as cows, now grow frantic, aggressive, difficult to shoo from the house. I blame the second blooms come out in hot colors, defiant vibrancy—unexpected from cottage cosmos, nicotianna, and bean vine. But those bees know, I'm told by the interested delivery man, they have only so many days to go. He sighs at sweetness untasted.

Still warm in the day, we inspect the bees. This kind stranger knows them in intimate detail. He can name the ones I think of as shopping ladies. Their fur coats ruffed up, yellow packages tucked beneath their wings, so weighted with their finds they ascend in slow circles, sometimes drop, while other bees whirl madly, dance the blossoms, ravish broadly so the whole bed bends and bounces alive.

He asks if I have kids, I say not yet. He has five, all boys. He calls the honeybees his girls although he tells me they're ungendered workers who never produce offspring. Some hour drops, the bees shut off. In the long, cool slant of sun, spent flowers fold into cups. He asks me if I've ever seen a Solitary Bee where it sleeps. I say I've not. The nearest bud's a long-throated peach hollyhock. He cradles it in his palm, holds it up so I spy the intimacy of the sleeping bee. Little life safe in a petal, little girl, your few furious buzzings as you stir stay with me all winter, remind me of my work undone.

Frederick Buechner, A Shepherd Remembers from The Magnificent Defeat

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field.”

—Luke 2: 8-16

“Night was coming on, and it was cold,” the shepherd said, “and I was terribly hungry. Have you ever had this happen to you? You have been working hard all day. You're dog tired, bone-tired. So you call it quits for a while. You slump down under a tree or against a rock or something and just sit there in a daze for half an hour or a million years, you could be dead for all you notice. Then, little by little, you begin to come to, your eyes begin to see, and all of a sudden you find you you've been looking at something the whole time except it's only now you really see it—one of the ewe lambs, maybe, with its foot caught under a rock, or the moon scorching a hole through the clouds. It was there all the time, and you were looking at it all the time, but you didn't see it till just now.

That's how it was this night, anyway. Like finally coming to—not things coming out of nowhere that had never been there before, but things just coming into focus that had been there always. And such things! The air wasn't just emptiness anymore. It was alive. Brightness everywhere, dipping and wheeling like a flock of birds. And what you always thought was silence stopped being silent and turned into the beating of wings, thousands and

thousands of them. We all tore off across that muddy field like drunks at a fair, splashing through a sea of wings and moonlight and the silvery wool of the sheep.

‘Shh, shh, you’ll wake my guests,’ said the Innkeeper we met coming in the other direction with his arms full of wood. At the eye of the storm, you know, there’s no wind—nothing moves—even silence keeps silent. Hush now, hush. You see him? Open your eyes. Listen.”

Articles, Podcasts and Videos

ARTICLES

Edwidge Danticat, The Ancestral Blessings of Toni Morrison and Paule Marshall

New Yorker, August 17, 2019,

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-ancestral-blessings-of-toni-morrison-and-paule-marshall>

Writer Edwidge Danticat beautifully reflects on her reverence for black women writers, how their “combined words trailed me, like an ancestral blessing.”

Kendyl Gibbons, Human Reverence: The Language of Reverence is the Language of Humanity

UU World, Summer 2006,

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/need-language-reverence>

Rev. Gibbons offers three reasons a language of reverence might be useful for UUs: “to respond in the moment to our experiences of awe and communion; to describe those experiences to others; and to solicit such experiences, both in ourselves and in others.”

Yahia Lababidi, Reverence for the Visible and Invisible Worlds

On Being, Sept 16, 2014, <https://onbeing.org/blog/reverence-for-the-visible-and-invisible-worlds/>

From the article: “Reverence for the visible world is not in opposition to the invisible one; in the same way that it is through the body we access the life of the spirit. Remembering we are “bees of the invisible,” sweetens the suffering and even cheats death of its ultimate sting. We are saved by the very idea of a

back and forth, between a Here and There. Bodies are like poems that way, only a fraction of their power resides in the skin of things. The remainder belongs to the spirit that swims through them.”

Russell Rickford, A Reverence for Hope: On Struggle, Faith, and Persistence

Black Perspective, May 2017,

<https://www.aaihs.org/a-reverence-for-hope-on-struggle-faith-and-persistence/>

Rickford argues that “struggle is more than defiance. It is faith. It is a quest for grace. And it is — at least in part — the audacity to persist.”

Darren Walker, Let's Match our Reverence with Resolve

Ford Foundation Blog, March 2015,

<https://www.fordfoundation.org/ideas/equals-change-blog/posts/lets-match-our-reverence-with-resolve/>

The president of the Ford Foundation challenges himself and his readers to put their reverence for civil rights leaders into action.

Gary Zukav, Reverence Protects Life, Waking up to Wisdom In Stillness and Community

<http://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2180>

As you work toward becoming reverent, your tendencies toward harming others and other forms of life diminish. As you acquire a sense of reverence, you develop the capacity to think more deeply about the value of life before you commit your energy to action.

PODCASTS

Bespoke Bones, The gender revolution will be podcasted!

Interviewer Pavini Moray, <http://bespoken-bones.com/episode-54-the-gender-revolution-will-be-podcasted/>

From the website: “Join Dr. Alex Iantaffi, gender radical, ancestral reverence practitioner and host of Gender Stories Podcast as we discuss liminality, the intersection of patriarchy and liberation, and praying through queer sex.”

Ross Gay, Tending Joy and Practicing Delight

An interview with Krista Tippett, On Being, July 25, 2019, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ross-gay-tending-joy-and-practicing-delight/>

From the website: “There is a question floating around the world right now: “How can we be joyful in a moment like this?” To which writer Ross Gay responds: “How can we not be joyful, especially in a moment like this?” He says joy has nothing to do with ease and “everything to do with the fact that we’re all going to die.” The ephemeral nature of our being allows him to find delight in all sorts of places (especially his community garden). To be with Ross Gay is to train your gaze to see the wonderful alongside the terrible, to attend to and meditate on what you love, even in the work of justice.”

Adam Gopnik, Practicing Doubt, Redrawing Faith

On Being, An interview with Krista Tippat, Last Updated December 7, 2017

<https://onbeing.org/programs/adam-gopnik-practicing-doubt-redrawing-faith-dec2017>

From the website: “Adam Gopnik sums up a core irony of our secular age in this way: “Our ancestors acknowledged doubt while practicing faith. We moderns are drawn to faith while practicing doubt.”

Homesteading and Permaculture Podcasts, Reverence for Bees

<https://www.permies.com/wiki/34544/Podcast-Reverence-Bees-Part>

Jacqueline Freeman discusses her "reverence for bees" as well as her love for all animals on her farm and how she interacts with them in all aspects of animal husbandry.

Marilynne Robinson + Marcelo Gleiser, The Mystery We Are

On Being, Last Updated January 2, 2014,

<https://onbeing.org/programs/marilynne-robinson-marcelo-gleiser-the-mystery-we-are/>

From the website: “What do a fiction writer and an astrophysicist have in common? Marilynne Robinson and Marcelo Gleiser connect the dots between the cosmos, our minds, and all the ways we discover the story of where we came from.”

The Science of Happiness, Episode 35: Finding Awe in Every Step

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/diana_gameros

From the website: “How can we feel connected to the world around us? Singer Diana Gameros tries to cultivate a sense of awe in the most unlikely of places.”

Francis Weller: Of Grief and Reverence

<https://charleseisenstein.org/podcasts/new-and-ancient-story-podcast/episode-04-grief-and-reverence/>

Podcaster Charles Einstein talks with psychologist Francis Weller about grief as a gateway to joy, to reverence, and to community, and the power of public grief to bring healing on a personal, community, and political level.

VIDEOS

In the Light of Reverence: a very brief excerpt of the PBS Point of View program exploring indigenous understandings about the reverence of place.

<https://www.pbs.org/pov/watch/inthelightofreverence/video-inthelightofreverence-in-the-light-of-reverence-christopher-mcleod-and-malinda-maynor-behind-t/>

Confucian Ancestor Worship

BBC Radio 4, Narrated by Aidan Turner and

Scripted by Nigel Warburton, July 2015,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dZfaU5tsDY>

A very short (under two minutes) video explaining the basics of Confucius thought about honoring your elders and your ancestors.

Earth and Water Reverence; Story of Oshun Leaving the Earth

Earth Medicine Alliance, June 2012,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pM5MOS6_SEw

From the website: "Voices of the Earth, a project of the Earth Medicine Alliance (<http://www.earthmedicine.org>) speaks with Luisah Teish, an author, storyteller, and priestess of the Ifá/Orisha faith of Yoruba-speaking West Africa and the African Diaspora." (13 minutes)

Honoring Our Ancestors: A Conversation with Parker Palmer

Upper Rooms Ministries, December 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEr-k--ebjs>

A conversation with Quaker leader Parker Palmer, who summons us to celebrate our accomplishments and to honor our ancestors. (12 minutes)

Paul Robeson: Here I Stand Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUki-v-NvoE>

An almost-two hour documentary about Robeson, an internationally known African-American concert performer, stage actor, recording artist and film actor.

Rev. Christine Robinson, UU Reverence

First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, May 2013,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTyUiRUm2n0>

Sermon description: "We UUs often have a high tolerance for, irreverent, but reverence is also a value that is important to us, and understanding its importance to others is an important part of social intelligence. As a person whose title includes this concept of reverence, I have done some thinking about what, exactly, this old fashioned sounding word means." (22 minutes)

Stand Up / Stand N Rock #NoDAPL (Official Video)

December 2016,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onyk7guvHK8>

A music video that honors the water protectors at Standing Rock and their reverence for the earth and water. (5 minutes)

BOOKS

David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (1997)

From the book's description: "For a thousand generations, human beings viewed themselves as part of the wider community of nature, and they carried on active relationships not only with other people with other animals, plants, and natural objects (including mountains, rivers, winds, and weather patterns) that we have only lately come to think of as "inanimate." How, then, did humans come to sever their ancient reciprocity with the natural world? What will it take for us to recover a sustaining relation with the breathing earth?"

Wendell Berry, "A Native Hill" in The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays (2003)

In this essay, Berry ponders the sense that he is "involved in history," a feeling that demands that he consider "the inheritance I will leave." This essay, and many other in this collection of twenty, is infused with a reverence for the land.

Karen Hering, Writing to Wake the Soul (2013)

In a chapter on "Writing about Reverence," Hering offers six reflections and writing prompts on this theme.

Kent Nerburn, Native Echoes: Listening to the Spirit of the Land (2017)

Reflections on the poetics of place and the Native American path of walking in beauty. Nerburn speaks as a seasoned listener to the land, learned from his

own wilderness sojourns and from the wisdom Jesus, Lao Tzu, Black Elk, and the Ojibwe.

Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (2006)

From the book's description: "Reverence is an ancient virtue dating back thousands of years. It survives among us in half-forgotten patterns of behavior and in the vestiges of old ceremonies. Yet, Paul Woodruff says, we have lost sight of reverence. This short, elegiac volume makes an impassioned case for

the fundamental importance of the forgotten virtue of reverence, and how awe for things greater than oneself can--indeed must--be a touchstone for other virtues like respect, humility, and charity."

MOVIES

BBC's Planet Earth, season 1 (2018)
Promised Land (2012)
The Secret of Kells (2009)

This packet has been created by Kathryn Jay with additions by Karen Hering. Based on the Soul Matters Model of Small Groups it is prepared for use at Unity Unitarian Church only.



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