

# Chalice Circle

## Humility

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cookeville  
Cookeville, TN, April 2020

**Chalice Lighting:** Jennifer Leota Gray, *Embrace The Night*

Universal mystery,  
Guide us away from the desire to  
Shine light in all the corners.  
Teach us to embrace the night,  
For without the darkness,  
We never see the stars.

**Check-in:** Mind, body, spirit. This is a time to share and/or reflect silently on how you are doing emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

**Opening Words:** Elena Westbrook, *To Remind Ourselves What is Real*

In a world ravaged by violence, by hatred,  
by conflicts that seem eternal and insoluble,  
sometimes the only thing we can do  
is be still for a moment  
to remind ourselves what is real:  
the sun that rose this morning,  
the dirt under our feet,  
the air whispering in and out of our lungs.

This hour, try just to be present in each moment as it unfolds.  
Your simple attention is what makes these moments holy.

**Topic:** Humility: freedom from pride or arrogance : the quality or state of being humble - *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

**Readings:**

“I have yet to meet a wise person who doesn’t know how to find some joy even in the midst of what is hard, and to smile and laugh easily, including at oneself. A sense of humor is high on my list of virtues, in interplay with humility and compassion and a capacity to change when that is the right thing to do. It’s one of those virtues that softens us for all the others. Desmond Tutu, whom I found impossible to doubt, says that God has a sense of humor. There is science helping us to see a sense of humor in the brain as an expression of creativity, making unlikely connections and leaning into them with joy. . .

I’m not surprised by the fact that inexplicable and terrible things happen in a cosmos as complicated as ours, with sentient beings like us running the show. But I am emboldened by the fact that surprise is the only constant. We are never really running the show, never really in control, and nothing will go quite as we imagined it. Our highest ambitions will be off, but so will our worst prognostications. I am emboldened by the puzzling, redemptive truth to which each and every one of my conversations has added nuance, that we are made by what would break us. Birth itself is a triumph through a bloody, treacherous process. We only learn to walk when we risk falling down, and this equation holds - with commensurately more complex dynamics - our whole lives long. I have heard endless variations on this theme - the battle with illness that saves the life that follows; the childhood pain that leads to vocation, the disability that opens into wholeness and a presence to the hidden wholeness of others. You have your own stories, the dramatic and more ordinary moments where what has gone wrong becomes an opening to more of yourself and part of your gift to the world. This is the beginning of wisdom.” - Krista Tippett , *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

- Proverbs 11:2

Who has not gazed at the night sky, mouth slightly agape? The experience is so common, its effects so uniform, that a standard vocabulary has evolved to describe it. Invariably we speak of the profound humility we feel before the enormity of the universe. We are as bits of dust in a spectacle whose scope beggars the imagination, whose secrets make a mockery of reason.

- Edwin Dobb, *Harper's*

If leadership has a secret sauce, it may well be humility. A humble boss understands that there are things he doesn't know. He listens: not only to the other bigwigs in Davos, but also to the kind of people who don't get invited, such as his customers. —*The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2013

**Questions:**

Does humility ground you? Does it affect your day-to-day interactions with others?

In times of crisis do you find comfort in humility? Or do you find discomfort?

What role does control play in your day-to-day life?

How do you deal with sudden changes in your life?

Has there been an instance in your life where you were suddenly put on a different path? How did that situation turn out for you?

What role does humility play in your faith?

**Sharing:** This is the time we take to practice sharing and deep listening. Please use this time to respond to the readings and/or questions. Save conversations and responses to others' comments for the open discussion portion. Remember we are here to practice listening, not to practice saving, fixing, or setting each other straight.

**Open Discussion:** This is a time to respond to others' comments and continue the conversation about the topic.

**Closing Words:** Marjorie Newlin Leaming,  
*Remembering that the Universe is Larger*

Remembering that the universe is so much larger than our ability to comprehend, let us go forth from this time together with the resolve to stop trying to reduce the incomprehensible to our own petty expectations, so that wonder—that sense of what is sacred—can find space to open up our minds and illumine our lives.

**Check-out:** How are you feeling now? Is there anything from this session that you plan to take with you into the rest of the week?