

Unitarian Universalist Area Church of Sherborn

Monthly Theme – April 2022 – Surrender

Personal Reflection from Jennie Breault: I didn't realize that I had "surrendered". I wouldn't have called it that at the time. But it did feel like a 'holy' moment. Listening to Rev. Nathan's Easter sermon in 2014, I was 8 months pregnant with my first child and full of fear. The unknown is scary. How painful would it be? Could I do it? Would there be complications?

As he told the Easter story, Rev. Nathan came to the part when the women found the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb. They were scared. But the angel came to them and said, do not be afraid. Jesus has risen. The women were so afraid of potential negative conclusions, they could not see the incredible possibilities.

I had an epiphany in the pew. Don't be afraid. Surrender to what the universe has in store. The outcome could be so much better than you could ever imagine. And it was. The birth of my first child was the most exhilarating, empowering experience of my life.

The word "surrender" has mostly negative connotations. It is associated with resignation, failure and weakness. But we can reframe the notion of surrender as an act of faith and trust. By choosing to surrender we can exchange a life of endless "what ifs" for a life of trust in powers beyond ourselves. Accepting that you cannot control everything is a colossal idea for many. But, when we spend time worrying about things that we cannot change we often spend physical, emotional and mental energy that we could put to better use elsewhere. Accepting that there are some things we cannot change takes courage. It is a leap of faith to put our trust in God (or a power greater than ourselves) that "God [or the universe or time] will make all things right if I surrender to God's will." But if we are willing to take that leap it can be the greatest gift of all. *Surrender is a gift that you can give yourself. It's an act of faith. It's saying that even though I can't see where this river is flowing, I trust it will take me in the right direction. – Debbie Ford*

Surrender is a letting go, a release, a dive into the unknown. When we surrender, we often feel tension ease, physically, mentally and emotionally. We give it up. We get to the place where all our trying and wanting things to be the way we think they should be, is futile. We are hurting ourselves and others, and the situation hasn't budged.

Because letting go is not like following a formula and has to be fully experienced, methods that help us use all of our senses can be helpful. A walk in the woods, time spent in meditation or connecting with loved ones can loosen the grip of the situations and encounters to which we cling. Other effective practices in the process of surrender often include poems, music, meditation, and prayer. Whether you have your own understanding of God or rather find your perspective and attunement in Nature, the power of community or something else, having a relationship with that which inspires awe, contains mystery and feels larger than our own ego, encourages the trust and strength to let go.

Of course, surrendering doesn't absolve us of responsibility. As our faith supports us as we "try to become the people we say we want to be", we daily are engaging with what needs changing (in ourselves and our world) and what is not for us right now. This is not easy. I'd like to end with what many call the perfect prayer. This is an excerpt from the serenity prayer that was written by Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who composed it in the 1940s, when the world was at war, and suffering abounded. While adopted by twelve step programs worldwide, it is applicable to all times and to all people. But, perhaps, at this moment in our world, we hear these words with fresh ears and see how poignant these words can be in our own lives, today:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

May it be so. Amen.

QUESTIONS

What gets in your way of surrendering?

Is 'surrender' negative or positive?

What are some things you have surrendered?

What do you find hardest to surrender? Why?

When do you not want to surrender?

Have you personally experienced a moment of surrender or epiphany? What did it feel like?

QUOTES

The moment of surrender is not when life is over, it's when it begins. – Marianne Williamson

Surrender and accept that whatever is happening in the moment, the universe is working on your behalf - Mastin Kipp

The ultimate act of power is surrender – Krishna Das

Surrender is deeply misunderstood as an act of weakness. Surrender is the bravest and most lucid thing a human ever does, and that's why it's so precious to the divine. – Andrew Harvey

Transformation happens on the other side of surrender – unknown

Peace requires us to surrender our illusions of control. – Jack Kornfield

Surrender all that no longer serves you. Let all that remains buried in your heart come to the surface and be healed. Let there be space for new energies to enter. A new beginning transforms darkness to light. – Anonymous

Try something different – surrender. – Rumi

If you surrender to the wind, you can ride it. – Anonymous

Sometimes surrender means giving up trying to understand and becoming comfortable with not knowing. – Eckhart Tolle

Surrender is not a weakness, it is a strength. It takes tremendous strength to surrender life to the supreme – to the cosmic unfolding. – Mooji

The more you go with the flow of life and surrender the outcome to God, and the less you seek constant clarity, the more you will find that fabulous things start to show up in your life. – Mandy Hale

Growing closer to God is not the result of trying harder but of surrendering more. – Anonymous

At fifteen life had taught me undeniably that surrender, in its place, was as honorable as resistance, especially if one had no choice. – Maya Angelou

Surrender is a journey from outer turmoil to inner peace. – Sri Chinmoy

Surrender to what is. Let go of what was. Have faith in what will be. – Sonia Ricotti

Sometimes, it's not the times you decide to fight, but the times you decide to surrender, that makes all the difference. – Sissy Gavrillaki

In a real sense, faith is total surrender to God. – Martin Luther King, Jr.