

Spirit of Life Talk - 16th October 2022

Title –

How does singing together affirm and promote the seven Principles of each Unitarian Universal member?

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides.

“The principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.”

The talk last night by Prof Geoffrey Levermore highlighted and enlightened us on our responsibilities as a member of UU especially in regard to the crisis of climate change.

Being part of a cohesive group has been essential for survival throughout our evolutionary history. To survive, our ancestors needed ways to keep the group together through conflicts, such as conflict over resources and mates.

Music is found in all human cultures around the world. The oldest bone flute found is 40,000 year old, so music has been around at least this long. Music often occurs in social settings, from religious rituals to football games, suggesting that music

might be an evolved behaviour for creating community cohesion.

Singing with other people can help build connections and feelings of togetherness. Recent research has also shown that the sense of self-other merging when we experience the synchronising of our voices with others, it is a great way to fast-track social bonding.

Research has shown that singing can be good for you on many levels. There is an increasing amount of evidence that singing releases endorphins, serotonin and dopamine, the “happy” chemicals that boost your mood. Singing may help lower stress, boost immunity and lung function, enhance memory, improve mental health, and help you cope with physical and emotional pain.

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person; in simple words each person is important. How can any of us know what it is like to walk in another person’s footsteps. Therefore, we must not judge too hastily but always act with kindness to others. Not an easy task in this chaotic world today.

“Everyone who can speak can learn to use a singing voice,” says [**Joanne Rutkowski**](#), retired professor of music education at the Pennsylvania State University “The quality of the voice is dependent on many factors; however, barring a physical vocal disability, everyone can learn to sing well enough to sing basic songs.”.

When we come together and as we sing our first song, it regulates us, soothing our own fragile nervous systems because it's the sound vibration that we make with our own bodies that sets off a cascade of positive neurochemicals that lift mood and promote connections and bonding.

CD track 3 - Hymn 108 My Life Flows on in Endless Song

2nd Principle: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; all people should be treated fairly and kindly. We are all equal regardless of race, colour, or creed. As a member of the Unitarian Universalist our hearts and actions must never stop having compassion and support for all those in need in the world.

Singing together strengthens and enhances our empathy and compassion. A year long study on children's music-making indicates that playing music in groups on a regular basis greatly improved a child's ability to empathise with others.

"These results bear out our hypothesis that certain components of musical interaction may enhance a capacity for emotional empathy, which continues outside the musical context," says Tal-Chen Rabinowitch, from the Centre for Music and Science, University of Washington, Seattle, who led the study.

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations; we should accept one another and keep learning together, lifting our spirit to a higher plain.

Singing together “Spirit of Life” reinforces our desire for continual spiritual growth, stirring up compassion and giving all life the shape of justice. “Bring Many Names” hymn 23

“We need souls that can take in the world in all its complexity and diversity, yet still maintain our integrity. And we need souls that can love and be in relationship with all this complexity. Instead of fight or flight, we need a spiritual posture of embrace.” —Rev. Rob Hardies, All Souls Church Unitarian, Washington, DC

CD 2 Track 2 – [Hymn 23 - Bring Many Names](#)

4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning; each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

“As a faith tradition, Unitarian Universalism makes sacred the right and responsibility to engage in this free and responsible quest as an act of religious devotion. Institutionally, we have left open the questions of what truth and meaning are, acknowledging that mindful people will, in every age, discover new insights.”—Rev. Paige Getty, UU Congregation of Columbia, Maryland.

The words of Hymn 361:

“Enter, Rejoice, and Come In
Open your ears to the song,
Open your hearts to everyone,
Don’t be afraid of some change,
Enter, Rejoice, and come in.”

Encourage us to open our hearts and minds to change as we search for truth and meaning in our lives.

5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.

“In our religious lives, the democratic process requires trust in the development of each individual conscience—a belief that such development is possible for each of us, as well as a commitment to cultivate our own conscience. We could call it a commitment to the value of each person. In the words of [Theodore Parker](#), ‘Democracy means not “I am as good as you are,” but “You are as good as I am.”’ My connection with the sacred is only as precious as my willingness to acknowledge the same connection in others.”—Rev. Parisa Parsa, executive director of the Public Conversations Project

CD track 6 – [Hymn 128 – For All that is our Life](#)

6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; we believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

“The sixth Principle seems extravagant in its hopefulness and improbable in its prospects. Can we continue to say we want ‘world community’? ‘Peace, liberty, and justice for all’? The world is full of genocide, abuse, terror, and war. What have we gotten ourselves into?

“As naïve or impossible as the sixth Principle may seem, I’m not willing to give up on it. In the face of our culture’s apathy and fear, I want to imagine and help create a powerful vision of peace by peaceful means, liberty by liberatory means, justice by just means. I want us to believe—and to live as if

we believe—that a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all is possible. There is no guarantee that we will succeed, but I can assure you that we will improve ourselves and improve the world by trying.”—Rev. Sean Parker Dennison, Tree of Life Congregation, McHenry, IL

As we sing “We’ll build a Land” words where sisters and brothers, may create peace, where justice shall roll down like waters and peace like an ever-flowing stream affirm our united effort to bring about a world community of peace, liberty, and justice.

7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; we believe in caring for our planet, the home we share with all living things.

“Our seventh Principle may be our Unitarian Universalist way of coming to fully embrace something greater than ourselves. The interdependent web—expressed as the spirit of life, the ground of all being, the oneness of all existence, the community-forming power, the process of life, the creative force, even God—can help us develop that social understanding of ourselves that we and our culture so desperately need. It is a source of meaning to which we can dedicate our lives.” —Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director of Shalom Community Center, Bloomington, IN

CD track 7 – [Hymn 123 – Spirit of Life](#)