

All Souls Church Unitarian

January 2015 Covenant Group Guide

Awakening

Our duty is wakefulness, the fundamental condition of life itself. The unseen, the unheard, the untouchable is what weaves the fabric of our see-able universe together.

Robin Craig Clark, *The Garden*

When one realizes one is asleep, at that moment one is already half-awake.

Pyotr Uspensky

Days

What are days for?
Days are where we live
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*

WE ALREADY HAVE everything we need. There is no need for self-improvement. All these trips that we lay on ourselves—the heavy-duty fearing that we’re bad and hoping that we’re good, the identities that we so dearly cling to, the rage, the jealousy and the addictions of all kinds—never touch our basic wealth. They are like clouds that temporarily block the sun. But all the time our warmth and brilliance are right here. This is who we really are. We are one blink of an eye away from being fully awake.

Pema Chödrön, *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living*

Once again, we are reminded that awakening, or enlightenment is not the property of Buddhism, any more than Truth is the property of Christianity. Neither the Buddha nor the Christ belongs exclusively to the communities that were founded in their names. They belong to all people of goodwill, all who are attentive to the secret which lives in the depths of their breath and their consciousness.

Jean-Yves Leloup, *Compassion and Meditation: The Spiritual Dynamic between Buddhism and Christianity*

On Becoming Awake

“I have been four months with you, and you have still not given me a method or technique.”
“A method?” said the Master. “What on earth would you want a method for?”
“To attain inner freedom.”

The Master roared with laughter. “You need great skill indeed to set yourself free by means of the trap called a method.”

Anthony de Mello, *Awakening: Conversations with the Master*

As Master Dongshan was washing his bowl (no attendants to wash the master’s bowl here) he saw two birds fighting over a frog. A monk also witnessed this scene and asked, “Why does it come to that?” “Only for your benefit,” Dongshan replied. This is the detached viewing of life’s reality. There is no right or wrong when the discriminating mind is still. No meaning. Just this. It is for your benefit—to help you awaken.

Janet Jiryu Abels, *Making Zen Your Own: Giving Life to Twelve Key Golden Age Ancestors*

A Prayer

Holy Spirit,
giving life to all life,
moving all creatures,
root of all things,
washing them clean,
wiping out their mistakes,
healing their wounds,
you are our true life,
luminous, wonderful
awakening the heart
from its ancient sleep.

Hildegard de Bingen, in Stephen Mitchell, *The Awakened Heart*

From an Awakened Perspective

What makes this such a wonderful world is its diversity. What if everybody were alike? What if everybody had the same abilities, the same talents and shortcomings? What a terrible, dreary, colorless world it would be. Mumon says, "The failure is wonderful indeed." Absolutely wonderful! A snake has no legs. Is it a failure compared to a bug, which has many? Each is just as it is. From the standpoint of awakening, there's no way to despise anyone or anything. Zen Master Rinzai said, "There's nothing in this world I dislike." Everything is what it is by reason of its karma. As karma changes, things change. Practicing diligently, our karma does change.

Philip Kapleau, *Straight to the Heart of Zen: Eleven Classic Koans & Their Inner Meanings*

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What does it mean to be awake? What are we awakened to? Do you consider yourself awake, mostly awake, sometimes awake? Is there language that works for you better than "awake" or "awakening"?
2. Have there been moments in your life where you were conscious of awakening, being awake, or not being awake? What led up to this moment? What have been the consequences? Are there intentions that come to mind as you think about this topic, this calendar year?
3. How does All Souls fit in to your understanding of being awake or to living the life that your awakening(?) is asking you to live?

by Mary Beth Hatem for All Souls Covenant Groups