

All Souls Church Unitarian

Covenant Theme Guide, January 2017

DEVOTION

The word *devote*-- to give all or a large part of one's time or resources to (a person, activity, or cause)-- comes to us by way of “devovere” from Latin *devot-* ‘consecrated,’ from the verb *devovere*, from *de-* ‘formally’ + *vovere* ‘to vow.’

True devotion and commitment are never made with the mind. These qualities, which allow us to expand, to grow, and to bloom into our potential, are developed through the heart and the spirit. **Jamie Sams, Earth Medicine**

You cannot engage the sacred and then commit; commitment is the only way of engaging the sacred. **Martin Bell**

Your self-sacrificing devotion to your purpose in life and your unwavering faith will carry you through times of difficulty. **Martin Luther King**

Devotion takes many forms: the solemnity and joy of prayer; the ecstasy of song, poetry, or art; the intimate connection between individuals in marriage, family, or community. It involves opening the heart fully to the presence of love and beauty, which brings a compassionate and reverent awareness of the Divine in all things. Through the lens of devotion, every aspect of creation is seen as purposeful, and hence received in gratitude. **LaVera C. Draisin quoted in *Opening the Inner Gates* edited by Edward Hoffman**

Every life needs its altar. It may be in a church or quiet nook, it may be a moment in the day, or a mood of the heart . . . but somewhere the spiritual life must have its altar. From there, life gains its poise and direction. **Esther B. York, in *Temple in***

the House, Anthony Lawlor

The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is—it must be something you cannot possibly do!”
eighty-year old sculptor Henry Moore, quoted by Donald Hall in Hall’s memoir, *Life Work*

The Sufis believe that every aspect of daily life has potential as a devotional practice. Every bodily movement has its source in the divine. Everything we do, everything seen or heard, tasted or touched, can be undertaken as a devotional practice. This level of devotion brings us into a new relationship with the ongoing creation as we realize that the entire universe is dependent upon the creative energy that vitalizes each and every moment. **David A. Cooper in *Silence, Simplicity & Solitude***

“Watching you wash your truck,” I told David, “I felt I was witnessing an act of devotion, certainly not a chore.

“I’m not sure what devotion means,” he said shaking his head, “But I do think it sort of reflects that my business is in order when I have a clean, well-conditioned truck,” he said. “It says something about me.”

Sue Bender, in *Everyday Sacred*

The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is—it must be something you cannot possibly do!” **Dana Gioia, from his essay, *Donald Hall: Work for the Night Is Coming for The Los Angeles Book Review, 1994 (review of Hall’s, memoir, *Life Work*)***

The heart can think of no devotion
Greater than being shore to ocean.
Holding the curve of one position,
Counting an endless repetition.

---**Robert Frost**

A man sometimes devotes his life to a desire which he is not sure will ever be fulfilled. Those who laugh at this folly are, after all, no more than mere spectators of life.

— **Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Rashomon and Other Stories**

So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.”

— **Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie**

“My task is to simplify and then go deeper, making a commitment to what remains. That's what I've been after. To care and polish what remains till it glows and comes alive from loving care.”

— **Sue Bender, Plain and Simple: A Journey to the Amish**

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Language. Is devotion a word that resonates with you? Is the language helpful or do you have other language that feels more useful?

2. A Life of Devotion. Would you say that you live a life of devotion? What are you devoted to? How do you know this to be true? Would others know this about you?

3. Acts of Devotion. What act(s) of devotion have you witnessed recently? What effect did they have on you? What act(s) of devotion have you performed? Are these scheduled or spontaneous? What is the impact of your act(s) of devotion?

4. Devotion and All Souls. How does All Souls contribute to your understanding of what “devotion” means in your life?

--Prepared by Mary Beth Hatem