

ALL SOULS CHURCH,UNITARIAN
Covenant Group Theme Guide, June 2017

Love

1 Love is the very difficult understanding that something other than yourself is real. **Iris Murdoch**

2 Most people think of love as a feeling but love is not so much a feeling as a way of being present. **David Richo**, *How to be an Adult in Relationships: Five Keys to Mindful Loving*

3 *Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law. This is our great covenant: To dwell together in peace, To seek the truth in love, And to help one another.* **Rev. James Vila Blake**, *on Unitarian Universalism*

4 Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier. **Mother Teresa**

5 To love deeply in one direction makes us more loving in all others. **Anne-Sophie Swetchine**

6 And we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. **John 1, 4:16**

7 Love says 'I am everything.' Wisdom says 'I am nothing.' Between the two, my life flows. **Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj**

8 With an undefended heart, we can fall in love with life over and over every day. We can become children of wonder, grateful to be walking on earth, grateful to belong with each other and to all of creation. We can find our true refuge in every moment, in every breath. **Tara Brach**

9 Most of us need to be reminded that we are good, that we are lovable, that we belong. If we knew just how powerfully our thoughts, words, and actions affected the hearts of those around us, we'd reach out and join hands again and again. Our relationships have the potential to be a sacred refuge, a place of healing and awakening. With each person

we meet, we can learn to look behind the mask and see the one who longs to love and be loved. **Tara Brach**

10 Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread: remade all the time, made new. **Ursula LeGuin**

11 *How much good inside a day?
Depends how good you live 'em.
How much love inside a friend?
Depends how much you give 'em.*
- **Shel Silverstein**, *A Light in the Attic*

12 *Love is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete.* **Plato**

13 Love Is an Art

“The first step to take is to become aware that love is an art, just as living is an art; if we want to learn how to love we must proceed in the same way we have to proceed if we want to learn any other art, say music, painting, carpentry, or the art of medicine or engineering.”

“Love, experienced thus, is a constant challenge; it is not a resting place, but a moving, growing, working together; even whether there is harmony or conflict; joy or sadness, is secondary to the fundamental fact that two people experience themselves from the essence of their existence, that they are only one with each other by being one with themselves, rather than by fleeing from themselves.”

--Erich Fromm

14 How Can I Love God. . .The Rabbi Explains to a Small Boy

Once upon a time, a small Jewish boy went to his rabbi and said he didn't know how to love God. 'How can I love God when I've never seen him?' asked the boy. 'I think I understand how to love my mother, my father, my brother, my little sister, and even the people in our neighborhood, but I don't know how I'm supposed to love God.'

"The rabbi looked at the little boy and said, 'Start with a stone. Try to love a stone. Try to be present to the most simple and basic thing in reality so you can see its goodness and beauty. Then let that goodness and beauty come into you. Let it speak to you. Start with a stone.' The boy nodded with understanding.

" 'Then, when you can love a stone,' the rabbi continued, 'try a flower. See if you can love a flower. See if you can be present to it and let its beauty come into you. See if you can let its life come into you and you can give yourself to it. You don't have to pluck it, possess it, or destroy it. You can just love it over there in the garden.' The boy nodded again.

" 'I'm not saying it's wrong to pick flowers,' added the rabbi. 'I'm just asking you to learn something from the flower without putting it in a vase.' The boy smiled, which meant he understood – or maybe he didn't. Just in case he didn't the rabbi chose the boy's pet dog as the next object of loving and listening. The boy nodded and smiled when the rabbi talked about his dog; he even said, 'Yes, Rabbi.'

" 'Then,' the rabbi went on, 'try to love the sky and the mountains, the beauty of all creation. Try to be present to it in its many forms. Let it speak to you and let it come into you.' The boy sensed the rabbi wanted to say some more, so he nodded again, as if he understood.

" 'Then,' the rabbi said, 'try to love a woman. Try to be faithful to a woman and sacrifice yourself for her. After you have loved a stone, a flower, your little dog, the mountain, the sky, and a woman, then you'll be ready to love God.'

Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deepest Self*

For Reflection and Discussion

A What's your definition of love? Has it changed over time?

B How has love (or lack of love) affected your life? Has love changed you, healed you, betrayed you?

C What lessons have you learned about love? From elders? From peers? From children? From friends? From ministers? From the arts? Are you also a teacher of love? How so?

D How does your experience of All Souls Church contribute to your understanding of love and your capacity for giving and receiving love? Think about every aspect of AS and be as specific as you can.

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