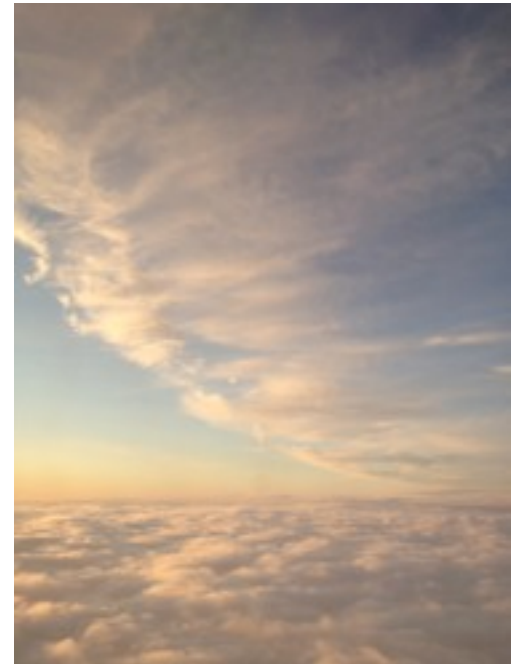


MAY 2012

Transcendence

Mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Clarita Valley

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Clarita Valley enhances the lives of members through spiritual development and active service in the community. We offer a diverse, non-dogmatic spiritual home to all who share our values as defined by the Unitarian Universalist Association. We provide a liberal religious voice, a social justice presence in the Santa Clarita Valley, and a stimulating and supportive environment to help our members on their own spiritual journeys during all stages of their lives.



In MAY we explore "transcendence", which is popularly equated with that which is "above the ordinary" or even "above the material world", within the realm of the Divine.

Transcendence is often closely linked with what we think of as "spiritual". Spiritual people are commonly expected to have transcended/risen above all worldly concerns, needs or desires - sometimes, literally, sitting on a remote mountain top or heavenly cloud. Our own lives, in comparison, can seem hopelessly mired in the mundane!

The Latin root of the word "transcendence", however, points less to a

remote, permanent destination, than to a *journey into the heart of the present moment*. Rather than being distracted and disheartened by the mundane, in those moments we find our spirits renewed and our hearts opened to the forces that create and uphold all of life.

While countless rituals and objects have been devised to help create such blissful experiences, they can happen anywhere, and at anytime.

The challenge, when they do, is to allow these experiences to transform us, informing our actions (rather than causing us to focus on recreating the experience).

Direct experience of transcending mystery and wonder" is one of the many sources from which Unitarian Universalists draw. In fact, it's the first of six listed. It is recognized as something affirmed in all cultures: an experience of reality that, however briefly, moves and changes us.

The American Transcendentalist movement of the 19th century, which helped shape Unitarian Universalism as it is today, promoted the idea that divinity is to be found not above, but within the material, natural world.

Take a walk through the woods or along a beach, look closely at a

What does "transcendence" look like or feel like?

(Write, doodle or draw your response)

seashell or child's hand, and you are likely to sense that there is far more to this forest, this ocean, shell, or hand than is visible to the eye! The idea might even come to you that the distinctions between them are mere illusion. That feeling of oneness can be utterly intoxicating. But it's what happens "next" that defines you as a spiritual being.

Unitarian Universalists of Santa Clarita Valley



2012

Website: <http://uuofscv.org>

While there are many paths to spiritual growth, it helps to regularly set aside time to think deeply about our experiences and how they relate to our core values. This year each month's worship services at UUofSCV lift up a particular theological theme for your reflection. You may also choose to engage with that theme by reading some of the books recommended here, watching movies related to the theme, discussing and/or journaling your thoughts, creating art, poetry or music, or engaging in service. May your insights unfold gently and joyfully, inspiring acts of love.

In Awe & Gratitude, Rev. Stefanie (RevSteffi@gmail.com)



Did you know...?

The American Transcendentalist movement of the 19th century promoted the idea that human beings are at their best when truly “self-reliant” and independent, and that true community is formed through the unity of such real individuals.

Some of the Transcendentalists who are part of Unitarian Universalist history are:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry, David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Amos Bronson Alcott, William Ellery Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Walt Whitman, and Theodore Parker.

Movies and books on the theme of TRANSCENDENCE:

MOVIES:

Avatar (R)
Dead Poet's Society (PG)
Into the Wild (R)
Tree of Life (PG-13)
The Truman Show (PG)
Pleasantville (PG-3)
Lost in Translation (R)
The New World (PG-13)
The Pianist (R)

BOOKS FOR ADULTS:

The American Transcendentalists, Edited by Buell
Nature, by R. W. Emerson
Walden, by H. D. Thoreau
Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism, C. E. Wright, ed.
Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and her Father, by James Matteson
The Poets of Transcendentalism, by G. W. Cooke

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:

Ralph Waldo Emerson for Kids, by Joseph Madden
Tar Beach, Faith Ringgold
Dr. Seuss, Whorton Hears a Who

READINGS FROM THE SINGING THE LIVING TRADITION

HYMNAL: 479, 499, 606, 607, 524, 603, 653, 611, 517, 608, 437, 467, 492, 441, 445

Questions to Consider:

- When/where do you feel most inspired, connected and filled with awe?
- Is the longing for transcendence universal?
- Is it harmful or helpful?
- If transcendence is a journey and not a destination, how do you prepare yourself for that journey?
- How can you tell if someone's been on that journey?

Quotes to ponder:

Without ambition one starts nothing. Without work one finishes nothing. The prize will not be sent to you. You have to win it.

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he had imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. [Henry David Thoreau](#)

A house is no home unless it contain food and fire for the mind as well as for the body. [Margaret Fuller](#)

All men are children, and of one family. The same tale sends them all to bed, and wakes them in the morning. [Henry David Thoreau](#)

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books. [Walt Whitman](#)

I can do small things in a great way. [James Freeman Clarke](#)

Never violate the sacredness of your individual self-respect. [Theodore Parker](#)

Strengthen me by sympathizing with my strength, not my weakness. [Amos Bronson Alcott](#)

Error is discipline through which we advance. [William Ellery Channing](#)

Starting in September 2012 UUofSCV the following themes were explored as part of this congregation's focus on spiritual growth: **forgiveness, death, faith, hope, justice, Love, brokenness, transformation, and transcendence.**

How do you feel about this year's "theme-based ministry"? Was it meaningful? Do you have suggestions on how to make it more-so? Contact the Committee on Shared Ministry (Rick Kamlet, Sara Brown, Gerri Brehm) or Rev. Stefanie (RevSteffi@gmail.com), with your thoughts. Future themes might include: **unity, vocation, gratitude, peace, grace, prayer, letting go, salvation, truth, vision, evil, democracy, god, creation, religious authority, redemption, freedom and mercy!**