

Soul Matters 2014-15

# April

*What Does It Mean To Be  
a People of Revelation?*



PHOTO: ROMMEL

## *What Does It Mean To Be a People of Revelation?*

Every UU out there agrees: to be a "people of revelation" in our liberal tradition means first and foremost to be a people of humility. Revelation is not sealed. It is on-going and spread out all over the place. Nobody has cornered the market. Nobody has captured it whole cloth. All each of us, and each of our religions, can do is know a piece of the truth. And so we are called to be humble. Humble and open. Open to other perspectives. Open to new insights. Open to a diversity of perspectives and insights.

But an openness to otherness and diversity is very different than an openness to being led, being guided, being called. It is one thing to affirm the wisdom of *other perspectives*; it is quite another to affirm the existence and importance of *otherness*!

This is how Parker Palmer, the Quaker teacher beloved by many UUs puts it:

“Before you tell your life  
what you intend to do with it  
listen for what it intends to do with you  
before you tell your life  
what truth and values  
you have decided to live up to  
let your life tell you what truths you embody  
and what values you represent”

This requires a whole different sense of being humble and open to otherness! Forget celebrating diverse perspectives and multiple sources of wisdom. This is about Life speaking! To us! Take a moment to let that sink in. It's a radical idea. We are not the only ones doing the talking. Imagine that!

Imagine that Life itself actually “wants” something for us and from us. Imagine that it's not all about us choosing and being in control, but instead about us listening, and looking, and letting ourselves be led. This too is what it means to be a people of revelation.

Indeed if our UU theologians are right, we are dependent on this being true. Here's how the preeminent UU theologian James Luther Adams put it:

"We cannot properly place our confidence in our own creations; we must depend upon a transforming reality that breaks through our encrusted forms of life and thought to create new forms. We put our faith in a creative reality that is re-creative. Revelation is continuous."

So humility indeed. Humility to admit we get stuck in "encrusted forms." Humility to admit that we can't see or breakout of those stuck ways of being all on our own. Humility to trust that there is an otherness – a confounding, mysterious, maybe conscious, maybe not-conscious otherness-- operating out there and in us that we need.

And so, do you trust it? Do you trust that Life itself is trying to tell you something important? Lead you somewhere important? Get you to see or do something important?

This month, we'll find out.

# Our Spiritual Exercises:

## Option A: Your Book of Revelation

Religions across all time and places have located revelation in a book. Unitarian Universalists are famous for saying we don't have 'one' book but many. What book has recently come to you as a revelation? Or what book do you hold on to because it contained a revelation you don't want to forget?

Bring that book to your group, tell the story of what it revealed and share one brief passage from it that "opened your eyes."

## Option B: Sharing Your Revelation

Look back over your own life and notice when you have suddenly become privy to some kind of truth or illumination that changed the direction of your life? Has there been a pattern of similar contexts? Have you been able to share with others the illumination that you received? How did you keep it fresh when others remained unaware of your experience or transformation? Did you try to share this revelation? Why or why not? If so, were you successful? Come to your group ready to tell your story of looking back.

## Option C: Risk The Revelation of Your Horoscope

Many of us laugh and don't take them seriously. But what if you took them seriously for just one week? Try it this month! Download one of these apps or pick up the paper every morning for a week. Come to your group ready to share how it altered your days!

- <https://apps.facebook.com/phonehoroscopes/mobile.php>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=info.androidz.horoscope&hl=en>
- <http://comitic.com/dailyhoroscope/>

## Option D: Keep Your Eyes Out For The Face of God

Our Christian friends and many Christian UUs see God reflected in the life and person of Jesus. Many of us believe God and the Divine shows up in the face and person of others as well. This month put that lens on as you look around. Come to group prepared to share the name and story of one person through whom the divine was revealed this month.

## Option E: Through the Looking Glass

What do you see when you look in the mirror? This one is as straight-forward as it is hard. Few of us take the time, or take the risk. For one week, literally take 2 minutes a day and look at yourself in the mirror. Come to your group ready to shared what it revealed.

# *Your Question:*

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." You do not need to engage every single one. Instead, simply pick **the one** that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. And then come to your Soul Matters meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.*

1. When has love been a revelation for you? And how are you honoring that revelation today?
2. Has revelation ever "taken you by the hair and dragged you around the room," to use the words of the poet Hafiz? Has it tried to "rip to shreds all your erroneous notions of truth"? Did you listen or "quickly pack your bags and hightail it out of town"? Are you ready to listen now? Or suffer a bit of dragging?
3. What do you see when you look in the mirror?
4. The poet Coventry Patmore writes, "Love wakes men, once a lifetime each." Does that fill you with hope? Excitement? Curiosity? Or dread?
5. Do you consider revelation to be a big event or something you can find every day? How does your daily living reflect that? Would others know it by watching you?
6. Did you laugh at, doubt or celebrate the last person who shared a revelation with you? Did it say more about you than them?
7. Are you prepared for the readings in this packet to be a revelation to you?
8. Do you remember your first revelation?
9. Do revelations come to you more often in times of joys or times of loss?
10. Have you had a revelation of "something more - a strength beyond our strength, giving strength to your strength" as Howard Thurman puts it?
11. Are you hiding a revelation? Keeping it to yourself? Is it time to share it?
12. Who is trying to reveal themselves to you?
13. Do you have revelation teachers? Who are those people in your life who have revealed themselves to you or encouraged you to reveal yourself to the world? What have you revealed and learned?
14. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

## **Recommended Resources:**

*As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started, and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be “a people of revelation.”*

### **Revelation (n.)**

1. the act of revealing or disclosing.
  2. Something that is revealed or disclosed, especially a striking disclosure, as of something not before realized.
- Synonyms: disclosure, announcement, discovery, epiphany, leak, news, lightning bolt

## **Wise Words:**

“Revelation comes to those who are radically hospitable to what they don’t know.”

--Rebecca Parker

“We cannot properly place our confidence in our own creations; we must depend upon a transforming reality that breaks through encrusted forms of life and thought to create new forms. We put our faith in a creative reality that is re-creative. Revelation is continuous.”

--James Luther Adams, UU Minister

“Every day, priests minutely examine the Law  
And endlessly chant complicated sutras.  
Before doing that, though, they should learn  
How to read the love letters sent by the wind  
and rain, the snow and moon.”

--Ikkyu

“In a religious context, we almost always think of revelation in terms of “the Truth.” The revelation of “the truth.” “The truth” revealed. I have to admit that I am skeptical about how much seeking the revelation of truth will really help us. Since there are so many ways to envision “the truth” it seems to me that the very concept often causes more rifts than relationships. What if we focused on the revelation of beauty instead. As Mary Oliver does in her poems. ([The Summer Day](#) and [The Place I Want to Get Back To](#)) We do not have to understand or

claim knowledge of beauty. It simply is. And learning how to pay attention to the amazing beauty in the world might reveal more about how we are all connected – might bring us closer together - than trying to get our diverse hearts and minds around “the truth” would.”

--Soul Matters Minister

### **The Revelation**

An idle poet, here and there,  
Looks round him; but, for all the rest,  
The world, unfathomably fair,  
Is duller than a witling’s jest.  
Love wakes men, once a lifetime each;  
They lift their heavy lids, and look;  
And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,  
They read with joy, then shut the book.  
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme  
And most forget; but, either way,  
That and the Child’s unheeded dream  
Is all the light of all their day.

--Coventry Patmore

### **Tired Of Speaking Sweetly**

Love wants to reach out and manhandle us,  
Break all our teacup talk of God.  
If you had the courage and  
Could give the Beloved His choice, some  
nights,  
He would just drag you around the room  
By your hair,  
Ripping from your grip all those toys in the  
world  
That bring you no joy.  
Love sometimes gets tired of speaking  
sweetly  
And wants to rip to shreds  
All your erroneous notions of truth  
That make you fight within yourself, dear  
one,  
And with others,  
Causing the world to weep  
On too many fine days.

God wants to manhandle us,  
Lock us inside of a tiny room with Himself  
And practice His dropkick.  
The Beloved sometimes wants  
To do us a great favor:  
Hold us upside down  
And shake all the nonsense out.  
But when we hear  
He is in such a “playful drunken mood”  
Most everyone I know  
Quickly packs their bags and hightails it  
Out of town.  
--Hafiz

### **Love Poems to God, II, 22**

You are the future,  
the red sky before sunrise  
over the fields of time.  
You are the cock's crow when night is done,  
you are the dew and the bells of matins,  
maiden, stranger, mother, death.  
You create yourself in ever-changing shapes  
that rise from the stuff of our days---  
unsung, unmourned, undescribed,  
like a forest we never knew.  
You are the deep innerness of all things,  
the last word that can never be spoken.  
To each of us you reveal yourself  
differently:  
to the ship as coastline, to the shore as a  
ship.  
--Rainier Maria Rilke

“We are all of us deeply involved in the throes of our own weaknesses and strengths, exposed often in the profoundest conflicts within our own souls. The only hope for surcease, the only possibility of stability for the person, is to establish an Island of Peace within one’s own soul. Here one brings for review the purposes and dreams to which one’s life is tied. This is the place where there is no pretense, no dishonesty, no adulteration. What passes over the threshold is simon-pure. What one really thinks and feels about one’s own life stands revealed; what one really thinks and feels about other people far and near is seen with every nuance honestly labeled: love is love, hate is hate, fear is fear. Well within the island is the Temple where God dwells – not the God

of the creed, the church, the family, but the God of one’s heart.”  
-- Howard Thurman

“I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.  
Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropped in the street, and every one is signed by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that others will punctually come for ever and ever.”  
--Walt Whitman

### **Laughter**

What is laughter? What is laughter?  
It is God waking up!

It is happiness applauding itself and then taking flight  
To embrace everyone and everything in this world.

Laughter is the polestar  
Held in the sky by our Beloved,  
Who eternally says,

"Yes, dear ones, come this way,  
Come this way towards Me and Love!  
--Hafiz

### **Three Mornings**

In Istanbul, my ears  
three mornings heard the early call to prayer.  
At fuller light, heard birds then,  
water birds and tree birds, birds of migration.  
Like three knowledges,  
I heard them: incomprehension,  
sweetened distance, longing.  
--Jane Hirschfield

“When we look into the eyes of another we see opportunity, when we look down on someone we see success, when we look in the mirror we see our adversary.”

--John Frederick Charles Fuller

"What each of us knows about God is a piece of the truth."

--Laila Ibrahim

“God is still speaking.” - United Church of Christ billboard campaign

“Never put a period where God put a comma.”

--Gracie Allen

“Before you tell your life  
what you intend to do with it  
listen for what it intends to do with you

before you tell your life  
what truth and values  
you have decided to live up to  
let your life tell you what truths you embody  
and what values you represent”

--Parker Palmer

" I am a devout skeptic. I don't believe in ESP or heaven or a zillion other unverifiable things. And yet after returning from an extended trip to Argentina, where people tend to be intensely sociable, I had a powerful vision during waking hours for six straight days. As I went through my day, I saw every person literally connected to every other person in the vicinity via umbilical-type cords. If the interaction between persons was positive, a golden, amber liquid flowed between them in this cord; if it was negative, the fluid look blackish-green. No one else showed any awareness of these cords, which also stretched between people not obviously interacting in the moment. The message was clear to me: We are all connected, whether we realize it or not; furthermore, I want to generate amber, not bile. I told no one for six months because I was concerned that they'd have me locked up as crazy. When I finally shared it with a colleague (a history

professor well versed in religion), he had this insightful comment: “If you had been a Catholic, you'd have seen the Virgin Mary. You, however, are a Unitarian Universalist—so naturally you saw the interconnected web!” Fifteen years later, I am still committed to caring for the web, aiming to inspire interpersonal harmony wherever I go.”

--Soul Matters Leader

## Videos & Online:

### Looking Past Limits

Caroline Casey tells the story of her extraordinary life, starting with a revelation. [http://www.ted.com/talks/caroline\\_casey\\_looking\\_past\\_limits](http://www.ted.com/talks/caroline_casey_looking_past_limits)

### Kids, Take Charge

Kiran Bir Sethi teaches kids the powerful revelation of “I can.” [http://www.ted.com/talks/kiran\\_bir\\_sethi\\_teaches\\_kids\\_to\\_take\\_charge](http://www.ted.com/talks/kiran_bir_sethi_teaches_kids_to_take_charge)

### How to Learn? From Mistakes

Three surprising things Diana Laufenberg learned from teaching. [http://www.ted.com/talks/diana\\_laufenberg\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_teach](http://www.ted.com/talks/diana_laufenberg_3_ways_to_teach)

### What You're Really Running From

A humorous look at what motivates us. <http://www.mbird.com/2015/02/from-the-onion-new-nike-running-app-tells-you-what-youre-really-running-from/>

### Grilled Cheesus

An episode of the tv show Glee where a student sees Jesus in a grilled cheese. Sounds ridiculous; but take it seriously. <http://m.imdb.com/title/tt1628293/>

### PBS: Frontline on The Book of Revelation

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/revelation/>

## Articles:

### **Yes, Joe We Do Have Sacred Texts**

Rev. Beth Ellen Cooper

<http://blog.chron.com/keepthefait/2012/01/yes-joe-we-do-have-sacred-texts/>

### **The Cathedral of the World** (excerpt)

Rev. Forrest Church

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/newuu/workshop1/160219.shtml>

### **Up To Our Necks** (A Revelation about Ferguson) Rev. Meg Riley

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-meg-riley/up-to-our-necks\\_b\\_5678365.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-meg-riley/up-to-our-necks_b_5678365.html)

### **Speculation and Revelation**

William Shetterly

<http://www.uuworld.org/2005/02/bookshelf.html>

## Movies:

Henry Poole is Here

Inception

Jerry MacGuire

Lion King

The Matrix

The Mission

Tree of Life

Sixth Sense

Star Wars

Wall-E

Wizard of Oz

## Books:

*Revelations* by Elaine Pagels

[Review by EJ Dionne here](#)

*Exile and Pride* by Eli Clare

*Waking Up* by Sam Harris

*Lovingkindness* by Sharon Salzberg

*Mindset* by Carol Dweck

*Stiches* by Anne Lamott

*When God Talks Back* by T.M. Luhrman

*Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* by Douglas Wood

### **From our UUA's Beacon Press:**

*Surprised by God* by Danya Rutenberg

A memoir of a young woman's spiritual awakening and eventual path to the rabbinate, a story of integrating life on the edge of the twenty-first century into the discipline of traditional Judaism, without sacrificing either. It's also an unflinchingly honest guide to the kind of work that goes into developing a spiritual practice-and it shows why, perhaps, doing this in today's world requires more effort than ever.

*Dreaming Beyond Death* by Kelly and Patricia Bulkeley

Drawing from a rich understanding of dreaming in culture, history, psychology, and modern dream study, this work explicitly addresses three common aspects of pre-death dreams and offers interpretations that will aid both dying persons and their caregivers.

## **April Events & Revelation:**

*April Fools Days (April 1)*

*Passover (April 4-11): [UU Materials](#)*

*Easter (April 5): [UU Materials](#)*

*Earth Day (April 22): [UU Materials](#)*

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### **SOUL MATTERS FACEBOOK PAGE**

Join our Soul Matters Facebook group to  
share and find inspiration for this month's  
theme:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatters/>

### **SOUL MATTERS PINTEREST PAGE**

Join our Soul Matters Pinterest boards to see  
pins and pics for each of our monthly  
themes:

<http://www.pinterest.com/soulmatters2014/>

## ***NEXT MONTH'S THEME:***

# **TRADITION**

*If you've enjoyed this packet and are not a  
part of Soul Matters or a Unitarian  
Universalist congregation, please join us at  
[www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com](http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com)*