



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Positive Side of Darkness
USG Facing Racism Together June 2023

CHALICE LIGHTING

Everybody has a little bit of the sun and moon in them. Everybody has a little bit of man, woman, and animal in them. Darks and lights in them. Everyone is part of a connected cosmic system. Part earth and sea, wind and fire, with some salt and dust swimming in them. We have a universe within ourselves that mimics the universe outside. None of us are just black or white, or never wrong and always right. No one. No one exists without polarities. Everybody has good and bad forces working with them, against them, and within them. *Suzy Kassem*

COMMUNITY SINGING: HOW SWEET THE DARKNESS, NO. 1055 IN TEAL HYMNAL
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk-bTM_3Bo8

OPENING WORDS

READING IN THE ROUND: The Darkness Divine

God resides in depths of darkness / as in the light of sunbeams. / The moon shines brighter surrounded by night / and life is secure in the black waters of the womb. / As the night sky littered with stars demonstrates / again and again, / there is beauty in darkness and beauty in light— / one no more brilliant than the other, / one no more necessary than the other, / one always complementing the other. / Without the heated dark-ness of the Universe, / splitting neutrons, electrons, and protons from atoms, / life and light would never be. / The task for us today / is to recognize God in both— / To see the divine in the rich brown earth, / the textured black walnut, / as well as the white snow and the pale pink jellyfish. / To see the sacred in the panther and the swan. / To embrace the dignity of the Black Madonna, / as it is embodied in the Virgin Mary. / The task for us today / is to look into the multifaceted colors of the onyx / and see the miraculous spectrum of color / produced in the prism of a diamond. *Rev. Kristin L. Harper*

CHECK-IN Share recent experiences facing racism in ourselves or others.

INTRODUCTION

From the UU World article *A Theology of Darkness*, by Rev. Kristen L. Harper

As a student of religion and race for many decades, I have been concerned about the consistent equating of darkness and blackness with negative qualities such as sin and despair. Our connection to the divine is a deeply personal, driving force. Continuing to associate black and dark with "evil" or "the absence of God" has only contributed to fear, dehumanization, and violence toward Black and brown people. A new relationship with blackness and darkness should include lifting up the creation possible within the dark and its empowering and nurturing qualities.

QUOTES ABOUT THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF DARKNESS

Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us. Oh be swift to love, make haste to be kind. *Henri Frederic Amiel*

Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells and sights, before the dark hour of reason grows. *John Betjman*

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. *Helen Keller*

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

You wait and watch and work: you don't give up. *Anne Lamott*

I think the healthy way to live is to make friends with the beast inside oneself, and that means not the beast but the shadow. The dark side of one's nature. Have fun with it and you know, is to accept everything about our-selves.

Anthony Hopkins

Never fear to deliberately walk through dark places, for that is how you reach the light on the other side.

Vernon Howard

You can't have a light without a dark to stick it in. *Arlo Guthrie*

All the lessons of history in four sentences: Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small. The bee fertilizes the flower it robs. When it is dark enough, you can see the stars. *Charles A. Beard*

There is nothing in the dark that isn't there when the lights are on. *Rod Serling*

I'm afraid of losing my obscurity. Genuineness only thrives in the dark. Like celery. *Aldous Huxley*

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. *Carl Sagan*

The heart of another is a dark forest, always, no matter how close it has been to one's own. *Willa Cather*

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other. *Francis Bacon*

Walk on a rainbow trail; walk on a trail of song, and all about you will be beauty. There is a way out of every dark mist, over a rainbow trail. *Robert Motherwell*

Imperfection and perfection go so hand in hand, and our dark and our light are so intertwined, that by trying to push the darkness or the so-called negative aspects of our life to the side ... we are preventing ourselves from the fullness of life. *Jeff Bridges*

I hate this quality, but I can go to dark levels when we lose. It's not a panic attack, but there's anxiety. I'm inconsolable. I'm a train wreck. I'm being myself. Then I get this crazy, intense focus, where I get desperate not to be embarrassed again. That dark spot is what I tap into. Creativity comes from there. *Erik Spoelstra*

When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer. *Corrie Ten Boom*

We work in the dark--we do what we can--we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art. *Henry James*

All growth is a leap in the dark, a spontaneous unpremeditated act without benefit of experience. *Henry Miller*

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. *Swami Vivekananda*

My dark side, my shadow, my lower companion is now in the back room blowing up balloons for kids' parties.

Gary Busey

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost.

Dante Alighieri

It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests. H. P. Lovecraft
 Roll on, deep and dark blue ocean, roll. Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain. Man marks the earth with ruin, but his control stops with the shore. *Lord Byron*

When a person listens to a good song, and they can look out at the world and their lives and see the dark and the light, the negative and the positive, all the different elements, all come together in one holistic poem, that is a very healing and very reductive thing, and that's what my music is about. *Matisyahu*

I'm a big believer in small, dark, cozy bedrooms. I would describe myself as introspective--I feel things first, and then I think them through--and I need the enveloping comfort of a little squirrel's nest when I have to retreat from the world to recharge. *Michael Bastian*

I keep sailing on in this middle passage. I am sailing into the wind and the dark. But I am doing my best to keep my boat steady and my sails full. *Arthur Ashe*

Yet, no matter how deeply I go down into myself, my God is dark, and like a webbing made of a hundred roots that drink in silence. *Rainer Maria Rilke*

I am a forest, and a night of dark trees: but he who is not afraid of my darkness, will find banks full of roses under my cypresses. *Friedrich Nietzsche*

QUESTIONS

What is your relationship to God, to the holy, to nature, to humanity?

What is your relationship to black, brown, and darkness?

What impact does the negative use of the words dark and black have on you?

What is some positive imagery of darkness and blackness?

What words might you use to replace dark and black to describe your mood or experience?

How might a positive understanding of black and dark deepen your relationship with the holy?

COMMUNITY SINGING: CHANT FOR THE SEASONS, # 73 IN GREY HYMNAL (Singing the Living Tradition)

https://youtu.be/l_hiC0s010Y

THREE DEEP BREATHS

SHARING ON THE POSITIVE SIDE OF DARKNESS

REFLECTION on something someone else shared.

SESSION FEEDBACK How did this session go for you? What could have gone better for you?

EXTINGUISH CHALICE

If we are outside at night long enough our eyes adjust and we begin to notice that the night is not completely dark. Then we can recognize the recurring patterns that reveal the rhythms of nature. Certain constellations and planets appear at different times of the year; the Milky Way changes orientation in the sky; and each month the moon illuminates more or less depending on its phase. By taking time at night to observe these movements the broader universe itself becomes more familiar. And with the lights off animals come nearer and remind us that we share this place with them. This can be exciting if we are unsure what lurks out there. This too is a moment of wonder. Then we notice that we see much more at night without artificial light. Lights blind us to the night's more subtle appearances. So see more by turning out the lights!

Matthew, Co-creator at Sedona Philosophy

Created by Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, 15 December 2021