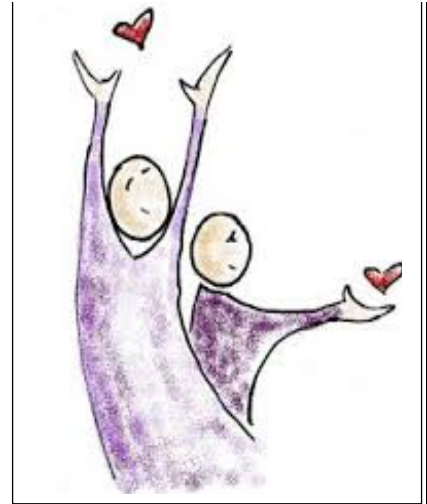


BEACON'S SEPTEMBER THEME is **FAMILY**

We begin the first month of our new church year with the theme of Family. Families can be the greatest source of inspiration and love, or they can be dark places of loneliness and pain. There are the families that you are born into and the ones that you create from your own choices. Here are some ideas for exploring what family means to you and how family has inspired your life journey. You can pick one of the activities to share with a friend, or with your family, or deepen your understanding by being part of a Soul Matter's group.



Quotes:

Having a place to live is home.

Having someone to live with is family.

Having both is a wonderful life. (Anonymous)

This is my country, that is your country, these are the conceptions of narrow souls. To the liberal-minded, the whole world is a family. (Gandhi)

Film suggestions: The Color Purple, Big Fish, Away We Go, Beginners, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Juno, Brothers, My Sisters Keepers, Monson Wedding, Jumping the Broom.

Book suggestions: *The Joy Luck Club, And the Mountains Echoed, The Clay Lion.*

Articles for the Unitarian Family:

The UU World is a magazine for and about our liberal faith community and a great source for ideas and reflections. Here are three articles:

'Reclaiming Family Time' <http://www.uuworld.org/2003/06/feature1c.html>

'New Family Traditions: Creating Rituals with & for Children' <http://www.uuworld.org/2003/04/feature2.html>

'Clive: A Story about Death and Different Parenting Styles' <http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/277414.shtml>

Theological Questions:

What are the lens, or the glasses that your family gave you?

What did your family teach you about love? About diversity? About hope?

What role did you family play in your spiritual formation?

How big is your family?

Family Rituals:

Family rituals can be about anything. They aren't just for special occasions. They can be everyday things like meals, conversations, movie nights, baths, walks, games. A ritual is something that is done more than once and has a sense of specialness or intention. Repeated words or actions, a little flair, a little flourish. When I was growing up it was a family ritual to go to my grandmother's house for Sunday dinner and then watch the Ed Sullivan show together. Or on Saturday mornings my brother and I would make a fort out of the couch cushions and watch cartoons while our parents slept in. As a mother I created the nightly ritual of, once my daughters were in bed and the light was off, having a snuggle and asking them about their day.

This month, consider reading the article New Family Traditions, the link is above, and creating a new family ritual. --- Rev. Debra Thorne

“On Children”

by Kahlil Gibran

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.



“It is a wise father that knows his own child.” (Shakespeare)

Healing Broken Families is Soul Work (sermon excerpts)

by Rev. Marjorie Wheatley-Bowen

Brokenness in the family. Brokenness in our communities. Brokenness in our world. It is an old story, one we know well. When family and social discord disrupts and threatens life, it is more than a social problem; it is a religious problem, one that calls people of faith to respond. Families are complicated. Like Hagar and Ishmael, too many of our children and families are out in the wilderness. Even though youth may show up in the classroom day after day, teachers and administrators never know what they may be facing in their families or communities. Our youth cannot make it alone! They need our love. They need to feel our arms around them wherever they may be. And they need a church that can help them to know that: they are loved; they are not alone; they have infinite worth; they are connected to all of us, and all life; and they can make a difference, and that there is joy in doing so.

If only we could commit ourselves to do the internal work necessary—with children, youth, adults, and families—to recover and integrate the lost parts of ourselves—to find the silences that lead to kids bullying kids, which leads to distancing—which leads to alienation, which leads to hopelessness and despair. If only we could recover those parts of the self that have been fragmented or suppressed. If only we could be more hospitable to each other.

This is the work of the soul. Soul work is hard work, but it must be done if we are to be fully alive. One thing that makes it difficult is that it is transcendent—we must move beyond ourselves, to the place of empathy and compassion; to the place of hospitality—hospitality of the human spirit. This is what counters alienation, nihilism, and brokenness in the human family. Soul work. Compassion. Hospitality. It is the work of the church. It is our salvation. It is what ministry is—to save souls through hospitality of the human spirit.