

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings, but
connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: What is most on your mind today?

Opening Readings:

“Pride is concerned with who is right. Humility is concerned with what is right.”
— Ezra Taft Benson

“We can choose to use our lives to bring light into this world, or to increase the darkness. We can become proud and self-centered, or we can work to develop humility and compassion.”
— Dalai Lama

“Humility is not denying your strengths. Humility is being honest about your weaknesses.”
— Rick Warren

Introduction:

Pride can wear many faces. It can be a healthy reflection of our self-worth and the joy we feel in our accomplishments and identities. But it can also tip into arrogance—when it closes us off from others or inflates our sense of superiority. Likewise, humility is often confused with self-deprecation, but true humility is a grounded recognition of our place within a web of interconnection, shaped by love, help, luck, and timing.

In Unitarian Universalism, we honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person. That worth is not something to be puffed up or played down—it simply is. We’re invited to walk the middle path, holding pride that lifts and connects, and humility that grounds and opens us.

Discussion:

1. Pride vs. Self-Esteem: Pride becomes unhealthy when it’s rooted in comparison or superiority, but self-esteem is a grounded, internal sense of worth. The former needs validation, stemming many times from feelings or fear of inadequacy; the latter stands on self-awareness and inner peace. When we confuse the two, we may push others away or hold ourselves back. For example, someone who refuses to acknowledge their strengths for fear of seeming arrogant may miss opportunities for growth or connection. Likewise, someone who needs to constantly assert their value may alienate others without meaning to.

- When in your life have you felt a healthy pride in something you accomplished? What made it feel healthy rather than boastful?
- OR
- Have you ever caught yourself (or another) being prideful in a way that closed you off from others? What helped you realize it?

2. Pride in Relationships: In close relationships, pride can prevent us from apologizing, softening, or truly hearing someone else. It can make us choose being “right” over being connected. Humility in relationships looks like curiosity, empathy, and a willingness to be vulnerable.

- What does pride and humility look like when you're in conflict with someone?
- OR
- Who in your life models humility for you? What do they do that makes them humble yet strong?

3. Defensiveness as Wounded Pride: Defensiveness often signals a pride that has been wounded — especially when we feel criticized, misunderstood, or challenged. It's the voice inside saying “I need to protect myself”, creating a shield to a perceived threat by inflating one's own importance. But if we respond from humility, we can pause and ask: is there something here for me to learn?

- When do you notice yourself getting defensive? What is the trigger? What's usually beneath the response? How can we respond to these triggers with humility?
- OR
- How might defensiveness serve us, and how might it hurt us?

4. Pride as a Barrier to Receiving Help: Many people struggle to accept help, especially when doing so feels like losing control or admitting weakness. But no one thrives alone. Humility allows us to receive help without shame and honors the giver by accepting their gift.

- Have you (or anyone in your life) ever struggled to accept help? What made it hard? How does it feel to receive help graciously?
- OR
- Think of a time someone offered you help. What made it easier or harder to receive? How can help be offered in a way that respects both pride and dignity?

5. The Two Faces of Self-Deprecation: Self-deprecation can be charming and disarming — a way to connect, be relatable or signal humility. But it can also become harmful when it stems from insecurity or masks genuine gifts. When we constantly put ourselves down, we may be reinforcing a belief that we don't deserve to be seen.

- When has self-deprecation helped you connect? When has it hidden your worth?
- OR
- How can you practice honest humility without erasing yourself?

Closing Words

“True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.”
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Checkout and reflections on today's session: Please express any closing thoughts on today's session.

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.