

Pride and Humility – Part II - BBUUC Journey Circle— August 2025

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 Reading

“Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you.” - Andrew Murray, (Mennonite)

“..it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” - C.S. Lewis

“Pride Leads to Failure, Self-Exaltation Leads to Foolishness” – Lin Bu 967-1028 CE (Chinese Proverb)

Introduction:

These opening readings show how humility has been upheld across time and tradition as a spiritual virtue — and pride as a dangerous vice. Yet humility has also been used as a tool of control. For example, women have often been taught not to be proud — to be modest, silent, and self-effacing — while self-assertion was discouraged or even punished.

Still, many traditions frame humility as a path to connection and maturity, not submission. Thinkers like Brené Brown and Thich Nhat Hanh speak of humility as essential. Brown emphasizes the power of vulnerability and the courage to be imperfect, while Thich Nhat Hanh teaches humility as a mindful recognition of our spiritual interbeing — that we are never separate from others or the earth.

Our early experiences have also shaped how we relate to pride and humility. Some of us were encouraged to be proud — of identity, effort, or heritage. Others were taught to shrink. These early lessons echo in how we show up in the world today.

Discussion:

1. Familial Expectations Around Pride and Humility: The way we first encounter pride and humility is often within our families. Some parents or caretakers openly express pride and encouragement with and in their children, families, each other and selves, while others are more reserved or even critical. Gender roles, birth order, and cultural expectations often shape these dynamics. Some children may be praised openly; others only subtly — or not at all. These early messages deeply influence how we relate to confidence, pride, modesty, and vulnerability later in life.

- Did your caregivers or other family members communicate pride in you growing up? How did that impact you?

OR

- How have your early experiences with pride and humility shaped the way you show up in relationships today?

2. Humility as a Spiritual Practice: Humility is foundational to many spiritual paths — not as self-negation, but as clarity. It is the quiet knowing that we are a part of something larger than ourselves. Humility says: I am not all-knowing, but I am always growing.

- How do you experience humility as a spiritual value?
- OR
- What how do you relate to our UU Value of Interdependence?

3. Pride in Justice and Community: For those in marginalized communities, pride is more than celebration — it's survival. Black Pride, LGBTQ+ Pride, Disability Pride, even Feminism — all are forms of resistance that reclaim dignity in the face of erasure or shame. This kind of pride may serve to heal what is denied. It tells the world, and ourselves: "We belong".

For allies, humility means learning to support rather than center oneself — to show up without needing praise. Yet allies may also feel a deep pride in standing for justice, not in a self-congratulatory way, but as part of a shared commitment to human dignity.

True justice work is a dance between pride and humility: the pride that restores identity, and the humility that keeps us listening and lifting together.

- Have you ever been part of a community or movement where pride served as a healing or empowering force?
- OR
- What does it feel like to support another group's pride as an ally? How can we do that with humility and respect?

4. Pride, Humility, and the Pressure to "Stay Small": In many cultural, social, racial, class, and gendered contexts, people are taught — implicitly or explicitly — to "keep their heads down". Whether it's the message not to "get too big for your britches," the pressure to appear "grateful but not proud," or simply that your talents and opinions don't matter. These norms ask people to shrink themselves to survive. For women, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community and others, pride has often been seen as a threat rather than a virtue. The result? Generations of people carrying incredible gifts who were told not to name them. Reclaiming pride can be an act of personal liberation and communal healing — a way of taking up space with integrity.

- Have you ever been told to (implicitly or explicitly) "tone it down," be humble, or not call attention to yourself? How did that affect you?
- OR
- In what ways have race, gender, or class shaped your understanding of what's appropriate pride?

5. Pride and Humility in Leadership:

Strong leaders often blend confidence with humility — they listen, admit mistakes, and lift others up. Leadership rooted in pride seeks control and credit; leadership rooted in humility seeks impact and shared success.

- Have you experienced a leader whose humility made them stronger?
- OR
- How do you balance confidence and humility in your own leadership or influence?

Closing reading:

Humility allows us to soften, to listen, to prioritize the relationship over the need to be right or the loudest or most important. In this way, humility becomes an expression of love and strength, not submission.

And pride — when rooted in truth — reminds us of our inherent worth, our identities, and our power to heal and resist erasure.

Together, pride and humility invite us to show up fully: to celebrate who we are, while holding space for the dignity of others.

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.