



Home Connection December 2011

Hope

Chalice Lightings:

In flame from this chalice
we find the light of faith,
the glow of hope,
and the warmth of service.

May we ever grow in faith, hope, and service
as we kindle our own lights from its spark.

-- Wayne B. Arnason

The light of this chalice is a frail thing.

It can be snuffed out by the winds of cynicism and apathy.

May its little flame be a reminder of the power of the spirit.

Let us rededicate ourselves to providing light that lifts our hearts and increases
the world's joy.

-- Alan G. Deal

May the candle/s we light this holiday season remind us of the glowing love within
the heart. May the carols we sing uplift our spirits and renew our hope and vision.
May the special moments we spend with family and friends strengthen the bonds
of caring between us at this time and throughout the coming year.

-- Patrick Green

Story:

The Face of Hope

Once upon a time, not all that long ago, people did not understand as much as we
do now about how diseases are caught and how to treat them. At one time people
with certain diseases such as leprosy were removed from their families and made
to live apart from other people. Many of these colonies were very unpleasant
places. The people were lonely. All most of them could do was wander around
inside the walls of their compounds with nothing to do. They quit caring about
anything and just sat and waiting to die.

But in one such colony, there was a man who still walked around with a sense of purpose. He could still smile and when he was offered food, water or any help by the people who worked there, he would thank them. He was the only person with leprosy in the colony who still acted as if he were a living human being.

The Nun in charge of this colony was curious to understand why this one man reacted so differently to his surroundings than all the others. She kept a close eye on him for several days. She wondered what kept the spirit of life alive in him. And then one day she saw it – a small face appeared above the wall of the compound. She watched and noticed that every day the smiling face of a small woman appeared for just a few moments and then disappeared. The man would be there waiting, and smiling in response.

One day, the nun hid, and when they were both there together, she came out and asked them what was going on. The man explained that she was his wife. He told the nun that before he had been brought to the colony, his wife had tried to hide him and care for him as best she could. But, it could not last. The authorities came and took him away. When they brought him to the colony she followed. He said, "She comes to see me every day. It is because of her that I can go on living."

This story is adapted from the story "The Face at the Wall" by Charles Arcodia in his book Stories for Sharing.

Story Questions:

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- Why did seeing his wife's face each day give hope to the man?
- Have you ever been the face at the wall? What did you do?
- Have you ever been like the man? Who or what brought you hope?
- Can you think of ways you can be the face of hope for someone?
- If this is not your first time hearing this story, how are you hearing it differently this time?

Possible Activities:

- Think of some ways you can bring hope to people during this Holiday season. They might be family members, friends, or even people you do not know.
- Discuss with your family and friends what can lift your spirits and give you hope when you are feeling unhappy or discouraged. Make plans so you can ask for that "smiling face" when you need it.

- Discuss with someone who has lived through some difficult time – a serious illness, natural disaster, or economic hard times – what gave them strength and hope to keep on.
- Read newspapers and magazines looking for stories that show actions that bring hope to the lives of others. Share them with others.
- During this winter season, and as we prepare for the coming New Year rather than make resolutions to carry out, make a list of your hopes and aspirations. What do you hope for in the new year? What would you like to aspire to in the new year?

Resources:

Books for Children:

Circles of Hope, by Karen Lynn Williams, Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005.

Hope, Isabell Monk, First Avenue Editions, 2004.

Hope is an Open Heart, Lauren Thompson, Scholastic Press, 2008.

Further Reading for Parents:

Hope and Healing: Peaceful Parenting in an Uncertain World, Naomi Drew and Arthur Caliendo, Citadel, 2002.

Raising Resilient Children: Fostering Strength, Hope and Optimism in Your Child, by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein, McGraw-Hill, 2002

Further Reading for Adults:

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

#461 by Reinhold Niebuhr
#470 by Leonard Mason
#488 by Langston Hughes
#535 Psalm 42

#560 by Dorothy Day
#610 by Mohammed Iqbal
#648 by Denise Levertov
#666 by Thandeka

The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness, by Jerome Groopman, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005

Half Full: Meditations on Hope, Optimism and the Things that Matter, Mina Parker, Conari Press, 2006.

House for Hope: The Promise of Progressive Religion for the Twenty-First Century, John A Buehrens and Rebecca Ann Parker, Beacon Press, May 2011

“The Journey toward Hope,” by Linda Hanson; UUWORLD Magazine, May, 2003
<http://www.uuworld.org/2003/05/feature2.html>

Living into Hope: A Call to Spiritual Action for Such a Time as This, Joan Brown Campbell, Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010

Poems to Live by in Troubling Times, edited by Joan Murray, Beacon Press, 2006.

Poems to Live by in Uncertain Times, edited by Joan Murray, Beacon Press, 2001.

Signs of Hope: In Praise of Ordinary Heroes, Edited by Jon Wilson and Kimberly Ridley, Pushcart Press, 2000.