



December Journal: Exploring Our Monthly Theme

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What It Means to Be A People of Mystery



The Root of The Word

The roots of mystery point beyond the idea of a secret, hidden truth to an experience that renders us speechless. It comes from the Latin root *muo* - literally translated as "shut the mouth" or "to be rendered silent or dumbfounded" and is also the root for our English word "mute."

The practice of mysticism has two essential elements that correspond to two meanings of the Greek word *mystikos*: to "shut one's senses" and to "enter the mysteries." The rhythm in all

mysticism springs from the fact that these two meanings are related. To be more fully open to the mysteries requires the purification or shutting down of one's senses -- pulling the plug on the television, going out into the woods, or calling a halt to marathon reading. The mystic shuts down the senses not because they are evil, but because they are such blessings that they deserve a periodic rest and cleaning to be renewed and restored.





Dear Members of DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church,

My last day as your minister is December 31, 2018. I will be available for pastoral visits until December 24th. From January 1st to July 31st, I will be on permanent leave from the church. As far as I know right now I will still be in the area from January to end of July. However, due to the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministers, I will not be able to have contact with any member of the congregation after December 31st. This is so that I will not have any influence on the congregation. Also Martha and I will not be able to respond online or in person to any member of the congregation after December 31st. It is considered best practices for the outgoing minister to not have any contact with the congregation for 2-3 years after their departure. I have included a link to the Ministerial Guidelines because I thought it might be helpful for some members of the congregation to see the ethics by which I and Martha are bound. (<https://www.uuma.org/page/guidelines>)

I have been working with and helping leadership and a number of committees as they prepare for my departure. You are in good hands. The Social Justice Committee plans to continue the SMILE Project and forums, but might not take on any other projects this winter and spring. The Sunday Services Committee is preparing for local clergy, as well as other speakers to fill the pulpit from January 1st until the end of July. And the Pastoral Minister Associates will continue to provide pastoral care for our community; please remember to reach out to them if something happens in your life and you want some support. It seems to me that everyone is stepping up and doing more for this church to help this congregation get through this winter, spring, and summer. I am very grateful for everyone's willingness to take on additional responsibilities.

The first three Sundays in December, I will be available after the second service in the Whitney Young room for anyone who wants to stop by, share some memories, and offer a personal goodbye. If that time doesn't work, please feel free to email me and we can set up a time to talk.

I am very sad to be leaving this great congregation, but I believe that DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church will continue to grow and thrive. I will keep my eye on you from afar seeing what you all accomplish in the future.

With much love and blessings,

Reverend Tom Capo





Mysteries One May Have Encountered

Haiku from the forthcoming chapbook, Transcending Sunshine by Tom Chockley

before the breeze
a soundless stir
of pine needles

clears eclipsing clouds
and drops
 below
 the
 horizon

rolling surf
the white line between
twilight and undertow



HOLIDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, December	12	Blue Christmas	7 p.m.
Thursday, December	20	Solstice Service	7 p.m.
Friday, December	21	Solstice Service	7 p.m.
Sunday, December	23	Holiday Pageant	11:15 a.m.
Monday, December	24	Christmas Eve—Family	6 p.m.
		Soup and Bread	7 p.m.
		Candlelight	8 p.m.
Sunday, December	30	Fire Communion	11:15 a.m.




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People of Mystery

By Steve Cooper
Director of Religious Education

“What Does It Mean to be a People of Mystery?” I’ve been looking forward to this theme of mystery since we received the theme list last spring. It seemed to be a good fit for the quiet, dark and contemplative month. But that’s a paradox, isn’t it? To create the holiday mood, we go crazy with the hustle and bustle of parties, gifts, decorating, merriment and many worship service opportunities. And yet at the center of the season sits the symbol of the opposite of busyness: The quiet flame of a candle standing out against the deepening of the night, capturing the mystery that it often takes darkness and silence for us to perceive, hear and connect to what matters most.

Taking us to this mysterious space of clarity and connection is what this month’s lessons are all about:

December 2nd - “Let the Mystery Be” - invites everyone into the practice of connecting to gratitude and appreciation.

December 9th - “The Mystery All Around Us” - invites our children into the practice of connecting to the miraculous in the ordinary.

December 16th - “The Mystery of Us” - invites our children into the practice of connecting to the divine in others and ourselves.

December 23rd - “The Mystery of the Nativity” - what better way to experience mystery than to have an unrehearsed pageant? This pageant is unique and inclusive as actors are chosen on the spot! Which part are you going to play?

Enjoy the holidays and I’ll see you next Sunday!



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Truth is not a Mystery

By Mary Law, Congregational Life Coordinator

When we first started Whole Church Ministries, we were excited about what the resource packets that came with Worship, Religious Education and Small Groups. Each packet is filled with such a rich variety of materials to be able to explore the monthly theme. We didn't have a way to really let people who aren't in small groups have access to the resources that are available to explore the theme on their own. That is why this journal was created.

We are all here at DuPage UU Church to search for truth and meaning and we encourage one another's spiritual growth. I hope you are able to take a look at the materials in this journal and pick an exercise or a question or listen to a podcast or our Spotify list for this month.





Mystery

The following resources are being used for our small groups at DuPage UU Church and may be helpful for you to use to think about what it means to be a people of and a person of sanctuary. If you are interested in learning more about Covenant or other small groups, contact Mary Law at membershipduuc@gmail.com.

Connect with Mystery on a Clear Night

Since the beginning of our existence, stargazing has been a primary way we humans contemplate mystery. For scientist and mystic alike, it is a central way we sort out our mysterious place in the universe and the mystery of who we are. As we connect with the universe we connect more deeply with ourselves. This exercise invites you to lean into this connection between the stars above and deep meaning within.

To do this, make room on a clear night to listen to the following podcast while you gaze at the open sky:

Space - RadioLab:

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91520-space>

The podcast tells the stories of numerous people's efforts to connect with and make meaning of the mystery that lies beyond. As you listen, treat each story as an invitation to see something new in the vastness overhead. Simply allow this visual and auditory meditation to soak over you. When the podcast ends, continue to sit or lay in the quiet stillness and listen for the new story that your own voice starts to tell. Come to your group ready to share what this clear night clarified for you.

Here's some additional inspiration:

- Stargazing In Yosemite National Park: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuhNNmzHP-c>
- The Soul of the Night by Chet Raymo: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B009D16QVE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1
- A New View of the Moon: <https://vimeo.com/259818647>.
- Check out the Stargazing playlist on our Spotify [here](#).





Pondering Mystery

Every month, questions regarding the theme are given for you to take time to ponder. No need to answer all the questions. Pick a question that calling to you.

- What was the first mystery to capture your imagination? How does that still shape you today?
- Who has taught you the most about “living with and loving the mystery”?
- What’s the most unprovable thing you place your faith in?
- What mysterious experience still nags at your disbelief?
- Do sunsets and sunrises whisper to you?
- Have you ever heard silence speak?
- If you had to name one “holiday miracle” you believe in, what would it be?
- Has mysterious “meaningful coincidence” ([synchronicity](#)) ever pointed you in the direction you needed to go, right when you were not sure of your way?
- Pico Iyer says that “The opposite of knowledge isn’t always ignorance. It can be wonder. Or mystery. Possibility. And in my life, I’ve found it’s the things I don’t know that have lifted me up and pushed me forwards, much more than the things I do know.” When has “what you don’t know” pushed you forward into new possibilities and greater knowing?

- In your experience, has love been a mystery or a choice? Has it been an accomplishment you created and choose or a mysterious “other presence” that choose and created you?
- Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?
- It’s said that we will never experience the fullness of our being until we get in touch with the mysterious “[divine that dwells within us.](#)” Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it’s true?
- It’s said that we stop struggling to feel at peace once we experience the mysterious and transcendent “love that will not let us go.” Has this been true for you? Maybe more importantly, what if it’s true?

What’s your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don’t include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.





Articles

Living with Uncertainty in a Certainty-Obsessed Culture

Maria Popova

Full article at

<http://www.dailygood.org/2015/03/16/living-with-mystery-in-a-certainty-obsessed-culture/>

Excerpt: “Our human definition of ‘everything’ gives us, at best, a tiny penlight to help us with our wanderings,”... Carl Sagan captured this idea in his masterwork *Varieties of Scientific Experience*, where he asserted: “If we ever reach the point where we think we thoroughly understand who we are and where we came from, we will have failed.” This must be what Rilke, too, had at heart when he exhorted us to live the questions. And yet if there is one common denominator across the entire history of human culture, it is the insatiable hunger to know the unknowable — that is, to know everything, and to know it with certainty, which is itself the enemy of the human spirit...”

Earthy Mysticism: Spirituality for Unspiritual People

Tex Sample

https://www.amazon.com/Earthy-Mysticism-Spirituality-Unspiritual-People-ebook/dp/B00AKJYPZC/ref=sr_1_7?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1537654076&sr=1-7&keywords=mysticism+and+spirituality

When God is Gone Everything is Holy (offers a religious naturalist perspective on mystery)

Chet Raymo

https://www.amazon.com/When-God-Gone-Everything-Holy/dp/1933495138/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1531336800&sr=8-1&keywords=when+god+is+gone

Rational Mysticism: Spirituality Meets Science in the Search for Enlightenment

John Horgan

<https://www.amazon.com/Rational-Mysticism-Spirituality-Science-Enlightenment->

[ebook/dp/B003WJQ6ZE/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1537654076&sr=1-1&keywords=mysticism+and+spirituality](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B003WJQ6ZE/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1537654076&sr=1-1&keywords=mysticism+and+spirituality)

“Chronicles the most advanced research into such experiences as prayer, fasting, and trances in this “great read” (The Washington Post).

Movies

The Diving Bell and The Butterfly

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_diving_bell_and_the_butterfly_2007

An immeasurably moving film about the mystery and miracle of inner life.

The Tree of Life

https://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/movies/reviews/article_0753e1aa-1f34-55b1-82dc-c2f6e9abe9e6.html

“Ideally, you would bathe in a film like this without striving to decipher it. As it’s a film about what we can’t get our heads around, we are probably not meant to get our heads round it.” - reviews

Awakenings

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1032970_awakenings?

The much-loved Robin Williams film that wakes us up to the mystery, miracle and preciousness of human awareness and connection.

Samsara

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/samsara_2012

An exploration of the mysterious forms of interconnection that run through our lives.

Waking Life

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/waking_life

“If there was ever a film that made ontological exploration fun, this is it.” - review



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Songs and Music

Mysterious Ways

[U2](#)

[Snow Patrol cover](#)

More “mystery songs” are found on our December Soul Matters Spotify playlist. Click [here](#) to check them out! Want stargazing music, click [here](#) for that playlist. You can also explore the playlists from other months [here](#).



Videos & Online

[The Beauty of What We Will Never Know - TED Talk](#)

Pico Iyer

“The opposite of knowledge, in other words, isn’t always ignorance. It can be wonder. Or mystery. Possibility. And in my life, I’ve found it’s the things I don’t know that have lifted me up and pushed me forwards, much more than the things I do know....”

[The Mystery and Miracle of a Moment](#)

A video meditation to help open us to the mystery and miraculous of ordinary moments...

[The Amazing Mystery Within and Around US](#)

A video meditation on the size of the universe

[The Madness and Mystery of Love - Shots of Awe](#)

The Mystery of the Rosary

Did you know that the catholic rosary beads represent the many mysteries of the Christian faith and that saying the rosary is a meditation on those mysteries? Learn more:

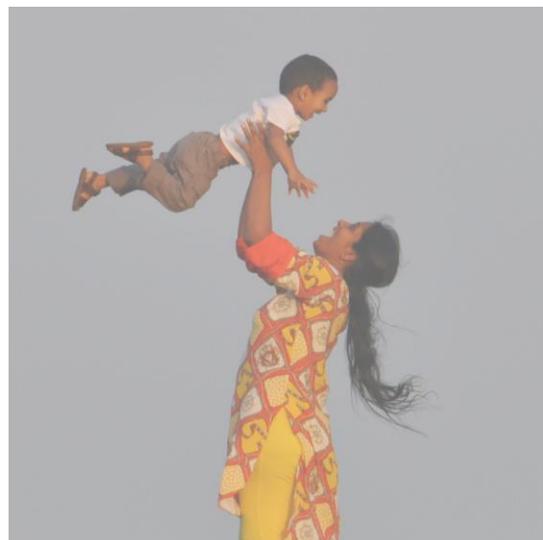
[Mystery of Rosary](#)

Video: [Rosary in Two Minutes](#)

Podcast: [Mystery of rosary](#)

The Meaning & Mystery of the Incarnation - Brené Brown

Want to learn more about joining a covenant group or to talk about this month’s theme? Contact Mary Law at membershipduuc@gmail.com.



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