



Soul Matters

June 2015

*What Does It Mean To Be
A People of Revelry?*



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What Does It Mean To Be A People of Revelry?

Lucky us! As the inimitable writer and UU friend, Kurt Vonnegut, has written,

“God made mud.
God got lonesome.
So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!"
"See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around.
Lucky me, lucky mud.”

Indeed. And given this, how can we not revel in this precious, fragile, ridiculously lucky life of ours?! How can we be anything other than a people of revelry?!

Of course, that's not to say life is easy or without pain. That's a given. But if the spiritual life is about anything, it's about the task of stepping back and seeing it all as a gift, even with the trials and terrors.

And we are so good at looking squarely at those trials and terrors. Even taking responsibility for fixing them. Our faith rightly reminds us we have a duty and responsibility to ease the burdens of others, to bend the arc toward justice. But it also reminds us that we have a duty to joy, even a duty to plain old “useless” fun! Which, of course, is not really useless. Joy, celebration, play and revelry are a means of replenishment. We will have nothing to give, if we don't make room for getting filled up.

Even more than that, revelry is also about perspective. This too is the message of our faith. This life of ours is ultimately the equivalent of being invited to the best party in town. Our challenge is to stay awake to that, to continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It's all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done. We are also called to look around and see all that has been given.

So, this month, let us make room for the gift. Let's let the dogged focus on responsibility go, at least for a little while. Let's lay it down, and as Vonnegut says, sit up and look around! And notice all there is to revel in!

Lucky mud. Lucky us!

Our Spiritual Exercises:

Option A: Bring It To Others!

Revelry is not just something we are called to do but something we are called to share! And all of us have the ability to do it! This month figure out what special gift you have that invites others into revelry, and then share that gift. It might be something gregarious, like this:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKzUd_xw20#t=65

Or your gift may be of a subtler kind: joke-telling, story-telling, appreciation of nature.

Simply put: take someone by the hand and lead them toward revelry!

Option B: Revel in Diversity

June is the month when many UU congregations celebrate Flower Communion. At its core, this ritual is a celebration of diversity. There is something in the human spirit that hungers to live in the midst of diversity, to be surrounded by the sacred joy of otherness.

To honor this, do something this month that immerses you in diversity or increases the amount of diversity in the world.

If your congregation celebrates Flower Communion, make sure your flower symbolizes your adventure.

Option C: Dads Deserve a Bit of Revelry

Father's Day is this month! Why not find a way to revel in your dad by watching him revel in something he loves? Surprise him. Make him laugh. Spoil him in a way that echoes the gratitude you feel for the gifts he's given you!

Option D: Promise to Play This Summer

Summer is a time of letting go of responsibility. This release from duty is no small thing. Many argue that it is a sacred calling, a needed gift we need to give to ourselves. Come to your group with a plan to play this summer, a plan to truly let go of "work" and make room for *a new level* of play, fun and immersion in "uselessness."

Your Question:

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework." Instead, simply pick the one that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. And then come to your Soul Matters meeting prepared to share that journey with your group.

1. Can you honestly say you have recently been guilty of "revelry"? Think of the synonyms: boisterous, rejoicing, debauchery, fun. If not, do you WANT to be able to be accused of it? What source of revelry is tempting you right now?
2. What did you learn as a child about giving into revelry? About letting go and giving into joyful abandon? Are those lessons feeding your life right now or holding it back?
3. How is restraint calling you to revelry? Sometimes connecting to joyful abandon requires not just letting go, but a bit of holding back. For instance, when life is too full of responsibility, there's not much room for anything else. What do you need to get control of in order to make room for revelry?
4. When was the last time you did something "useless"?
5. Has revelry increased or decreased as you've aged? Grown deeper? Changed in form?
6. Do you wish your life felt more like being invited to a party?
7. Is too much revelry your challenge? There is a dark side to revelry. Is that something your life is asking you to look at?
8. What ritual or tradition regularly calls you back to revelry? How are you passing that on to or sharing it with those you love?
9. When was the last time you experienced revelry in church?
10. Did a child recently call you to revelry? Did you listen and accept the invitation?
11. Who is currently your best "teacher" when it comes to revelry?
12. What have you done that comes close to this? - <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458>. What do you WANT to do that comes close to it? Most importantly, what's holding you back?
13. 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.

Recommended Resources:

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started, and maybe to open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be “a people of revelry.”

Revelry (n.)

1. reveling; boisterous festivity
2. noisy partying or merrymaking
Synonyms: celebration, carousel, conviviality, rejoicing, debauchery, fun, jollity

Wise Words:

At This Party by Hafiz

I don't want to be the only one here
Telling all the secrets -
Filling up all the bowls at this party,
Taking all the laughs.
I would like you
To start putting things on the table
That can also feed the soul
The way I do.
That way
We can invite
A hell of a lot more
Friends.

“A busy executive was speaking to her six-year-old niece at the end of a particularly frustrating day. She had spent the better part of the day trying to get a new printer installed. Nothing had worked, and she was exhausted and very frustrated. On the phone with her young niece, she described in general terms how frustrated she was. Her niece asked, Did you try hard? Yes, she replied. Did you try really, really hard? Yes I did. Well then, said the six-year-old, now it's time to go out and play!”
--Margaret Wheatley in *Perseverance*

“Revelry prepares you for surrender. Increases trust in life. Puts you in a state of openness. Reminds you that it's worth letting go, that there's something more out there beyond the stiffness of self protection.”
--Soul Matters participant

“Laughter is a holy thing. It is as sacred as music and silence and solemnity, maybe more sacred. Laughter is like a prayer, like a bridge over which creatures tiptoe to meet each other. Laughter is like mercy; it heals. When you can laugh at yourself, you are free.”

-Ted Loder

“Play exists for its own sake. Play is for the moment; it is not hurried, even when the pace is fast and timing seems important. When we play, we also celebrate holy uselessness. Like the calf frolicking in the meadow, we need no pretense or excuses. Work is productive; play, in its disinterestedness and self-forgetting, can be fruitful.”

— Margaret Guenther in *Toward Holy Ground*

Peace is wonderful,
but ecstatic dance is more fun, and less narcissistic; gregarious He makes our lips.

On a day when the wind is perfect,
the sail just needs to open
and the love starts.
Today is such a day.
~ Rumi

“Once in a while joy throws little stones at my window, it wants to let me know that it's waiting for me.”
--Mario Benedetti

“We all grow up with messages that being an adult is about being serious—that being silly or goofy or playful are childish. But what if that's just not true? The antidote: find a way to play, everyday. Go flap your wings in the park, or find a patch of grass to roll around on, and just give a big grin to

anyone who gives you a strange look.
Interrupt a normal conversation to talk like
Elmer Fudd for a bit, and see if you can get
your friends to join in. Twust me, it's
hiwarwious."

--Soul Matters minister

The Last Rites of the Bokononist Faith
(excerpt)

God made mud.
God got lonesome.
So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!"
"See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the
sea, the sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up
and look around.
Lucky me, lucky mud.

I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God
had done.
Nice going, God.
Nobody but you could have done it, God! I
certainly couldn't have.
I feel very unimportant compared to You.
The only way I can feel the least bit
important is to think of all the mud
that didn't even get to sit up and look
around.
I got so much, and most mud got so little.
Thank you for the honor!

Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep.
What memories for mud to have!
What interesting other kinds of sitting-up
mud I met!
I loved everything I saw!
Good night.

~ Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. ~
(*Cat's Cradle*)

Videos & Online:

The Liberators: Funky Friday

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=439383706224458> (other links to the Liberators:
<https://www.facebook.com/theliberatorsinternational> & <http://www.theliberators.com.au>)

Revelry through Dance

"Happy" Urban Dance Camp

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_bX0T76X8U#t=92

Competitive Revelry

Classical musician joyfully competing with
their love of music

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKezUd_xw20#t=65

Play, Spirit and Character

Krista Tippett's interview of Stuart Brown

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/stuart-brown-play-spirit-and-character/transcript/6359>

Play is More than Just Fun

A TED talk of Stuart Brown and his
enlightening research on play

http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than_fun_it_s_vital?language=en

Articles:

When Pigs Fly

Meg Barnhouse

Do we try too hard to grasp joy when it
comes?

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/296811.shtml>

**Play Doesn't End With Childhood: Why
Adults Need Recess Too**

Sami Yenigun

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/08/06/336360521/play-doesnt-end-with-childhood-why-adults-need-recess-too>

On Revelry

A parent's take on learning from their kids about how to revel

<http://juneandbear.com/2014/03/31/on-revelry/>

Disco Ball and Candlelight

Kimberly French

The importance of a congregation that knows how to revel!

<http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/280833.shtml>

Movies:

Waking Ned Devine

Best in Show

Bruce Almighty

The Bucket List

Despicable Me

Life is Beautiful

Patch Adams

Toy Story

Books:

Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life

By James Martin

Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul

By Stuart Brown

The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun

by Gretchen Rubin

How to Live in the World and Still Be Happy

By Hugh Prather

Jesus the Holy Fool

By Elizabeth-Anne Stewart

I Hear God Laughing

By Hafiz (trans. Daniel Ladinsky)

The Happiness Makeover: Teach Yourself to Enjoy Every Day

By M.J. Ryan

From our UUA's Beacon Press:

House of Light

By Mary Oliver

This collection of poems by Mary Oliver once again invites the reader to step across the threshold of ordinary life into a world of natural and spiritual luminosity.

June Events & Revelry:

Father's Day (June 21): [UU Materials](#)

Summer Solstice (June 21): [UU Materials](#)

If you've enjoyed this packet and are not a part of Soul Matters or a Unitarian Universalist congregation, please learn more about how to join us at

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com

Join the Soul Matters Facebook page to engage in the theme with participants from all around the US and Canada:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatters/>