Soul Matters

A kaleidoscope of thoughts, images, stories, poetry, podcasts, and videos to engage hands, hearts, and minds.

January 2017
What Does It Mean A Community Of Prophecy?

Our times ask us to exercise our capacity for prophetic witness, by Prophetic witness I mean our capacity to see what is happening, to say what is happening and to act in accordance with what we know....
Prophetic witness ...is the ability to name those places where we resist knowing what needs to be known.
-Rebecca Parker, UU theologian and minister

Prophets are known for their condemnation. Images of an angry bearded man shouting and predicting God’s judgment come to mind. But for Unitarian Universalists, the prophetic voice has always been less about shouting “You’re evil!” and more about pointing out “We’re all asleep!” The prophetic message, for us, is not so much “Repent!” but “Wake up!”

Recent political events are relevant here. On election day, many of us realized we had been living in a bubble. We existed in an echo chamber but told ourselves we had a clear picture of the world. Whether it was class, condescension or comfort, something distorted many people’s view.

And so if election day was about realizing we were asleep in a bubble, the question on Inauguration Day becomes, Are we ready to wake up? And let’s be clear: this is not a politically partisan thing; liberals and conservatives both have a ton of waking up to do. One unemployed Michigan factory worker was quoted after the election saying, “I vote Republican because I won’t vote for anyone who doesn’t see and respect me.” On the other side of the political fence, black, Latino, Muslim and LGBT families are struggling with real fear about what’s been unleashed and what may be unleashed against them. And they are wondering if this country will wake up to and take their fear seriously.

Bottom line: we need prophetic communities now more than ever. As Rebecca Parker says, we need circles of brave and bold people who are willing “to see what is happening, to say what is happening and to act in accordance with what they know.” Which means that being a community of prophecy is not just about helping people wake up to each other’s realities and fears; there is also the matter of waking up to and being wide-eyed about the need for resistance. Most of the time, holy work is about finding common ground among differing world views. But sometimes, holy work is about prophetic judgment and knowing when some views need opposed. As that activist said, “I am not crushed. I am awake.”

So many ways to wake up. So many people who need us to do so. Sleep is no longer a luxury. In the end, maybe that is the most prophetic message of all.

This Soul Matters packet was prepared by Rev. Carie Johnsen at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta, ME. Thoughts within were gleaned from the Soul Matters Network, the UUCC Resource Circle, and other sources. If you would like to share your experience and wisdom for future packets, please email minister@augustauu.org. To receive an electronic copy please email info@augustauu.org. To learn more about Unitarian Universalist Community Church, please visit our website www.augustauu.org.
QUESTIONS TO WALK WITH

Below is a list of questions to open the mind’s gateway to reveal the wisdom that is right below the surface of our ordinary, everyday lives. Pick one question, any, the one that grabs you and won’t let go, then walk with it. Let your mind wander and wonder. Let the question percolate. Listen curiously to what surfaces. Live into the answers. Be surprised by what is discovered. Share what you learn with someone meet along the way.

1. **Who has been a prophetic oracle to you? Whose voice has influenced, and thus, predicted your future? Is it still doing so?** (Every man is hero and an oracle to somebody, and to that person, whatever he says has an enhanced value. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson)

2. **What are you willing to being driven into the desert for?** (The ones we call the prophets were the ones jailed and driven into the desert. ~Noam Chomsky)

3. **How is Beauty calling you to a new future?** (Beauty is the oracle that speaks to us all. - Luis Barragan)

4. **What would it look like for you to remember?** (“The biblical prophet didn’t so much predict the future as to speak for God in a world that has gone askew by forgetting ...something essential.” - Peter Santucci)

5. **Have you domesticated your prophets? Is your “cloud of prophetic witnesses” really just an echo chamber?** (Avoid the bad habit of domesticating the prophet of your choice, turning him into a cheerleader for your way of thinking and way of life. ~Parker Palmer)

6. **Are your New Year’s resolutions too small? Are they really big enough to bring down your bully?** (The best way to [predict] any future is to cause one... The future isn’t a pattern laid out to abuse and bully you. The future is a beautiful playground... - L. Ron Hubbard)

7. **What New Year’s resolution will make life feel like a playground again?** (The best way to [predict] any future is to cause one... The future isn’t a pattern laid out to abuse and bully you. The future is a beautiful playground... - L. Ron Hubbard)

8. **How has the election of President Trump “mugged you with truth”?** (“You can tell the future?” “More like the future mugs me from time to time.... The oracle spirit kind of hijacks me once in a while, and speaks important stuff.” ~Rick Riordan)

9. **What’s your wave?** (It is a mistake to see [the prophet] as an isolated, heroic individual. It is better to see him/her as the crest of a wave. -Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker)

10. **Is your prophetic engagement with or without love?** (If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. - 1 Corinthians 13:2)

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**Opening Words**

To love life is to notice the wonders that abound
And
To notice the wonders that abound
Is to be grounded here and now
And
to be grounded here and now
Is the beginning of finding love for this life today.

Let us ground ourselves in this instant to the
worship of all things good and right.

~ Daniel Kanter “to Love Life”

**Closing Words**

Listening is soul work. It can help the living find the meaning to go on in the midst of trying circumstances, and it can help the dying accept the brevity of their lives. Without listening, there can be no story. And without stories, we cannot complete the unfinished work of healing.

[Blessed be the listeners]

~ Richard Stone, The Healing Art of Storytelling
*Spiritual Practice - Deepening Experiences*

*A new way of being for all ages*

**Pick a Day and Make it Prophetic**

**Prophecy**

Greek - *prophēteia*: the gift of communicating and enforcing revealed truth; pró, "before" and phēmí, "make clear, assert as a priority, what is clarified beforehand.

Hebrew – *nabi*: from a root meaning “to bubble forth, as from a fountain,” hence “to utter.”

This month is full of prophetic holidays. But too often our culture turns them into parties or excuses for another day off, or worse yet, ignores them all together. In one-way of another, we allow these holidays to become small. This exercise invites us to not let that happen. Your assignment: Pick at least one of the major holidays of January and find your personal way of keeping it “large”-keeping it’s radical and prophetic potential alive.

**New Year’s Day:** Resolving to lose a few pounds is important, but one wonders if that alone is worthy of New Year’s potential. This quote by L. Ron Hubbard suggests it’s not: “The best way to [predict] any future is to cause one... The future isn’t a pattern laid out to abuse and bully you. The future is a beautiful playground.” So this year, ask yourself: Are your New Year’s resolutions too small? Are they really big enough to bring down your “bully”? Are they radical enough to make life feel like a playground again?

**MLK Day:** Parker Palmer writes, “Avoid the bad habit of domesticating the prophet of your choice, turning him/her into a cheerleader for your way of thinking and way of life.” These words tragically describe what so often happens each January to Martin Luther King Jr. His call for equality and justice is regularly reduced to an invitation to embrace diversity and ignores his demand to turn the economic social order on its head. Treating him as a “saint” ends up hiding how radical he was. So this year, what can you do to honor “the radical MLK”? Here is some inspiration:

- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/martin-luther-king-was-a-_1_b_6498740.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/martin-luther-king-was-a-_1_b_6498740.html)
- [http://www.beacon.org/The-Radical-King-P1049.aspx](http://www.beacon.org/The-Radical-King-P1049.aspx)
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice](https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice)

**Inauguration Day:** Regardless of whether you voted for Mr. Trump or not, his election taught all of us that we live in bubbles that distort the reality around us. It’s not just the pollsters that didn’t listen well; none of us seem to be good at listening to and understanding each other. So consider making this Inauguration Day about prophetic listening. For some of us, that means listening better to the unemployed Detroit factory worker. For others of us, it means making sure our fears as immigrants and minorities are heard. All of us, though, need to wrestle with how this election calls us to listen better and change our ways. So treat this Inauguration Day like it was one of those prophets of old; figure out how it is “judging us,” “warning us of danger” or “calling us to become something new.” Make at least one major commitment that represents what you figure out.

**Roe v Wade Anniversary:** UU theologian and minister, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker, writes, “It is a mistake to see [the prophet] as an isolated, heroic individual. It is better to see him/her as the crest of a wave.” No justice effort represents this more than the achievement of Roe v. Wade. The fight for women’s reproductive rights was – and is definitely a driven by a prophetic wave rather than one single celebrated prophet. To honor that, consider stepping up your participation in the wave of reproductive rights.

**One final note:** Regardless of which holiday you focus on, pay attention this month to the thread that ties all of them together. Each in their own way asserts that we are prophets of our futures. Each declares that our destinies are not determined. All of them remind us that we are not puppets that life pushes around.
Other Wise Words...

With winter on our doorstep a long list of books, videos, podcasts and movies seems fitting. Here is a list to help you settle into a snowstorm or a day of prophetic reflection.

Books

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving
The Radical King by Martin Luther King Jr
Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square by Paul Rasor.
Black Prophetic Fire by Cornel West
The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk
The Autobiography of Malcolm X
By Malcolm X and Alex Haley

Movies

Shut up and Sing

Selma
A chronicle of Martin Luther King’s campaign to secure equal voting rights via an epic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1020072/]

Milk
The story of Harvey Milk, and his struggles as an American gay activist who fought for gay rights and became California’s first openly gay elected official. [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1013753/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1]

Ghandi
The life of the lawyer who became the famed leader of the Indian revolts against the British rule through his philosophy of nonviolent protest. [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083987/]

Articles and Videos

Martin Luther King Was a Radical, Not a Saint
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/martin-luther-king-was-a-_1_b_6498740.html]

Searching for the Prophetic in Hip-Hop
While conscious hip-hop takes more of a propagandized, abstract approach and Christian hip-hop is concerned first and foremost with Christ, prophetic hip-hop bears witness to the human condition in graphic, uncompromising terms. [http://www.popmatters.com/column/132380-searching-for-the-prophetic-in-hip-hop/]

Prophet Muhammad: The Social Reformer
Few individuals in any civilization have been able to accomplish religious, gender, educational, racial and conflict-resolution reforms all at once. Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, reformed his society in all five respects which laid the foundation of the Arab and Muslim civilization. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amaar-ahmad/prophet-muhammad-the-social-reformer_b_3187443.html]

And How are the Children?
[http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/and-how-are-the-children]

Sacred Economics
We have all been given a gift, the gift of life. What we do with our lives is our gift back [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEZkQv25uEs

Videos and Podcasts

The Prophetic Imagination
by Walter Brueggemann
The people we later recognize as prophets are also poets. They reframe what is at stake in chaotic times. [http://www.onbeing.org/program/prophetic-imagination-walter-brueggemann/475]

Charlie Chaplin’s final speech in the film the great dictator: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WibmcsEGLKo]

Martin Luther King: I Have Been to the Mountaintop
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oehry1JC9Rk]

Predicting the Future & The Power of “Maybe”
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX0OARBqBp0]
[http://www.noogenesis.com/pineapple/Taoist_Farmer.html]