

Rev. Mary Grigolia
Olmsted & Oberlin Unitarian Universalist Congregations
September 20, 2020 - Seeing with Golden Eyes

Chalice Lighting: Maureen Killoran [Please read the italicized text]

As the kindling of this chalice calls us to community,

Let there be light.

As the flame of the chalice reminds us of our shared values,

Let there be light.

As the glow of this chalice encourages us to hope,

Let there be light.

Let there be light.

Singing: "Return Again" by Shlomo Carlebach, perf. by Katie Cross

Return again, return again, return the home of your soul. (2x)

Return to who you are, return to what you are, return to where you are born and reborn again. (2x)

Opening Words Return Again: to Equinox, to Autumn, to a New Year

Let there be light

Return again and again to the home of your soul

As summer turns into fall, we are aware of the changing light.

As the moon disappeared this week before the fall equinox and reappeared again, we observed Rosh Hashanah, the head of the Jewish New Year

We are called to be aware of the cycles of light and darkness.

We might wonder why the Jewish new year begins just as nights become longer than days. In the first chapter of the first book of the Jewish scriptures, we are reminded that everything new comes out of the darkness and that all of creation depends on the creative will and act: Let there be light!

In Jewish tradition, we celebrate the return of the light of new moon before the fall equinox. We wish each other a good year: Shanah Tovah! And then the hard work begins: Taking stock of those we've hurt and making amends.

And those who die at Rosh Hashanah are *sadiq* - the righteous wise ones. To guide us.

This week, this season, this year, let us take stock of all those we've written off because they don't vote like we do. Let us dare democracy, not passively, but by making space

and listening to each other's stories so we may understand and so they may see us and care.

Let us return again, to our deepest selves, to each other, to a New Year born in darkness. And say, Let there be light!

Reflection: What Does It Mean to Look with Golden Eyes?

With the health threat of pandemic and the growing volatility around the elections, I've needed to hold onto the UU principles for spiritual and ethical grounding. I've been using a practice called Golden Eyes to live into the first UU principle:

Affirming and promoting the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Golden Eyes comes from sohbat (sohbet) practice in Sufism, a form of intentional spiritual dialogue, connecting people heart to heart.

Golden Eyes reminds me a lot of Namaste: The light in me sees the light in you: The light from my beautiful heart shines through my Golden Eyes, seeing the light in your heart shining through your Golden Eyes.

In Golden Eyes practice, two or more people come together intentionally with open hearts, to see the essence shining through the other and to create to listen, to heal; to let go of doing and just to be, in heart space together.

Here's how Golden Eyes works:

First we start with the intention of seeing the wholeness, the essence, the inherent worth and dignity of the other.

Then, we come into the heart, deep embodied wisdom, capacity to be open and present to sorrow and to joy, welcoming us as we are, connecting us beyond the individual self with all that loves and guides us.

Next, we open to the person or persons we're practicing with - whether on Zoom or in sharing physical space - opening to their deepest wisest self.

Together we create space within ourselves and between us, to welcome one another's deepest essence. The soul beneath ego, which we may experience as vitality or presence; sparkle or spaciousness.

I practice Golden Eyes online with the New Republic of the Heart. My small group partners are in England and Holland. We meet every other week on Zoom. Even though

we've never met in person, the Golden Eyes practices has enabled us to go deep, to be vulnerable and real with one another.

And let's be real. We start each meeting with our ego-masks on, but as we open to our intention, as we go into our hearts, as our bodies remember what Golden Eyes feels like, defenses and masks melt away and the energy of the heart arises - a yearning to be fully present with one another. Just a few moments of Golden Eyes transforms us. We leave fully charged. Present and open. Ready to do Life's deep work, Love's deep work.

It feels great to practice Golden Eyes. So I started practicing Golden Eyes in other parts of my life. I was humbled to discover how easily Golden Eyes get turned off: When I read something in the news that scares me or when someone says something that makes me defensive.

My hope is to practice Golden Eyes all the time. To notice without conforming to those who are coming from fear or hate. To stay in the open heart, the home of the soul to which they may or may not choose or be able to find.

I hope to disempower my habits of mind that cause suffering and stifle the heart.

My Golden Eyes practice shows me when I'm living our 1st UU principle, seeing your worth and dignity, and when I have inner work to do, to open my heart and see your light.

The 1st UU principle isn't just a good idea. It's the power that holds us together, that makes democracy possible. Our UU religious movement becomes a blessing to ourselves and to the world, when we put it into practice, again and again. Especially in this New Year, in these darkening times, calling for the creative spark of our light.

Reading: "The Balance," by The Moody Blues

After he had journeyed, And his feet were sore, And he was tired, He came upon an orange grove And he rested. And he lay in the cool, And while he rested, He took to himself an orange And tasted it, And it was good.

And he felt the earth to his spine, And he asked, And he saw the tree above him, And the stars, And the veins in the leaf, And the light, And the balance.

And he saw magnificent perfection,

Whereon he thought of himself in balance, And he knew he was.

Just open your eyes, and realize, The way it's always been.

Just open your mind and you will find The way it's always been.

Just open your heart and that's a start

And he thought of those he angered, For he was not a violent man, And he thought of those he hurt For he was not a cruel man And he thought of those he frightened For he was not a evil man,
And he understood. He understood himself.

Upon this He saw that when he was of anger Or knew hurt Or felt fear,
It was because he was not understanding.
And he learned, compassion. And with his eye of compassion He saw his enemies Like unto himself, And he learned love. Then, he was answered.

Just open your eyes, and realize, The way it's always been.
Just open your mind and you will find The way it's always been.
Just open your heart and that's a start
Just open your eyes, and realize,
The way it's always been.
Just open your mind and you will find The way it's always been.
Just open your heart and that's a start

Music: “The Balance,” by The Moody Blues

Homily: WHY IT MATTERS to See One another with GOLDEN EYES

One question frequently asked about the 1st UU principle, inherent worth and dignity, assumes that we believe human nature is inherently good.

This is not what the 1st principle says.

We all know, we have all experienced, that every person has the capacity to live from their hearts, to live from love, or to live from fear and hatred.

When life circumstances support us in living from our hearts, and when we choose to live from our hearts, from our inherent worth and dignity, then we are able to look at each other with Golden Eyes.

Not everyone will drop their hate or stories of blame or fear. Some people have only found a sense of belonging with people who espouse hatred and fear.
Some have only experienced a sense of power or control in holding power over another.

We're all wired to protect ourselves when we feel threatened. That instinct to self-protection is being profoundly manipulated for political gain. Preposterous stories are being disseminated across social media to keep us divided and scared.

We are also wired to connect, to keep growing and evolving in awareness that we're part of this interwoven dance of creation. We are part of one another.

Love is compelling.

The open heart is the most powerful force I've ever experienced.

Golden Eyes practice builds our heart capacity.

When we look for the soul's essence in another, it helps the other person remember who they are, who they can be.

I have a friend who has a SuperPower for Golden Eyes, natural capacity to see the deep living essence in other people.

I've watched her excitement and awe in response to them coming alive to themselves.

Golden Eyes is an arduous spiritual practice that will transform us.

It will reveal all our hidden fears, resentments and self-judgments.

All the blame we project onto others.

It will challenge us to become more skillful in choosing not to blame.

This week, Rahindra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, turned 70 years old. The Dalai Lama sent him a birthday letter, expressing gratitude for the safety and welcome India extended to the exiled Tibetan Buddhists who fled the Chinese take-over of Tibet.

He sent this open letter at a time when India is mired in terrible conflict between Hindus and Muslims. The Dalai Lama lifted up not criticism of Modi, but the core spiritual teachings from Modi's Hindu path: Karuna, Compassion, the power of the open heart, and Ahimsa, Do No Harm.

In our practice of Golden Eyes, welcoming the inherent worth and dignity of all around us, when we encounter someone trapped in anger and hate, may we be kind toward ourselves when we are unable to maintain compassion. When we catch ourselves trapped in our old stories of resentment or anger, let us vow to do no harm, to others or to ourselves, because we are human, we are learning.

It all comes down to choice. Do we choose to love or to hate?

I choose to love. I choose to practice seeing with Golden Eyes.

Putting our 1st UU principle into practice.
Finding my limit and starting again.

May we all decide to start again: As the song says:
To open our heart and that's a start, and to open our eyes and to realize, the way it's
always been, in this open-hearted, interconnected, evolving world we share.