

## **Invitation (n.)**

1. the act of inviting, such as an offer of entertainment or hospitality
2. the act of enticing or attracting; allurement
3. a formal request to be present or participate

**synonyms:** encouragement, provocation, temptation, lure, magnet, bait, enticement, attraction, allure; come-on

## **Taking It Home:**

### **Activity: An invitation to redefine success**

The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer ([www.stevenkharper.com/invitation.html](http://www.stevenkharper.com/invitation.html)) invites us to consider what is truly the good life.

**Your assignment:** Print out the poem, and read it at least once a day. Each day consider what line most speaks to you, and then journal about it, share your thoughts with a loved one, or just rest with that line and return to it throughout the day.

### **Book:**

Inviting Silence – Universal Principles of Meditation (Gunilla Norris)

### **Article:**

Reason & Reverence: A New Religious Humanism – William Murray (<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-emerging-religious-humanism>)

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These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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# **Jefferson Unitarian Church September 2015 Small Group Session: Invitation 1.0**

**Opening/  
Chalice  
Lighting:** As we come together,  
I go into myself.  
I dig into myself for a deep answer.  
I have patience with everything that remains  
unsolved in my heart, and I live the question.  
What is required of us is that we love the difficult  
and learn to deal with it.  
In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands  
that work on us.  
It is clear that we must embrace the struggle.  
Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our  
happiness, our dreams.  
We create this space to go into ourselves and see  
how deep the place is from which our  
lives flow. (RM Rilke, adapted by Scott Rudolf)

**Check In:** Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they  
bring with them since the last time the group met

**Reading:** A real conversation always contains an invitation.  
You are inviting another person to reveal herself  
or himself to you, to tell you who they are or what  
they want. --David Whyte

**Resting in  
the  
Silence:** Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to it,  
go longer, as long as you let people know how  
long the silence will be.

**Questions  
and  
Quotes  
From The  
Common  
Bowl:** Share the quotes and questions for today's  
session in the way that is customary in your small  
group. You can pass the sheet, you can select  
them randomly from a bowl after having cut them  
into individual pieces. Or whatever works well for  
your small group.

**Sharing/  
Deep  
Listening:** Allow each person up to five minutes to share  
what has come up for them about today's topic. If  
someone does not use the full five minutes, make  
sure you count to ten full breaths before moving  
on to the next person, in case the speaker is not  
truly finished.

**A Second  
Share:** If time allows, you may have a brief second share  
from those who have found they have more to  
say, keeping in mind your commitment to going  
no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing  
Reading:** Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has  
been sent as a guide from beyond. -- Rumi

**Extinguish  
the  
Chalice:** Join hands and say the following together:  
**As we have been invited into this circle, may  
we invite an opening in our heart, now and in  
the days ahead.**  
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet  
again.

## *What Does It Mean To Be A People of Invitation?*

Create a clearing, listen for your song and let it teach you how to give yourself to this world. There is no better description of the religious life than this! And notice that it all begins with invitation, with the deep humility and knowledge that while the song is deeply ours, it also comes from something or somewhere beyond ourselves. It takes time, but eventually we each come to realize that --to be whole and to find home-- a space must be made, a clearing must be created, and otherness must be invited in.

That otherness takes many forms. Most often, we Unitarian Universalists have focused on the otherness of diverse perspectives and ideas. We have a rich tradition of continually expanding the circle to make room for multiple voices. If there is one spiritual practice we all share, it is the practice of trying to hear and invite in voices other than our own. There is power and holiness in the chorus. About this we all agree.

But right along side the chorus of multiple voices and perspectives sits another kind of otherness. It is the otherness of our particular calling, our particular voice, our particular song. It is never separate from us and yet it is also never quite under our complete control. Every single one of us knows how easy to lose touch with it. We make dense forests of our lives where what is most precious is not easily seen or heard.

So clearings become essential. Some may say that the sacred is earned by believing the right things. But for us the sacred never arrives until we are able to carve out the right amount of space. With all due respect to those who ask, *Do you believe?*, we've placed our lot with those who continually ask, *Are you making room? Are you committed to the precious clearing? Have you arranged a life with enough space to invite otherness in?*

And so as this new year begins, we start with cupped hands.

When were you “the stranger” and someone invited you in? More importantly, **how are you re-paying that gift in your present day living and loving?**

“I want to say somewhere: I've tried to be forgiving. And yet. There were times in my life, whole years, when anger got the better of me. Ugliness turned me inside out. There was a certain satisfaction in bitterness. I courted it. It was standing outside, and I invited it in.” -- Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love*

**What are you doing with the invitation to love yourself?**

Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in. Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This new day is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterdays.” -- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Collected Poems and Translations*

“Don't loaf and invite inspiration; light out after it with a club.” -- Jack London

In her song, [May I Suggest](#), Susan Werner sings, “May I suggest this is the best part of your life...” What if that were true for you? **What would it mean for you to accept the invitation that right now is the best and most blessed time of your life?** Would it change the way you see what's in front of you?

“I know at that moment what he's given me and it isn't a chair. It's an invitation, a welcome, the knowledge that I am accepted here. He hasn't given me a place to sit. He's given me a place to belong.” -- Katja Millay, *The Sea of Tranquility*

“I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired.” -- Martha Graham

**How are you handling Life's invitation to live gracefully and even gratefully with uncertainty and change?**

“Earning happiness means doing good and working, not speculating and being lazy. Laziness may look inviting, but only work gives you true satisfaction.” -- Anne Frank

“These are hard times. The world hurts. We live in fear and forget to walk with hope. But hope has not forgotten you. So ask it to dinner. It's probably hungry and would appreciate the invitation.” -- Libba Bray, *Going Bovine*