

DEFINITION:

family predecessors; persons comprising a line of lineage

SYNONYMS: heritage; descendants; genealogy; origin

Taking It Home:

Activity: Making Ancestors Visible

The practice of placing photos of ancestors on our walls, dressers, and lockets has fallen out of style. This month bring it back. And in doing so, *hear their voice, wisdom, comfort and call anew.*

Your assignment: Find or print out a picture of a relative, chosen ancestor, or spiritual ancestor. The goal is to pick someone who you want to be looking down on you. 2. Place that picture in a prominent place and take a brief moment to look at it at the beginning of each day. 3. Pay attention to how pulling their face, their story and "their stare" into your awareness alters your days.

Books:

Hidden Inheritance: Family Secrets, Memory, and Faith - Heidi B. Neumark

Forever Fingerprints: An Amazing Discovery for Adopted Children - Sherrie Eldridge

Article:

2008 Pilgrimage to Africa - Rev. William G. Sinkford

<http://www.uua.org/news/archive/sinkfordafrica>

Video:

Ulali "All My Relations"

https://youtu.be/bBeCixbql_c

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 November 2015 Small Group Session: Ancestry 2.0

**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:

"As human beings our lives begin and never
leave the soil of this earth that shapes us
through blood, kinship, genes, culture,
associations, social systems, networks of
relationships, and extended communities. Even
when we do not directly know the people whose
lives are linked with ours, our lives unfold in
relationship to theirs." – Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann
Parker

**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:**

We are a continuum. Just as we reach back to
our ancestors for our fundamental values, so we,
as guardians of that legacy, must reach ahead to
our children and their children. And we do so
with a sense of sacredness in that reaching. —
Paul Tsongas

**Extinguish
the
Chalice:**

Join hands and say the following together:
"As we go into the week ahead, may we be
ancestors worth having."
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet
again.

THEY ARE WITH US STILL

By Kathleen McTigue

In the struggles we choose for ourselves,
in the ways we move forward in our lives
and bring our world forward with us,

It is right to remember the names of those
who gave us strength in this choice of living.
It is right to name the power of hard lives well-lived.

We share a history with those lives.
We belong to the same motion.

They too were strengthened by what had gone before.
They too were drawn on by the vision of what might come to be.

Those who lived before us,
who struggled for justice and suffered injustice before us,
have not melted into the dust,
and have not disappeared.

They are with us still.
The lives they lived hold us steady.

Their words remind us and call us back to ourselves.
Their courage and love evoke our own.

We, the living, carry them with us:
we are their voices, their hands and their hearts.

We take them with us,
and with them choose the deeper path of living.

Which of your characteristics come from your ancestors?

"And then there was the willingness of my Grandmother to answer any and all questions about my dad. Is there anything better as a kid, than getting to glimpse your parent as a kid and hear of the shenanigans that aren't so different from the things you were getting in trouble for?"- WW

How does recognizing the influencing forces in your life, impact your ability to empathize?

It is true that you are burdened by an ancestry that you can't control or change?

Rev. William Sinkford wrote these words about visiting Africa: "Nor had I prepared myself to imagine standing in the courtyard of that Slave House, cut off from my people, enslaved and being inspected for sale. I had not prepared myself to wonder whether I would have survived, nor for the raw anger that welled up. But, most, I was unprepared for the admiration I felt. Admiration for the courage, the strength, the perseverance of those who survived this violence and lived to father and mother a people in a distant land. Since that visit [...], I have felt so proud and so thankful for the gift of life and the legacy I have been given."

"What have we been given? What is the covenant we are already in?" – Parker

What can we learn about risk-taking and covenant from Jefferson Unitarian Church's history of partnering with a Christian church in Applewood in order to thrive and grow?

"Yet, to be a people of ancestry means we see ourselves as part of a sacred chain. We recognize ourselves to be additional links—people who inherited a world from imperfect people who survived long enough to create and shape our lives and the lives of those around us." – WW

Are you using your ancestry as an excuse?

Have you decided whose legacy you want to help live on?

Martin Luther never wanted to be the father of a new religion, he wanted to correct the excesses and inaccuracies of his beloved Roman Catholic Church. What revolutionary change might you be unintentionally making?

The Protestant Reformation has been celebrated as separation—as a break from the wrong thinking of tribe—and yet, at its heart, the reformation was about coming together and ending false separations of us from our own wisdom, from each other, from our ability to discern for ourselves the lessons of scripture, and to form churches outside the blessings and purview of the Roman Catholic Church.