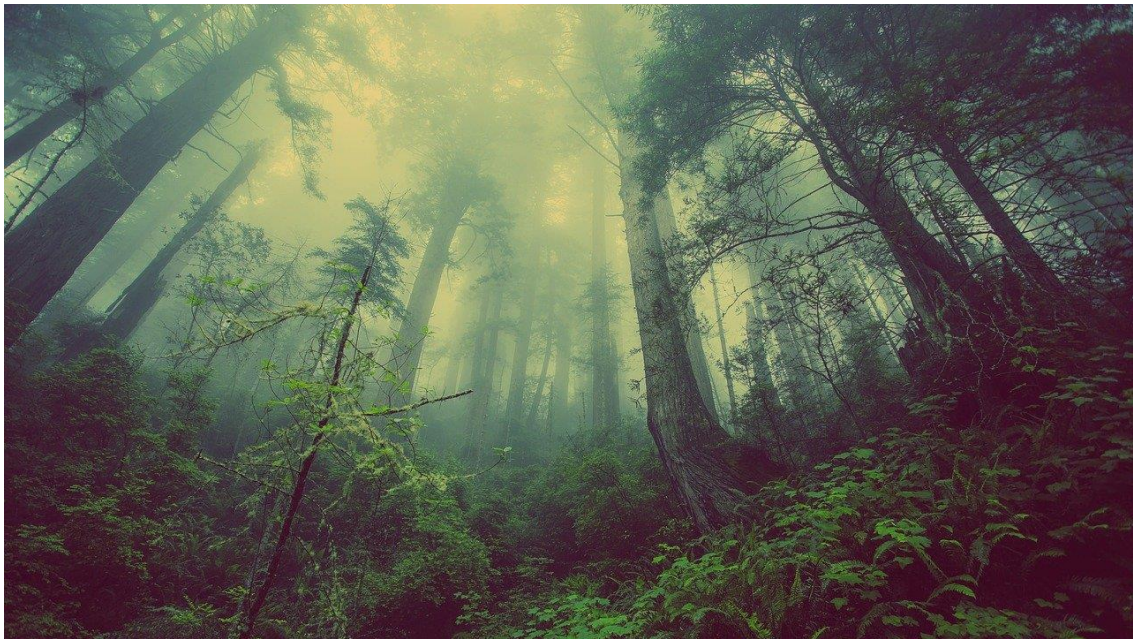


Exploring the Themes of Our Lives

October 2020

Myth



<https://pixabay.com/photos/forest-mist-nature-trees-mystic-931706/>

Myth

Myth: the wide-ranging stories told in different cultures, religions and spiritual traditions across the centuries as a means for human beings to make sense of nature, life and death and to connect with the sacred. But myth can also be the stories we tell ourselves in our families, our communities and in society.

Based on truth or entirely made out of fantasy, these are the narratives that can provide us with a moral compass, give us hope—or hold us back and even become dangerously destructive.

My own family told many myths about who we were over the generations and who my brother and I were supposed to become. Some of those stories were inspiring, but others were limiting.

I spent many years trying to find my way through those myths, responding positively and negatively to them. During my first career, I ended up working on Wall Street, trying to prove I was tough—in opposition to one of my family's favourite narratives. Of course, it wasn't long before I realized my soul was being crushed.

I'd had a dream that I wanted to teach, so I became a Montessori teacher. I loved working with young children. The funny thing, though, is that I constantly found myself reading creation stories from many cultures to my classes. Myths. It was as if these stories were calling me to become something else.

Sure enough, when the local UU congregation needed a new director of religious education, I applied and got the job. The work filled my heart as nothing else ever had. It was work that would eventually lead me into the ministry. I can honestly say that myth brought me here, in some very unexpected ways.

What are the myths that call to you, that have drawn you forward or held you back? What are the myths that touch us as a community? I hope you'll join us this month as we explore this powerful and complex theme.

Rev. Diane Rollert

Questions

As always, don't treat these questions like homework. Find the question that resonates the most for you and let it lead you where you need to go. Allow it to regularly break into—and break open—your ordinary thoughts.

1. What are your favourite mythical stories from childhood or adulthood? Why do these stories resonate with you?
2. Do you or your family have myths that you hold onto? Are these stories you tell yourself when the truth may be very different? Are there reasons why these myths persist?
3. What are the myths we tell ourselves as a community or as a society? Do they help us or harm us?
4. Rev. Susan Maginn, in her sermon entitled “Give Your Heart Away to a Myth” (see link in the “Recommended Resources” section below), says: “When you are in conversation with a myth, the story can guide you to imagine possibilities beyond what is here now. You can imagine growth that has yet to emerge and even imagine words that have yet to be given voice.” Have you ever been “in conversation with a myth”? What might that mean to you?

October Worship Calendar

Virtual services every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and coffee hour at 12 p.m.

Zoom link: <http://bit.ly/ucmtlsunday>

Meeting ID: 824 8169 5864

Password: 317122

Or by phone: 438-809-7799 or 1-855-703-8985 (toll-free in Canada)

October 4: *Drawn onto the Stars*

A multigenerational service with Rev. Diane Rollert, Camellia Jahanshahi, Katharine Childs and the RE Team, with music by Sandra Hunt and Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

Join us as we begin our monthly theme of myth with an online worship service exploring the magic of our archetypal stories and characters—the kind that helps us point to who we are, the kind that gets written onto the stars.

October 11: *Myths of Tradition: A Thanksgiving Service*

Katharine Childs, Caite Clark, Shoshanna Green and Camellia Jahanshahi

Music by Sandra Hunt and Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

The worship team explores the myths around the Thanksgiving tradition, our connections to the land, and the meaning of this day for settlers and Indigenous peoples.

October 18: *Myths of Eternity*

Rev. Diane Rollert with the worship team

Music by Sandra Hunt and Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

Perhaps every mythological, spiritual and religious tradition focuses on one of life's biggest questions: What happens to us after we die? Are we simply dust that returns to dust, or do we live on in some form? This Sunday, we explore some of the what and the why in the variety of answers, and how this may impact us as Unitarian Universalists.

October 25: *Myths and Misinformation*

Rev. Diane Rollert and the worship team

Music by Eleuthera Diconca-Lippert

We human beings love our own narratives so much that it can be hard to shift our opinions. Yet too often, myths and misinformation can be used against us for political gain. How do we find some sense and sensibility in these times when dangerous myths that threaten our safety, well-being and freedom abound?

Recommended Resources

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these resources in our group.

Wise Words

“Myths which are believed in tend to become true.” – George Orwell

“A myth is a way of making sense in a senseless world. Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence. Whether the meaning of existence is only what we put into life by our own individual fortitude [. . .], or whether there is a meaning we need to discover [. . .], the result is the same: myths are our way of finding this meaning and significance.” – Rollo May

“When we lose our myths, we lose our place in the universe.” – Madeleine L’Engle

“Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are the artists of one kind or another.”
– Joseph Campbell

“I believe in everything until it’s disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it’s in your mind. Who’s to say that dreams and nightmares aren’t as real as the here and now?”
– John Lennon

“Fascism says what you and I experience as facts or what reporters experience as facts are irrelevant. All that matters are impressions and emotions and myths.” – Timothy Snyder

“A myth is far truer than a history, for a history only gives a story of the shadows, whereas a myth gives a story of the substances that cast the shadows.” – Annie Besant

“Myth is the hidden part of every story, the buried part, the region that is still unexplored because there are as yet no words to enable us to get there. Myth is nourished by silence as well as by words.”
– Italo Calvino

“A myth [. . .] is a metaphor for a mystery beyond human comprehension. It is a comparison that helps us understand, by analogy, some aspect of our mysterious selves. A myth, in this way of thinking, is not an untruth but a way of reaching a profound truth.” – Christopher Vogler

“Myths have a way of bringing what is unconscious to the surface and putting a face on what we cannot see.” – Terry Tempest Williams

“Myth and nature are the two great garments of the world, with nature being the living green garment that covers the planet and myth being the multidimensional, many-colored fabric that continually weaves human culture.” – Michael Meade

“There is an illusion about America, a myth about America to which we are clinging which has nothing to do with the lives we lead [. . .] This collision between one’s image of oneself and what one actually is is always very painful and there are two things you can do about it, you can meet the collision head-on and try and become what you really are or you can retreat and try to remain what you thought you were, which is a fantasy, in which you will certainly perish.” – James Baldwin

Articles

“5 UU Myths Debunked,” Rev. Fred L. Hammond (A Unitarian Universalist Minister in the South)
<https://serenityhome.wordpress.com/2008/04/03/5-uu-myths-debunked/>

“Against Disenchantment,” Jason Josephson Storm (Aeon)
<https://aeon.co/essays/enlightenment-does-not-demand-disenchantment-with-the-world>

“The Bible: History or Myth?” Jeffrey Small (Huffpost)
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mythology-and-the-bible_b_898253

“Fact-Checking Grandma,” Lyz Lenz (Aeon)
<https://aeon.co/essays/should-you-fact-check-your-grandma-s-facebook-posts>

“Finding a Creation Myth of One’s Own,” Lyz Lenz (Lit Hub)
<https://lithub.com/lyz-lenz-finding-a-creation-myth-of-ones-own/>

“Give Your Heart Away to a Myth,” Rev. Susan Maginn (Wy’east UU)
<http://www.wyeastuu.org/worship/give-your-heart-away-myth>

“How, Exactly, Did We Come Up with What Counts as Normal?” Jonathan Mooney (Lit Hub)
<https://lithub.com/how-exactly-did-we-come-up-with-what-counts-as-normal/>

“How Nice Are Canadians, Really? Reckoning with Racism, Police Use of Force Tests Long-Standing Myths,” Jane Gerster and Olivia Bowden (Global News)
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7109213/canadian-myth-nice-racism/>

“It Never Was Golden,” Alan Jay Levinovitz (Aeon)
<https://aeon.co/essays/nostalgia-exerts-a-strong-allure-and-extracts-a-steep-price>

“It’s about Time, Perspephone!” Patricia Montley (UU World)
<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/its-about-time-persephone%21>

“Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth: ‘The Hero’s Adventure’” (Moyers on Democracy)
<https://billmoyers.com/content/ep-1-joseph-campbell-and-the-power-of-myth-the-hero%E2%80%99s-adventure-audio/>

“Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth: ‘The Message of the Myth’” (Moyers on Democracy)
<https://billmoyers.com/content/ep-2-joseph-campbell-and-the-power-of-myth-the-message-of-the-myth/>

“The Myth of Multitasking: Longing to Be Absorbed Wholly,” Courtney E. Martin (On Being)
<https://onbeing.org/blog/the-myth-of-multitasking-longing-to-be-absorbed-wholly/>

“Myths We Live By: A Fairytale Guide to Ever After,” Rev. Carrie Knowles (UUCB)
<https://uucb.org/myths-we-live-by-a-fairytale-guide-to-ever-after/>

Articles (cont.)

“Rise in Body or in Spirit,” William G. Sinkford (UU World)

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/rise-in-body-or-in-spirit>

“The Seven Most Common Myths about Racial Equity,” Randal Pinkett (CNN)

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/24/opinions/most-common-myths-about-racial-equity-pinkett/index.html>

“The Sherwood Syndrome,” Hugh Thomson (Aeon)

<https://aeon.co/essays/who-chopped-down-britains-ancient-forests>

“We Need a New Mythic-Scale Story to Tell about Climate Change,” Adam Frank (Lit Hub)

<https://lithub.com/we-need-a-new-mythic-scale-story-to-tell-about-climate-change/>

“What Makes a Hero: Joseph Campbell’s Seminal Monomyth Model for the Eleven Stages of the Hero’s Journey, Animated,” Maria Popova (Brain Pickings)

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/04/28/what-makes-a-hero-joseph-campbell-monomyth/>

“What Was the Beguiling Spell of Jung’s ‘Collective Unconscious’?” Antonio Melechi (Aeon)

<https://aeon.co/ideas/what-was-the-beguiling-spell-of-jungs-collective-unconscious>

“When Pop Culture Sells Dangerous Myths about Romance,” Julie Beck (The Atlantic)

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/01/when-pop-culture-sells-dangerous-myths-about-romance/549749/>

“Why Are We Talking about White Supremacy?” Crystal M. Fleming (UU World)

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/idiots-guide-critical-race-theory>

“Writing Our Own Story,” Kim Hampton (UU World)

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/writing-our-own-story>

Videos

“How I Bring Myth and Magic to Life,” (TED2019)

https://www.ted.com/talks/hiromi_ozaki_how_i_bring_myth_and_magic_to_life

“The Myth of the Gay Agenda,” LZ Granderson (TEDxGrandRapids)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CstD6O95L-o>

“The Real Story of Rosa Parks—and Why We Need to Confront Myths about Black History,” David Ikard (TEDxNashville)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkdJGcffe9I>

Warning: This video contains disturbing images.

Next month’s theme: Resilience