

Session 5: Prophetic Voices of Today

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Session Metadata	
Session	5
Title	Prophetic Voices of Today
UU Source	Prophetic Women and Men
Unit	2nd Source: Prophetic Women and Men
Head / Hands / Heart	Hands
Has Exercise	No
Has Ritual	No
Has Spiritual Practice Presentation	No
Special Blocks	Lectio Divina

Preparation

****Note to Facilitator:**** This session includes bringing prophetic witness to the issue of social justice. Since this is such a huge, complicated, and personal topic, please spend some extra time thinking through how you will approach this session. Reflecting ahead of time on your own personal anxieties, concerns, and hopes for this session is vitally important in order to create a brave, sacred space for everyone in your group. Everyone may have a call, for some direct action, for others it will be indirect.

Also note that the session includes a *Lectio Divina* opportunity where you will read a poem three times. You will want to leave about ten minutes for this right before the closing.

Email to Participants

In our last session, we explored our UU faith heritage and heard the prophetic voices of some of our Unitarian ancestors, as we reflected on our second source:

Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

For our next session on [date], we will continue exploring our second UU source as we hear from some modern prophets. Our second source recognizes that new voices can transform our hearts and our faith tradition and challenge us to create a more just world. Like prophets of the past who were considered radical in their time (Iowa Sisterhood, Servetus, etc.), modern prophets do the (often unpopular) work of envisioning and calling forth a world that has never been. Prophets are often people whose individually articulated vision arises out of recognizing a larger community's need for change. They often seem to be channeling a message moving through them but that did not begin with them and will not end there. Listening to and being exposed to words and deeds of prophetic people helps us more deeply understand our faith and see what is possible.

Systemic poverty, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia (and all the ways the dominant culture tries to marginalize entire groups of people) are so deeply entrenched in our society and minds. It can feel impossible to imagine a world without them and incredibly overwhelming to confront these evils directly, but that is what these prophets and our faith call us to do. As Unitarian Universalists, it is core to our theology that everyone has inherent worth, that no one is excluded, that we all have a voice. And we affirm that it matters as much what we do with our lives as what we believe.

We acknowledge there are as many prophetic voices that call us to seek and create justice as there are systems of oppression functioning in our world. It is **not** our task to do a comprehensive review of all of these- that is far too much for one session. Our main task in this session will be to listen to the wisdom of a few contemporary prophetic voices imagining and calling for justice, to invite this wisdom into our hearts, and to consider its power to challenge or affirm our way of being and transforming our world.

You may be recognizing your own barriers to public witness and activism, even as we are inspired by these vocal prophets. Remember to honor your daily acts of kindness and compassion as well as the larger movements you will explore today. As you learn about these activists, you might want to give thanks or honor their work as part of your own spiritual practice. All acts of kindness and witness can be honored.

Read or watch some of the selections below that you anticipate will challenge you the most. You might choose to seek out a prophetic voice that is not represented below. As you read, imagine yourself in the 1960s listening to Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech for the first time and how revolutionary and unimaginable his vision might have seemed then. Perhaps the visions articulated by these modern prophets seem as impossible now as Dr. King's did then! But with the work of hands and the change of hearts and minds, so much becomes possible.

Articles

- **[Defund the Police](#)**: UU Minister and President of the UUA 2018- 2024, Susan Frederick Gray (UU Voice) in a letter to white UUs.
- **[Gender Queering](#)**: Alex Kapitan (UU Voice)
- **[My Role in a Social Change Ecosystem](#)** Deepa Iyer
- **[“An Unshakeable Desire: Profile of Dr. Glenn Thomas Rideout”](#)**(2020)

Media

- **[Detention at the Border](#)**: Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
- **[Post-Covid Equity \(2 min\) Addressing Injustice Require Moral Action \(21 min\)](#)**: Bishop William Barber
- **[Gun Violence](#)**: Emma Gonzalez
- **[Climate Change](#)**: Greta Thornberg
- **[Ending Money Bail](#)**: Robin Steinberg
- **[“Love Calls Us On”](#)** by Rev. Dr. Bill Sinkford (UU Voice), delivered at 2016 General Assembly. Note the sermon begins at 1 hour 26 minutes.
- **[Valarie Kaur’s speech](#)** at the National Moral Revival Poor People’s Campaign Watch Night Service, Dec. 31, 2016
- **[A Conversation with Stacey Abrams](#)**
- **[“The Mysteries of Banksy”](#)** CBS Sunday Morning Aug 13, 2023.

Reflection Questions

- What strategies are these modern prophets using to paint their visions?
- What risk are each of the speakers taking?
- How is it a faithful act to trust in prophets?
- How do they inspire us?
- How do they challenge us?
- Do you feel a call to action? And if so, is it direct or as Iyer points out, there are many indirect ways to support justice.
- What is one idea that seemed prophetic when you were a child that is actually true or possible today?

In faith,

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

Our opening words are “Prayer for Living in Tension” by Rev. Joseph M. Cherry. Printed by permission of the author. You might choose to replace “step into our discomfort” with the more inclusive “move into our discomfort.”

“If we have any hope of transforming the world and changing ourselves, we must be bold enough to step into our discomfort, brave enough to be clumsy there, loving enough to forgive ourselves and others.”

May we, as a people of faith, be granted the strength to be so bold, so brave, and so loving.

“Prayer for Living in Tension” by Joseph M. Cherry

Today’s music is “[I Am Light](#)” by [India Arie](#).

Let’s take a few minutes of silence to bring ourselves fully into this circle.

Check-In

What are you carrying in your heart? How is your spiritual practice or spiritual companioning going?

Covenant Review

Note to Facilitators: Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant.

Is there anything about the covenant that we should address?

Note to Facilitators: No spiritual practice presentation since *lectio divina* will be held at the end of the session as a group spiritual practice.

Reflection

Note for Facilitators: There are two parts to the reflection time for this session:

- First, your group will share responses to the reflection questions like a standard UU Wellspring session.
- Second, the group will reflect on one short reading in the style of *lectio divina* (a full explanation of this process is included in the session plan below). This practice embodies the belief that every voice is equal and ensures the focus of this session is on listening.

Use the *lectio divina* part of the session as you see fit. If your group is going deep with the questions, spend extra time there. If your group starts debating or if the conversation becomes disrespectful, move into *lectio divina* earlier.

Today we are continuing our reflection on the second source of UUism:

“Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.”

UUA

Reflection Questions

- What strategies are these modern prophets using to paint their visions?
- What risk are each of the speakers taking?
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Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina /LECK-TEE-OH Dah-veen-ah/ is historically a Christian monastic tradition of reading verses of the Bible multiple times with the intention of deeper understanding and unity with God. Thomas Cramner in his “Homily on Scripture” described it as: “Let us ruminare, and, as it were, chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort and consolation of them.” www.anglicancommunion.org

Many people of faith as well as those who seek a spiritual connection use the process of *Lectio Divina* to ground and to either go within to touch their own spirit and/or to find a unity of spirit. Today we will employ our own process of *Lectio Divina* by listening to a poem read three times. I will first read aloud “[Community Means Strength](#)” by Starhawk as everyone listens.

I will read it aloud a second time and I invite you to note a word or phrase that speaks to you. I will share my screen so that if you want, you can follow along.

On our third reading, I invite you to focus on the word or phrase you chose and after this reading you will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group and briefly share how that word or phrase impacted you.

So What?

What is something that you are just now starting to believe is possible? What is helping you see this new way of being? Is it stories? Something getting unblocked?

Gratitude and Closing

After everyone has said a word, either of appreciation or if you read the *Lectio Devina*, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation. You might end with a protest song, such as “[The Times They Are a Changing](#)” by Bob Dylan or “[Prison Trilogy](#) (Billy Rose)” by Joan Baez.

Revision #2

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