

Session 9: Reimagining God: Process Theology

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Session Metadata	
Session	9
Title	Reimagining God: Process Theology
UU Source	Jewish and Christian Teachings
Unit	3rd Source: Jewish and Christian Teachings
Head / Hands / Heart	Hands
Has Exercise	No
Has Ritual	No
Has Spiritual Practice Presentation	Yes
Special Blocks	None

Preparation

Email to Participants

Dear UU Wellspring friends,

For our next session on [date], we will be following the example of our Universalist ancestors by reimagining the concept of God. People like John Murray and Olympia Brown looked to scripture and found there not a God of judgment and damnation, but of love and inclusion. How might we, inspired by their vision, continue to reimagine God?

Within our group there will be diverse reactions to this word, *God*. For some, a belief in God might be close to their heart and inspire their spirit. For others, the word may be an outdated or divisive concept. Let's see where this topic takes us.

As a starting point to our reimagining of God, we'll be learning about process theology. Process theology seeks to integrate spirituality, philosophy, science, ethics, and more into a worldview that embraces our expanding knowledge of the universe. The God of process theology is radically different from traditional definitions:

- Instead of being omnipotent (having complete power), God in process theology is persuasive. God does not and cannot control the unfolding of the world or of individual actions. Rather, God acts as a "lure" toward the good, using relationship not coercion to open up possibilities and bring about wholeness.
- Instead of being perfect and immutable (never changing), God is constantly growing and evolving. The divine constants of love and connection never waiver, but God receives every experience and changes accordingly. Through our choices and our relationships, we are creating God as God is creating us.
- Instead of an emphasis on the separateness of God from the world, God is present in every moment and in all things, not just human beings. The universe is creative, dynamic and interconnected; what affects one affects all; everything matters.

Readings

- Key Ideas in "[What exactly is process theology?](#)"
- "[Our Ultimate Canvas](#)" by Rev. Gary Kowalski
- "[All that You Are](#)" by Rev. Theresa Ines Soto
- [Read](#) how Bobby McFerrin creates moments that embody process theology with an audience. An [optional video](#), especially beginning at 57:00 shows McFerrin discussing his spiritual relationship to the audience.
- "[What in the world is process theology?](#)" from Theology Matters.
- "[Wholly, Holy, Holy](#)" by Rev. Jen Crow
- "[Cosmology and Mystery for a 21st Century Theology](#)" by [Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson](#).

Media

- Regina Spektor, [“Laughing with God”](#)
- Lauryn Hill [“Everything is Everything.”](#)

Reflection Questions

- What in the readings particularly resonated with you? Challenged you?
- Does process theology relate to your own idea of God?
- Have you ever had the sense that you co-created with God?
- Does process theology embody and expand on the UU source of “Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God’s love by loving our neighbors as ourselves?”
- Have you experienced the God of process theology? If so, is there a story associated with this theology?

If you are interested in exploring this concept further through Science Fiction, Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* explores a created religion of [“Earthseed.”](#) This is optional and not part of the session, but might be of interest.

I’m looking forward to seeing you all!

Session Plan

Chalice Lighting and Silence

As we consider that God may be present in everything, we will continue our exploration of the UU Source by responding to our thoughts through the ideas of Process Theology.

“Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God’s love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.”

UUA

Our opening reading is [“A Theology Adequate for the Night”](#) by Nancy Shaffer.

Today’s music is [“The Oneness of Everything”](#) by Jim Scott.

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

Check-In

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

Covenant Review

****Note to Facilitator: Use whatever process your group has established to stay current with the covenant. Use this time also to talk about the feedback you have received (what in the group is working well/not working well/could be changed).*

Is there anything about the covenant that we should address?

Spiritual Practice Presentation

Reflection

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So What?

How does this reflection relate to your spiritual journey? What are you inspired or challenged to do next?

Gratitude and Closing

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful or how they are feeling in this moment. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation. If you would like to play music as people exit, you might play Karen Drucker’s [“Face of God”](#)