

April Theme

Exodus: The Practice of Transformation

When we think of an exodus, it's almost always a mass of people leaving one place to settle in another. This is based on the story of the Jewish people leaving Egypt for their trek in the desert to reach the Promised Land. This and many other exoduses have proven to be transformative for the people involved. They were just not the same inside at the end of their journey as the beginning.

During our discussion, the Worship Associates interpreted the word as leaving everything familiar. In this context, there are many more kinds of exodus to consider. Examples include a family moving from one country to another; children going to or returning home from college; the Unitarians and the Universalists leaving the Protestant church; one spouse leaving an abusive marriage for a better situation; the body going from an unhealthy state to one that is healthy, perhaps a recovery from disease or from an addiction.

Most of life's exoduses are from less desirable situations to those that are better. People in exodus know only what is being left and really have no idea of what is to come. There is hope that the new will be better.

So how is an exodus the practice of transformation? To transform is to make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of something. In all of the examples cited and in others you may have experienced, the people involved make or undergo dramatic change in one manner or another.

Prior to beginning the exodus, one sees that something must be left behind or that one must be freed from something or someone. One leaves because there is hope that not only will those things be left behind but also that their lives will transform in the process.

Questions for discussion and discernment on your own, or with each other:

1. When is it worthwhile to make an exodus from something good?
2. In what ways could an exodus be reversible? Is that even possible, or is the change permanent?
3. How can you transform without leaving something familiar?
4. From what situations have you begun an exodus?
5. How does transformation differ from change?

This month's theme was composed by Alan Cantor, Penn Young, with the other Worship Associates.

6. When is it time to leave? When is leaving more important than staying?
7. Is exodus the departure or the arrival or the journey?
8. Transformation through exodus, is it always deliberate? Is it always voluntary or can it just happen to you?
9. How do you prepare for a transformation? How important is trying to see the unknowns that lie ahead? How important is faith, hope or optimism to the process? How about to the decision to start?
10. What do you pack for an exodus? What do you unpack for a transformation?

Quotes and Short Readings

No one's happy with the way things are
No one's figured out the right way
I keep guessing that that's the way it's supposed to be
We've got to right the wrongs
We've got to get along
Maybe I can change the world with just this song - Jim Stetson, Dedicated

The most important thing is transforming our minds, for a new way of thinking, a new outlook: we should strive to develop a new inner world. - Dalai Lama

We avoid the things that we're afraid of because we think there will be dire consequences if we confront them. But the truly dire consequences in our lives come from avoiding things that we need to learn about or discover. - Shakti Gawain, The Path of Transformation

Blessed is the path on which you travel.
Blessed is the body that carries you upon it.
Blessed is your heart that has heard the call.
Blessed is your mind that discerns the way.
Blessed is the gift that you will receive by going.
Truly blessed is the gift that you will become on the journey.
May you go forth in peace. - Eric Williams

"So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders." —Exodus 12:34

The Worship Associates are: Tom Bolton, Alexandra Businger, Alan Cantor, Masha Hoeffy, Margaret Homer, Maria Kempner, Julien Lafleur, Marty Nickerson, Jennifer Ollington, and Penn Young.