

## March Theme

### *Confession: The Practice of Healing*

#### **Introduction**

The word ‘confession’ comes from the Latin *confiteri* meaning “to acknowledge,” from the assimilated form of *com* “together” + *fateri* “to admit.” Confession, then, is an acknowledgement of failings and weakness and an admission that there is room for growth. As Unitarian Universalist Reverend Megan Foley writes, “Confession is really just a fancy word for telling your story. Except it is a word especially reserved for telling a difficult story where you are in the wrong.” We are all human and we all make mistakes. Confession provides us with an opportunity to name our mistakes and admit that we did something wrong and vow to do better. In doing so, we speak the truth and this may lighten the burden we carry. As a result, we may allow for healing to occur.

‘Healing’ comes from the Old English *hælan* meaning “cure; save; make whole, sound and well.” When we are broken and feeling defeated due to mistakes or wrongdoings, we may feel pain and be in a place of darkness. Confession allows us to take responsibility and simultaneously to open up to love, which is a healing force. The act of confession can take many forms: it is not restricted to the Catholic sacrament of professing sins to a priest. Confession can be a simple – though authentic and heart-felt – admission of wrongdoing, which we may make either to ourselves or to another. To whom we confess may not be as important as doing the actual work of confessing. And, by doing this hard work, we can open the door to healing and wholeness.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are familiar with covenants, through which we promise to behave in certain ways and engage in mutual promises. The act of confession – of talking about and admitting wrongdoings – can help to repair, cure, and make whole, sound and well the social covenant by which we try to be our best selves.

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

1. What needs to happen in the lead-up to a confession?
2. To whom does one confess? Does confession always have to be inter-personal? What about healing – is that inter-personal?
3. What are the risks of confession? Describe the role of courage in confession.
4. What aspects of your life and/or your relationships need healing?
5. What are the obstacles to healing?
6. Describe how confession can help remove and/or lower the obstacles to healing.
7. How do you know if/when you are healed? How do you know if /when you are broken?

This month’s theme was composed by Maria Kempner and Carly Baker and the Worship Associates.

8. Describe a time when you felt healed.
9. Explore whether or not confession is always a healing experience for everyone.

### **Quotes and Short Readings**

We do not heal the past by dwelling there; we heal the past by living fully in the present.

~ *Marianne Williamson*

There are things to confess that enrich the world, and things that need not be said.

~ *Joni Mitchell*

The confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works.

~ *Saint Augustine of Hippo*

Forgive us that often we forgive ourselves so easily and others so hardly;  
Forgive us that we expect perfection from those to whom we show none;  
Forgive us for repelling people by the way we set a good example;  
Forgive us the folly of trying to improve a friend;  
Forbid that we should use our little idea of goodness as a spear to wound those who are different;  
Forbid that we should feel superior to others when we are only more shielded;  
And may we encourage the secret struggle of every person.

~ *Vivian Pomeroy, #477 in Singing the Living Tradition hymnal*

Spirit of Life, we admit to you that all is not right – in our hearts and in our world,

We look to the darkness and not to the light.

We look for what is broken, and not at what is being mended.

We look to criticize and not to praise.

We look at ourselves and not to you.

Turn us around so that we look at the possibility, at hope, at promise, at grace, at healing, at love.

~ *Beth Merrill Neel, adapted*

May you be at peace,

May your heart remain open,

May you awaken to the light of your own true nature.

May you be healed,

May you be a source of healing for all beings.

~*Tibetan Buddhist Prayer*

Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.

~*Unknown*

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