

compassion the whole week through.

First Reading

Rev. Wayne Arnason

Gail Woosley, CLM

O god, whom we know as love, we gather here this morning as seekers and finders, creators and destroyers, givers and receivers of love. From the day of our birth we have asked for love, and yet as we grow and changed in time, we realize how little we really know about how love is given and how to grow within its nurture. Help us to recognize the love that surrounds us and in which we have our being. Help us to understand how we can be perfect channels for that love. Help us to see ourselves as the loving people we are and can be. In silence now, we bring to our minds' eye the people who have loved us and continue to love us.

People who are not here with us today, but whose love we carry with us. People who are there every day, and whose love we sometimes take for granted. People who might be within our circle of love, could we but extend it a little further. In silence now, we hold these people in our hearts. We ask that our hearts may be opened to all whose names and faces have crossed our minds. We ask that old wounds may be healed, that constant joys and be celebrated, and that the love we share with the people in our lives may be our abiding teacher.

Second Reading

Religions – Philip Wilkinson

Stacy Klemme

Virtually every culture that we know of has some kind of religion. In fact, the worship of God or the gods is so common that archaeologists, when they come upon some ancient object or structure that they do not understand, usually ascribe to it ritual or religious purpose. Not only is religion almost universal, it has also had a huge impact on human culture. For example, many of the world's greatest buildings, from medieval cathedrals to Mayan temples, are religious. And a great deal of literature from Dante's Divine Comedy to the works of the great Sufi poet Rumi, not to mention the sacred scriptures of the world's great faith, is religious in inspiration.

Sermon "Returning to our Unitarian Roots"

Gail Woosley, CLM

I want to thank all of you for joining us this morning. We are Unitarian Universalists. Our community is filled with Theists, Agnostics, and Non-theists. It

is also good, from time to time, to get back to our Unitarian roots that is based in Christianity, so during the next few minutes we will look at the Unitarian view of God, along with what other major religions of the world to see their definition of God or Gods in some cases. We will start first with some history. Now you all know this so please bear with me.

The **First Council of Nicaea** ([/ˈnaɪsiə/](#); [Greek](#): Νίκαια [[ˈnikɛa](#)]) was a council of Christian bishops convened in the [Bithynian](#) city of [Nicaea](#) (now [İznik](#), [Turkey](#)) by the [Roman Emperor Constantine I](#) in AD 325.

This [ecumenical council](#) was the first effort to attain [consensus](#) in the church through an [assembly](#) representing all of [Christendom](#).

Its main accomplishments were settlement of the [Christological](#) issue of the divine nature of [God the Son](#) and his relationship to [God the Father](#),^[2] the construction of the first part of the [Nicene Creed](#), establishing uniform observance of the date of [Easter](#),^[6] and [promulgation](#) of early [canon law](#).^{[3][7]}

This council also decided that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were one. A trinity that is still observed by some Christian religions today. That concept of the Trinity, was the major divide between Unitarians and other Christian religions of the time of its formation in the 14th century. Unitarians were persecuted or lauded depending on the Ruler of the time in Transylvania, simply because they rejected the concept of the Trinity. They believed that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were all separate entities. One God, as described in the Bible. Unitarian scholars of at that time could not find any evidence of the Trinity and rejected the concept. So let's look at some other religions .

Primal religions -

Primal religions are defined as those "belief systems that came into being before the great worldwide religions developed." These religions were handed down before they were literate. They were handed down by word of mouth in some cases for thousands of years. There are still some followers of the primal religions to this day in parts of North and South America, Canada, and Australia. It is believed that these primal religions came into being because of remote peoples having to deal with earthquakes, floods, food shortages, or even extreme weather. Having assigned spirits or deities to these challenges, their religions dealt with the proper worship of these to elicit help during difficult times. The other common theme among the primal religions is that the spirits shape the lives and destinies of individuals. The spirits are present in ceremonies that mark key

stages of life, from birth, through coming of age, to death. Presiding over such ceremonies are those most skilled in that religious practice, either Shamans or Elders who are steeped in the ways with the gods.

Hinduism -

Hinduism is probably the oldest of modern religions. There are no written records that go back to its beginnings, but it is believed that it began in the Indus Valley, now modern day Pakistan, some 3000 years ago. Today Hindus have three main Gods. First is Siva, the destroyer, second is Vishnu, the protector, and third is Ganesh, the god of good fortune at times of need. Hindu women worship one of the goddesses such as Laksmi, the goddess of wealth and purity. Hinduism is especially concerned with people's actions and how these impact on what will happen when they die. They believe that life consists of a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The cycle is governed by the doctrine of Karma, which asserts that a good life will be rewarded with a favorable reincarnation, whereas a life of sinfulness, selfishness, or indulgence will lead to a reincarnation as a lower being in the next life.

We next look at Eastern Religions.

The writings attributed to the great Chinese sage Kong Fuzi (Confucius) are read all over the world. They are admired for their humane qualities, wisdom, and their direct language. In China Confucius became so revered, and his teachings so identified with religious ideas, that Confucianism is now considered a religion in its own right. Confucianism involves two different concepts of god. First, there is the ultimate reality, known as Taiji. This is unknowable absolute force that orders the universe. Many believe that through scholarship, contemplation, meditation, and other mental disciplines, it is possible to achieve a kind of unity with Taiji. More accessible to ordinary people, though, are a host of lesser gods – deities, spirits and immortalized ancestors who live in Heaven.

The Chinese religion of Daoism began with the work of two philosophers. The first, Laozi, thought by some to be legendary, probably lived during the 6th century BCE. The second, Zhuangzi, lived 300 years later. Both key texts that helped to create a mystical religion that has continuously renewed itself for thousands of years. Daoism has also become associated with the popular religion of China, a fascinating belief system involving many deities.

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan. An ancient religion, with roots in practices and beliefs that date back to prehistoric times, Shinto continues to attract and retain many adherents. Somewhat unusually for such a living faith,

Shinto remains largely the preserve of the Japanese people who live in their native land. They also worship several deities which they call kami. None of these deities are more important than the others.

Last on our list is Monotheistic Religions –

The Faiths centered on a single God have spread all over the world from their roots in the Middle East. In spite of the domination of science and rational thought in modern life, the beliefs, ethics, morality, and general outlook of monotheistic faiths endures. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam remain hugely influential from the US to Africa.

Judaism -

These three modern monotheisms have several things in common. All have their roots in the Middle East, they share a number of important patriarchs and prophets and they emphasize the importance of prayer. Of the three, Judaism was revealed to its follows first – Jews believe that the teaching of their faith, laid down in the Torah was revealed to Moses by God on Mt Sinai more than 3000 years ago. Judaism has not formal creed but this work, the Torah, have guided the Jews through their lives ever since.

Islam –

Islam was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century C.E. which were written down as the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the heart of Islam, but Muslims also respect the earlier Jewish religious leaders from Abraham to Jesus.

Christianity –

Christianity appeared about 2000 years ago in the Jewish world. It is based on the teachings of Jesus and on the Christian Bible, which is made up of sacred texts plus the New Testament, which describes Jesus' mission and the work of his followers.

In these three monotheistic religions view God as an all- powerful, supreme being that can control all. A being that may control destinies of individuals, armies, or the outcome of any prayer offered.

So there you have it. World religions views of God or Gods. Gods with names like, Siva, Vishnu, Ganesh, Allah, Jehovah, or Yahweh. All perceived to be very powerful in their own right by the believers who follow them. Our Unitarian side

believes in one supreme-being. Our Universalist side believes in something different entirely.

This chalice, with its burning candle, reminds us of the community we have here at the UUFWC. So if your beliefs are in the one supreme-being, or your god is science, or your god is nature, we all are in this one community. We are bound together by our similarities and our differences. We are bound together, not by the gods we serve but, by our own common Principles, common goals, and the strength that this community gives us. Never, more than now, should that strength be drawn upon. It is a whole different world that we live in compared to what it was even two months ago. We have, quite literally, been separated by distance. If we even leave our homes, which we are not supposed to, we wear masks and gloves so fight something so small that we can't see it.

I came through the door of our Fellowship this morning and it felt good to be here. I was good to be in this building that I consider my home, but it is very empty and so very quiet. I miss seeing all of you and being in your presence. I miss the intimate conversations with you. I miss seeing the children and hearing the noise they make. ZOOM doesn't really provide that but that is what we must do right now. This is what we have.

Reach out to one another by phone, cards and letters. Keep the connection with those in our community. Pray that this is over soon, if you feel the need. Stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy until we can all be together again. Blessed be.

Parting Words The Mind of God – Stephen Hawking **Stacy Klemme**

One could define God as the embodiment of the laws of nature. However, this is not what most people would think of as God. They mean human-like being, with whom one can have a personal relationship. When you look at the vast size of the universe, and how insignificant and accidental human life is in it, that seems almost implausible. I use the word "God" in an impersonal sense, like Einstein did, for the laws of nature, so knowing the mind of God is knowing the laws of nature. My prediction is that we will know the mind of God by the end of this century.