

Our theme for October has been Awe. At the start of the month, I served as Worship Associate when the topic was nature. I spoke then about the awe I experience through nature, the magic of its beauty and complexity, and the miracle of my being alive to experience it. Nature is for me an inspiration that warms my heart and connects me to the world.

Today's topic is mysticism, something that I find a bit more difficult to relate to. The Oxford dictionary defines it as a belief that there is an entity unknowable to the intellect that connects us to a deity, sometimes through self-delusion or a belief in the occult. Webster defines it as the belief that a purely subjective experience can lead to a connection to or union with God or a deep spiritual truth.

Now, I am a scientist and an atheist, so as you might imagine, I see mysticism as a delusional desire to find simple answers to living in a complex world by attempting to make a kind of incomprehensible spiritual connection with an imagined higher power.

But perhaps I'm being overly critical and close-minded and maybe the topic is worth another look. First, it's conceivable that others have had experiences I can't even imagine. Then, as the chalice-lighting words I selected for today will point out, Unitarian Universalists form a diverse community that welcomes multiple truths, and we need to keep our hearts open to unexpected answers. And as I said in my opening statement, UU's hold many diverse theological perspectives, and therefore we need to be open to, and tolerant of, different ideas. So, I intend to listen intently with an open mind to Kent's sermon. Perhaps I'll discover that some UU's have redefined the meaning of mysticism from its dictionary definitions in a way that I can more easily relate to, one more in tune with my feelings on nature.