

# November Theme

## Abundance: The Practice of Generosity

### FOR MORE EXPLORATION

#### Books & Articles

- Purchase An Abundance of Experiences, Not Things!, The Atlantic, by James Hamblin -- <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/10/buy-experiences/381132/>
- From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Revolutionary Approach to Growing Older (the abundance of aging), by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi & Ronald S. Mille

#### Music

- 'The Best Things in Life Are Free', by Sam Cooke
- 'Beautiful Day', by U2
- 'Soak Up the Sun', by Sheryl Crowe
- 'Thankful', by Jonny Lang

#### Videos

- This Is Not A Humanising Poem, by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan -- <https://www.facebook.com/roundhouseLDN/videos/10155509509406180/> -- A call to celebrate the abundance of who you are, as you are! Do not allow yourself to be reduced to "the relatable and respectable"! "If you need me to prove my humanity, I'm not the one who's not human."
- FOMO: The Fear of Missing Out -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsSmFZNRpLc&index=51&list=PLgdvIBqNHvmb8BvKIEdmj6BzCaPYKpNRE> -- Anxiety, abundant choices and the desire to have it all.

### QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

#### Just Enough

Soil for legs  
Axe for hands  
Flower for eyes  
Bird for ears  
Mushrooms for nose  
Smile for mouth  
Songs for lungs  
Sweat for skin  
Wind for mind  
~ *Nanao Sakaki*

"Our task is to learn who planted this orchard that we are now sitting in and to lift up their names. Our task is to name the names and celebrate the fact that... we are standing on the shoulders of many giants. As the season of harvest as it comes upon us - it is a time to celebrate the lasting gifts and the many fruits of unseen hands."  
~ *Rev. Daniel Gregoire*

"For me, the opposite of scarcity is not abundance. It's enough. I'm enough. My kids are enough. You're enough."  
~ *Brené Brown*

"Out of abundance, they took abundance, and still abundance remained."  
~ *Upanishads*

"My barn having burned down I can now see the moon."  
~ *Mizuta Masahide*

"This could be our revolution: to love what is plentiful as much as what is scarce."  
~ *Alice Walker*

"Abundance is not about having what you want, but about noticing what you have, and multiplying it through sharing it, multiplying it through your manner of being in this world."  
~ *Rev. Angela Herrera*

"We are beset with the fear of scarcity – not just economic scarcity, but fear that all our resources are limited... We grow up thinking that we are not good enough or wise enough or athletic enough or rich enough... enough to do what? To live up to the expectations others thrust upon us. We should decide for ourselves when enough is enough – but too often we let the pressures of the world decide this for us, and we find ourselves lacking."  
~ *Rev. Anne Mason*

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."  
~ *Walt Whitman*



"If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace."  
~ *Ajahn Chah*

"I have the world's largest collection of sea shells. I keep it scattered on the beaches of the world. Have you seen it?"  
*Steven Wright, comedian*

It's not what we have that constitutes our abundance, but what we appreciate."  
~ *Jules Petit-Senn*

"When we see that our days are replete with abundance, we are less afraid. When we are less afraid, we connect more. The more connections we see in our lives, the more abundance we notice."  
~ *Rev. Deanna Vandiver*



## What Does It Mean to Be a People of Abundance?

When it comes to abundance, our culture and our religion are clearly at odds. Our culture cries, "Accumulate!" Our religion counsels "Appreciate!" The mantras couldn't be more different: The commercials tell us to "Go out and get what you want!" The pulpits plea with us to "learn to want what you have."

So, yes, appreciation is central to this month. Noticing the abundance around us is clearly the work we are called to do. But one wonders if that's enough. It all depends on what you do after the noticing is done.

Sometimes there's a passivity to appreciation that leaves nothing changed. There's a big difference between appreciating the blessing of family and committing to sitting down together for dinner at least three or four times a week. It's one thing to notice the beauty that fills your own backyard; it's quite another to pull yourself out of the rat race so you have time to enjoy it. It helps to have a sermon remind us that our spouse or parent is doing the best they can, but that insight rarely sticks without a commitment to action that helps us truly let go of all the things we wish they were and embrace the limited but wonderful abundance of what they are.

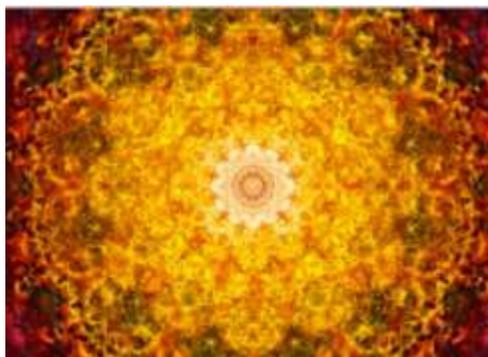
In short, appreciation only gets us part of the way there. Noticing places abundance in view, but only new commitments put it within reach. Without a decision to change our lives, noticing becomes nothing more than nostalgia.

So, what needs to change? Maybe that's the real question this month. What needs to be altered so you can dance with what is plentiful rather than worrying about what is scarce? What clutter finally needs to be cleaned up so there is room for new abundance to enter in? What changes will free you from the urgent and allow in the important?

Yes, people of abundance make time for noticing, but they also make tough choices. Choices that, after they are made, don't really feel tough at all.

Spiritual abundance is waiting for us, friends. May this be the month we choose it.

*Noticing places abundance in view, but only new commitments put it within reach.*



**KIDS' CORNER**

Thanksgiving is often an opportunity to remind ourselves to be thankful about what we have in our lives. Use this holiday as a reminder to practice gratitude regularly in your life. You can even just say one thing at the end of each day that you were grateful for in your day and share it with someone you care about.



**ABUNDANCE ON A SCALE OF 1-10**

This exercise invites us not only to recognize the abundance in our lives, but also recalibrate it. Sometimes abundance is a blessing; other times, too much of it is suffocating. Same with scarcity. Much of the time, scarcity feels like a desert, but other times it is the key to freedom. With this in mind, look over the below list and rate how abundant or scarce each is in your life, on a scale of 1 (scarce) to 10 (abundant). Then make time to reflect on the results. What surprised you? What insight came from placing all the rankings side by side? What clearly needs recalibration?



- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1-Access to food  | 15-Novels read           |
| 2-Freedom to make decisions about what you wear         | 16-Play                  |
| 3- Time for meditation/prayer                           | 17-Passion               |
| 4-Moments of beauty                                     | 18-Worry                 |
| 5-Moments of <a href="#">micro-aggression</a>           | 19-Exercise              |
| 6-Freedom to make decisions about how you use your time | 20-Regret                |
| 7-Financial independence                                | 21-Envy                  |
| 8-Work/professional obligations                         | 22-Fond memories         |
| 9-Access to health care                                 | 23-Family obligations    |
| 10-Time to volunteer                                    | 24-Self-care             |
| 11-Access to reliable shelter                           | 25-Self-love             |
| 12-Entertainment devices and activities                 | 26-Respect of your peers |
| 13-Dinners where your loved ones sit and talk           | 27-Friends               |
| 14-People to talk to when tough times come              | 28- A sense of purpose   |

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of courage means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. What would happen if you decided that abundance was lying around waiting for you to notice it, rather than something you earn or win?
2. What might it mean to allow yourself to be healed by the abundance all around you?
3. Do you love that which is plentiful or that which is scarce?
4. Is clinging to the pursuit of what you want cutting you off from noticing what you have?
5. So life's led you into a puddle. Are you still staring at your mud-covered feet? Or are you ready to look up and notice that the wide open sky never went away?
6. Are you a swamp or a stream? Do you collect and hoard abundance or let it flow through you?
7. Have you had enough of not feeling like you are enough?
8. Does time no longer feel abundant? Is that being forced on you? Or might you have a choice?
9. Are the best things in life really free? If so, how many will you pick up or lean into today?
10. Are you jealous of others' abundance? Have you ever considered the possibility that those very same folks are jealous of yours?
11. Who validates the abundance of who you are? Who has helped you present your whole self to the world? Have you thanked them lately?
12. Is it really true that you are right and they are wrong? Or could the truth be more abundant than that?
13. For many of us autumn is abundant with leaves blazing full of color. But if you blink, they are gone. What temporary blaze of abundance do you need to pay attention to before time runs out?
14. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

*All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for November 2017.*

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## JUSTICE CORNER

November is our month when we kick off the Guest at Your Table campaign. This campaign is an effort of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).

Guest at Your Table (GAYT) is UUSC's annual intergenerational program to raise support for and awareness about their work to advance human rights. Since UUSC works in over 25 countries, with over 75 grassroots partners, there are thousands of individuals involved in and who benefit from the work that UUSC members make possible. GAYT is an opportunity to celebrate grassroots partnership, support human rights, and learn about just four of these individuals – the "guests" in Guest at Your Table.

UUSC's grassroots partners make a big difference in their communities, and so does your participation in GAYT. That is why this year's program theme is **Small Change is Big Change**. STAY TUNED AT CHURCH FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO PARTICIPATE!