

Spiritual Naturalist Liturgy

First Temple of Spiritual Naturalism, Houston

Welcome to our service. Please take a program, enter in silence, and have a seat on the floor or a chair.

RECEPTION

During this time, we sit in silence as everyone arrives, preparing ourselves for a moment distinct from the normal flow of our day.

PURIFICATION

When the bell sounds, please stand and bow together to the altar three times.

This outward movement helps direct our attention to the wisdom the altar represents. We bow three times, once for each part of our spirituality: the head (reason), heart (compassion), and hand (practice).

As we bow, we focus our mind on the here and now, purifying it of all distractions and rumination.

Minister:

The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the Fastening of the Mind.

This is a quote from Confucius. 'The Way' is the Tao - the flow of the world, or the nature of reality. We also call it the Logos - the underlying rational order by which nature operates. This wisdom gathers (comes to us in deep understanding) only when our minds are still, perceptive, and free of superfluous judgments, over-thinking, and the limitation of language.

All sit.

EPIPHANY

The Liturgy follows the course of a transformative life practice. We dedicate this moment to the hope of epiphany...

Minister:

Let us celebrate the hope of epiphany - a glimpse beyond the veil of ignorance, and eventual revelation of new understanding and wisdom. The knowledge that stops at what it does not know is the highest knowledge. We humbly proclaim our own ignorance and the need for continued growth to greater enlightenment through practice.

The Taoist, Chuang-Tzu, spoke of this highest knowledge."

Minister:

Just as the sun and moon and heavens and earth and sea are common to all but called by different names, so too for the Logos which keeps all things in order. By this underlying natural law, all things come into being and all things pass.

Paraphrase of Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius. Were it not for the fact that the universe operates by natural laws, we could not attain greater understanding of it. Yet this highlights ourselves as a small transient part of a vast cosmos.

The minister will 'light the path' with a candle.

Minister:

This world, no one of gods or men has made, is an ever-living Fire. Its kindling moves throughout the impermanent cosmos, transforming all things.

This is a quote from Heraclitus. The Divine Fire, the complex systems of interaction throughout the cosmos, is the underlying creative force in the universe, making all things in life possible. Ralph Waldo Emerson echoed Heraclitus centuries later, asking, "Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things?"

The congregation participates...

Minister:

Where lies the good?

Congregation:

In the will.

Minister:

Where lies the evil?

Congregation:

In the will.

Minister:

Where is neither of them?

Congregation:

In those things independent of the will

TRANSCENDENCE

Through practice comes ever-greater understanding and a deepening of awareness. May our perspectives and intuitive responses be transformed so that we may transcend the small and egotistical.

All place hands together.

Minister:

We are disturbed, not by things, but by the judgment we take of them. False judgment is the source of unwholesome attachment and this is the cause of suffering.

These are a quotes of Epictetus, who taught that the key to happiness was in labeling only those things within our control as 'good' or 'evil' - and then seeing that our anger, fear, greed, and distress come not from our circumstances, but because of the innumerable judgments we make of every event. He calls on us to be mindful of our judgments and examine them closely. False judgments: the belief we control what we do not, forgetting impermanence and independence - these are the source of attachment, as the Second Noble Truth of Buddhism states.

Minister:

No one is free who is not master of themselves. It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.

The first sentence was said by Epictetus in the West, and the second was said by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) in the East.

Minister:

Now that you have emerged from your narrow sphere and have seen the great ocean, you know your own insignificance, and I can speak to you of great principles.

(Chuang-Tzu)

VIRTUE

As we direct attention to what is in our control, this refers to the value of our choices. Virtue is the ancient term for character traits that result in choices and actions in accord with Nature (reality). Namely, our nature as rational and social (moral) beings.

Minister:

Virtue alone is both necessary and sufficient for happiness.

Socrates said this, meaning a deep, lasting happiness (flourishing) not dependent upon our circumstances.

Minister:

Listen to the Logos and hear that all things are one.

(Heraclitus)

Minister:

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. What we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connects.

This was said by Chief Seattle of the Duwamish Native American tribe.

Minister:

Compassion is the keen awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

The words of Thomas Merton, Christian (Trappist) Monk.

Minister:

Yet one's heart, away from Nature, becomes hard (Standing Bear). A life is good when in accord with Nature (Zeno of Citium). When you are in accord with Nature, it will yield its bounty (Joseph Campbell). Please join me in a final invocation...

Minister and congregation:

For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through love (Carl Sagan).

MEDITATION

With our minds focused on our practice and the need for great mindfulness, we begin a 20 minute meditation.

Minister offers brief guide on breathing meditation if needed, and then rings bell.

Congregation meditates.

After 20 minutes: Guided loving-kindness meditation.

Minister:

**Think of someone for whom you have warm feelings
Say to them: I wish you to be safe, healthy, and happy.**

Think of yourself

Say to yourself: I wish you to be safe, healthy, and happy.

Think of a stranger for whom you have no strong feelings.

Say to them: I wish you to be safe, healthy, and happy.

Think of a person with whom you have had difficulties or anger.

Say to them: I wish you to be safe, healthy, and happy.

Think of all beings in the cosmos.

Say to them: I wish you to be safe, healthy, and happy.

With a final breath we take in the suffering of others as our own, and release unconditional love to all beings.

Minister rings bell.

If you have difficulty wishing this for enemies, consider the full implication of what it means to be healthy; and that True Happiness cannot come without greater wisdom, understanding, and transformation. So to for ourselves.

TODAY'S PROGRAM

Readings, Presentations, Music, or other content unique to today's program follows.

SERVICE CONCLUSION

Please stand and face the altar.

Minister (blowing out candle):

As the death of fire is the birth of air, so too is wantonness extinguished.

Heraclitus said this of the transformations of all things and transformation within ourselves.

Minister and congregation bow.

Thank You!

Thank you for attending our service. If you haven't before, please sign our signup sheet, and visit our website to subscribe to announcements!

<http://sn-temple-houston.blogspot.com>

The Temple of Spiritual Naturalism is a local chapter of the
Spiritual Naturalist Society
www.SpiritualNaturalistSociety.org

May peace and happiness go with
you in the new week!