



## Finding Our Center

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and this month's theme team: Drew Danielson, Ray Hommeyer, Rev. Karen Gustafson, Rev. KP Hong, Laura Park, and Rev. Andrea La Sonde Anastos

On the first Tuesday of every month, a group of us gather in the Center Room to discuss the following month's theme.

Although the writing of the article is not a group effort, the ideas reflected in this article are the result of our contemplation on an opening question: "Where do you find your center?"

"For me, I have to always practice finding my center," said one participant. "But finding it is outside my control! When it comes, it's a gift..." Another said, "My mother. She is my center. When I feel myself spinning away from my center, she pulls me back. And spiritually, I go to my 'mom' — that is, my connections that help me to ground myself in the center."

So, is finding your center a practice, a person or a place? One of our members spoke movingly about experiencing the solitude of her childhood in a particular place. It was in this place where she felt most safe, secure and grounded — a place of being well cared for; where her basic needs were met. She experienced that at "my center... is a sense of well-being that is not based upon the existence of others; and it helped to develop my sense of trust in the care of the world and the universe." Finding one's center, then, can be intimately connected to our experiences of place. As one participant said, "...it's knowing the land that formed my bones. This is what keeps me centered, even though I no longer live on that land."

In some ways, it felt as if the conversation were circling around the center, but never landing there, as each one of us tried to explore the feeling of being centered. That feeling was reflected in returning to one's center time and time again; to particular people, both past and present, and to ordinary or special places that help us to center down.

What's not to love about the idea of being centered? "Well," said a member, "I would prefer not to use the word 'center,' but instead 'grounded'... Because centering implies a certain duality, in that you are either centered or not-centered." When the Buddha, who was seeking enlightenment was being tormented by Mara and his minions, the Buddha touched the ground and the earth immediately responded, "I am your witness." That simple act of touching the earth was a grounding experience from which the whole of Buddhist tradition unfolds.

We also explored the dangers of "seeking our center" so much so that we neglect the ways in which we must also *de-center* ourselves. Our culture emphasizes individual achievement over collaboration. White people must continue to de-center the ways in which they have adopted and benefitted from white supremacy culture. Learning to de-center our own egos is a lifelong practice.

As we enter into this month's theme of "Finding Our Center" we encourage

you to explore both the ways that you center yourself and the ways in which you de-center yourself.

We began and concluded our conversation by reading this poem by Ha Jin. We offer it to you now for your own reflection and contemplation.

A Center by Ha Jin

You must hold your quiet center,  
where you do what only you can do.  
If others call you a maniac or a fool,  
just let them wag their tongues.  
If some praise your perseverance,  
don't feel too happy about it—  
only solitude is a lasting friend.

You must hold your distant center.  
Don't move even if earth and heaven  
quake.  
If others think you are insignificant,  
that's because you haven't held on  
long enough.  
As long as you stay put year after year,  
eventually you will find a world  
beginning to revolve around you.

### Theme Resources

For further reflection on this theme please see this month's Spiritual Practice Packet which will be available online at [unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html](http://unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.html).