

JUNE MONTHLY THEME:
PLURALITY—THE VALUE OF LIVING IN A DIVERSE WORLD

“Make difference ordinary,” writes feminist author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “Because difference is the reality of our world.” As we live within a diverse world of differences, how we respond to this reality can vary. Pluralism advocates coexistence. To value plurality is to seek to recognize our differences, rather than flatten them into sameness. While finding points of connection can be satisfying (“you also like ____?!”), we can also learn from places where we differ (“tell me more about your interest in ____.”). Although pluralism and diversity can be warmly touted as good liberal values (which they are!), the intentional practice of making space for differences can be challenging. Our theme this month invites us to reflect on the possibilities and the challenges of living in a diverse world.

Which question is calling to you? Where is it leading you?

1. Name some ways that you differ from those closest to you.
2. Are there some kinds of differences that are easier for you to accept? Harder?
3. When you encounter something different than what you prefer, how do you respond? Reject it? Try to change it to your preferences? Engage it? Or?

Wise Words:

It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.
Maya Angelou

In order to survive, a plurality of true communities would require not egalitarianism and tolerance but knowledge, an understanding of the necessity of local differences, and respect. Respect, I think, always implies imagination - the ability to see one another, across our inevitable differences, as living souls. *Wendell Berry*

To see the other side, to defend another people, not despite your tradition but because of it, is the heart of pluralism.
Eboo Patel

Religious pluralism is neither mere coexistence nor forced consensus. It is a form of proactive cooperation that affirms the identity of the constituent communities while emphasizing that the well-being of each and all depends on the health of the whole. It is the belief that the common good is best served when each community has a chance to make its unique contribution.
Eboo Patel

Pluralism isn't just diversity; it's something we create out of this diversity.
Diana L. Eck

Teach her about difference. Make difference ordinary. Make difference normal. Teach her not to attach value to difference. And the reason for this is not to be fair or to be nice but merely to be human and practical. Because difference is the reality of our world. And by teaching her about difference, you are equipping her to survive in a diverse world.

She must know and understand that people walk different paths in the world and that as long as those paths do no harm to others, they are valid paths that she must respect. Teach her that we do not know – we cannot know – everything about life. Both religion and science have spaces for the things we do not know, and it is enough to make peace with that.

Teach her never to universalise her own standards or experiences. Teach her that her standards are for her alone, and not for other people.

This is the only necessary form of humility: the realisation that difference is normal.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie