

## 2022-2023 ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENCE

### APRIL MONTHLY FOCUS:

## HUMANISM

Religious [Humanism](#) is a framework of finding meaning and purpose grounded in this world without reference to supernatural powers and divinities. While Humanism may often be understood as “code” for not believing in God, its tenants underscore multiple commitments to what they *do* believe, including the use of reason, the importance of social relationships, and an ethic of care for humanity and the natural world. What makes Humanism a *religious* tradition is how it functions as a system of meaning-making and ethical guidance. Historically, Humanism has roots that extend into antiquity. Contemporary groups such as the American Humanist Association (AHA) trace their origins to the [1933 Humanist Manifesto](#) which emerged in part from the efforts of [Unitarians](#).

### Some Notes:

- **Humanist Manifesto** (1933) – signed by 34 prominent leaders, including John Dewey, championed a “religion of the future” and affirmed reason, science, and a “self-existing” rather than created universe among other claims. About half of the signers were [Unitarians](#).
- **Humanist Manifesto III** (current successor to the 1933 Humanist Manifesto) affirms:
  - Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.
  - Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.
  - Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
  - Life’s fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
  - Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.
  - Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.
- **Ethical Culture**—an [organized group](#) usually traced back to Felix Adler who sought to unite humanity over ethical values and moral action. Identifying as a “humanist religion” there are non-theist groups that meet for weekly Platform Talks and train “Leaders” as clergy to officiate services and ceremonies.
- **UU’s and Humanism** – within UU congregations there are humanist congregants, clergy, and a national organization, [huumanists.org](#). Since the early 20th century, Humanism has been an influential part of our continually evolving religious tradition. Read [Humanist Voices in UUism](#) to learn more.

### Words of the Tradition:

I am a humanist, which means, in part, that I have tried to behave decently without expectations of rewards or punishments after I am dead. — *Kurt Vonnegut*

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. . . . —*American Humanist Association ([www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org))*

Happiness is the only good. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to help make others so. —*Robert Ingersoll*

Reverence is an organic human experience that requires no supernatural explanations. —*Kendyl Gibbons*

Losing that demanding God didn’t mean I lost my moral compass and my ethics. It simply meant my ethics and morality came from human sources as opposed to coming from a phantom figure and its magical book. —*Anthony B. Pinn*

The trend in modern religious developments is away from the transcendent, the authoritative, the dogmatic, and toward the human, the experimental, the tentative; away from the abnormal, the formal, the ritualistic; and toward the normal, the informal, the usual; away from the extraordinary mystic expression, the exalted mood, the otherworldly; and toward the ethical, the social and the worldly; away from religion conceived as one of man's concerns, and toward religion conceived as man's one concern. —*Curtis Reese (1931)*