

# Attend... Attend... Attend

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Many years ago I learned a fragment of wisdom from early Christianity, perhaps from what once was called Phoenecia. It was a description of the discovery of an ancient church building with a now barely decipherable warning on the exterior walls near the entry. In the local language, embedded in plaster with mosaic lettering, it read: Attend; attend; attend!

Rather than the empirical verb form ordering appearance at worship services, the meaning was far more subtle and profound. It was the custom in those times to prepare oneself spiritually to receive an encounter with the Divine. This was the meaning those wise words ritually repeated.

For most of my life, I've hungered to connect, to have meaningful conversations with thoughtful people about fundamental questions. Until now, this goal has stayed stubbornly elusive. In fact, when I first considered Jeremy Taylor's summer dream class at Starr King School, I envisioned something light and fluffy — a lovely counterpoint to a weightier offering at the end of the month. Or so I thought.

Imagine my astonishment when I realized this dream class was all about how to access my longings to touch truth in companionship. From the first moment, I realized that I had unintentionally blundered into that for which I had long been searching — and found enlightenment in the depths.

As a newbie to dreamwork, I had the usual shallow skepticism. But listening to Jeremy's thoughtful observations and profound insights from his decades as a leader in the field, I began to realize that here was a way to find those genuine conversations about life's most primordial existential concerns — the origins of religious searching. In the process, one can find one's way to self-revelations, reflected by co-searchers as we listen to one another's dreams.

Most surprising to me was the level of insight achievable via this process, even with my not-yet- well-developed ability to remember my dreams. Some of the class participants had been recording their dreams for many years. My dreams, on the other hand, remained elusive and frequently inaccessible, offering only tantalizing fragments for inspection.

But some of those fragments proved invaluable in small group settings. With the help of several more experienced dream readers, I found enormous comprehension of my own internal conversations. And along with this deeper self-experience, I also recognized the extraordinary gift of commonality, explained by Jeremy as the many universal archetypes revealed by the dreams.

Jeremy has a very interesting way of expressing his understandings of how dreams work. He uses the metaphor of dreams as living, sentient, intellectually conscious beings, often spoken of as the subject of action-oriented sentences. “The dreams,” he says, “fulfill their intent to bring us to wholeness and health.”

I also now realize that the numinous feeling I experienced with the birth of my youngest child, looking into his very wide eyes at the moment of his birth and asking of myself and of him, “Where did you just come from, little soul?” This is a query and a sensation as old as humankind, one that has always been partnered with the ultimate question of where do we go when we die? And, now that I’ve been exposed to the full spectrum of the human quest for truth and meaning, where do we go when we sleep? I suspect that place is the same land of deep dreaming, where we do our most important work.

Most of all, with dreamwork, I am grateful for greater access to the Divine. Using this route to go into another way of being in the world and with the world, I find myself experiencing much more closeness to the Universalist heritage of our faith. This is the intuitive, feeling, perceptive aspect of our Unitarian Universalist roots. In entering this world of spirit and love, we can make ourselves feel more whole, more in balance within our deepest selves, and, consequently, more connected to and more collaborative with all the universe.