

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—
We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.

—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people’s stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

Take Your Time



A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time.

—Anne Dillard

Take Your Time

Chalice Lighting

Look to this day!

For it is life, the very life of life.

In its brief course lie all the verities

and realities of your existence:

The bliss of growth,

The glory of action,

The splendor of beauty;

For yesterday is but a dream,

And tomorrow is only a vision;

But today, well lived, makes every yesterday

A dream of happiness

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day.

—*Kalidasa*

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

The morning glory which blooms for an hour

Differs not at heart from the giant pine,

Which lives for a thousand years.

—*Zen poem*

Whether, if soul did not exist, time would exist or not, is a question that may fairly be asked; for if there cannot be someone to count there cannot be anything that can be counted.

—*Aristotle*

It has often been observed, that those who have the most time at their disposal profit by it the least.

—*William Ellery Channing*

Hence, there is a time to go ahead and a time to stay behind.

There is a time to breathe easy and a time to breathe hard.

There is a time to be vigorous and a time to be gentle.

There is a time to gather and a time to release.

Can you see things as they are

And let them be all on their own?

—*Lao-tzu*

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

So what do we do in a circle of trust? . . . we speak our own truth; we listen receptively to the truth of others; we ask each other honest, open questions instead of giving counsel; and we offer each other the healing and empowering gifts of silence and laughter.

—*Parker J. Palmer, A Hidden Wholeness*

Round 1: Share a moment in your life when time was very important.

Round 2: At what times in your day or in your life are you most mindful?

Round 3: Share any insights you had while listening to others talk about time.

Closing Words

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.

—*Carl Sandburg*

Closing Song

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Take Your Time

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.

—Henry David Thoreau

Twenty-four hours each day, no more and no less. Sometimes that's hard to believe because it feels as if time is moving faster or slower at certain times of our lives. We sometimes equate time with money or something tangible when we ask, "How did you *spend* your time when you were on vacation," or say to friends, "the afternoon was a total waste of time."

Yesterday is a canceled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; today is the only cash you have—so spend it wisely.

—Kay Lyons

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.

—Annie Dillard

We can measure time mechanically with clocks or more naturally with the rising and setting of the sun and the passing of the seasons. But no matter how we monitor the passing of time, we cannot control its passage nor go back in time. Maybe that is why time seems so precious.

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.

—Carl Sandburg

We are conscious of the transiency of life as we perceive the transiency of nature. The summer is a particularly poignant time because even as we glory in its lush greenness and warmth and beauty, we still feel in our bones the memory of the chill of winter, and the wet cold of mud season, and the certainty of the seasons to come.

—Robert Sengas

The future is something which everyone reaches at the rate of 60 minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is.

—C. S. Lewis

For several decades our society has focused on time management, which sought to squeeze the maximum amount of productivity from each minute. Multitasking is a common practice for most of us. And while an increase in personal productivity might lead to more control over some things in our lives, we have begun to hear about the effects of stress on our physical and mental health and problems with personal relationships.

In response, some people have begun to practice mindfulness, the Buddhist practice of being present in each moment.

Life can be found only in the present moment. The past is gone, the future is not yet here, and if we do not go back to ourselves in the present moment, we cannot be in touch with life.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

There is only one world, the world pressing against you at this minute. There is only one minute in which you are alive, this minute here and now. The only way to live is by accepting each minute as an unrepeatable miracle.

—*Storm Jameson*

Be here now.

—*Baba Ram Dass*

If my happiness at this moment consists largely in reviewing happy memories and expectations, I am but dimly aware of this present. I shall still be dimly aware of the present when the good things that I have been expecting come to pass. For I shall have formed a habit of looking behind and ahead, making it difficult for me to attend to the here and now. If, then, my awareness of the past and future makes me less aware of the present, I must begin to wonder whether I am actually living in the real world.

—*Alan Watts*

I am learning slowly to bring my crazy pinball-machine mind back to this place of friendly detachment toward myself, so I can look out at the world and see all those other things with respect. Try looking at your mind as a wayward puppy that you are trying to paper train. You don't drop-kick a puppy into the neighbor's yard every time it piddles on the floor. You just keep bringing it back to the newspaper. So I keep trying gently to bring my mind back to what is really there to be seen, maybe to be seen and noted with a kind of reverence.

—*Anne Lamott*.

While washing the dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes. At first glance, that might seem a little silly. Why put so much stress on a simple thing? But that's precisely the point. The fact that I am standing there and washing these bowls is a wondrous reality. I am completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts and actions. There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly like a bottle slapped here and there on the waves.

—*Thich Nhat Hanh*

Ideas to Ponder

- At what times in your life was time very important? Think of the most important one and be prepared to describe it.
- Can you describe a time in your life when time stood still?
- When are you most mindful? What do you notice about these times?
- What determines how you spend your time? Has that changed over the course of your life?

Leader's Guide: Take Your Time

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin.

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and realities of your existence:
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Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences: “How you are today?” Share information about absent members.

Silence (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

Shared Readings (5 min)

Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all the readings are finished.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)

Ask someone to read the Parker J. Palmer quote in the bulletin.

Do your rounds of deep sharing and deep listening.

Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure that all get to share at least once.

Round 1 (10 min): Share a moment in your life when time was very important.

Round 2 (40 min): Read this definition of mindfulness for those members who were unable to do the homework.

Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience.
It isn't more complicated than that.
It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is,
without either clinging to it or rejecting it.

—*Sylvia Boorstein*

Describe how you see “mindfulness” in relation to your own life.

Round 3 (15 min): Share any insights you had while listening to others talk about time.

Closing Words (1 min)

Read or ask someone to read:

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.

— *Carl Sandburg*

Closing Song (1 min)

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.