

"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

Crime and Punishment



Crime and Punishment

Chalice Lighting

Help us to bring darkness into the light,
To lift out the pain, the anger,
Where it can be seen for what it is—
The balance-wheel for our vulnerable, aching love . . .

Help us to be the always hopeful
Gardeners of the spirit
Who know that without darkness
Nothing comes to birth
As without light
Nothing flowers.
—*May Sarton*

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

No man chooses evil because it is evil; he only mistakes it for happiness,
the good he seeks.

—*Mary Wollstonecraft*

Successful and fortunate crime is called virtue.

—*Seneca*

All criticism is dominated by the outworn theory that the man is the
cause of the work as in the eyes of the law the criminal is the cause
of the crime. Far rather are they both the effects.

—*Paul Valery*

The only medicine for suffering, crime, and all the other words of
mankind, is wisdom.

—*Thomas Huxley*

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Round 1: What elements do you believe are necessary for a true crime
to exist?

Round 2: What punishments do you believe are effective in deterring
crime?

Round 3: Tell what criminal acts would you be willing to do and why,
or speak to something that has come up for you in this session.

Closing Words

For centuries the death penalty, often accompanied by barbarous
refinements, has been trying to hold crime in check; yet crime persists.
Why? Because the instincts that are warring in man are not, as the law
claims, constant forces in a state of equilibrium.

—*Albert Camus*

Closing Song

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Crime and Punishment

In this session, we'll be exploring what constitutes crime . . . and punishment.

Crime: a violation of a law in which there is injury to the public or a member of the public and there is a term in jail or prison and/or a fine as possible penalties. There is some sentiment for excluding from the “crime” category crimes without victims, such as consensual acts, or violations in which only the perpetrator is hurt or involved, such as personal use of illegal drugs.

—Gerald and Kathleen Hill, *People's Law Dictionary*

Harm is an element of crime, but what type of harm is criminal?

Consider:

A 35-year-old well-educated white man plunges a knife into a sick old woman. He cannot be charged with a crime. He's a surgeon.

A young mother picks up her first grader from school. She belts the child into the child seat in the rear seat and drives home slowly. Before she reaches the driveway, a police officer stops her, arrests her, and charges her with two serious crimes, although she has hurt no one. She is drunk.

Had I a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, a voice of iron and a chest of brass, I could not tell all the forms of crime, could not name all the types of punishment.

—Virgil

But from each crime are born bullets that will one day seek out in you where the heart lies.

—Pablo Neruda

A crime has been committed, a suspect identified. Now justice must be served. For this purpose, there is a venerable procedure, one that is speedy, fair, and widely accepted. In other words—if you're among the Azande of Sudan, that is—it's time to poison a chicken. In the poison oracle, as the Azande's version of the criminal trial is known, a chicken is fed some random amount of a vegetable alkaloid: if it dies, the accused is guilty. There is even an appellate system: if you think your chicken has been bewitched, you may turn to another oracle.

A chicken's response to an erratic dose of an erratically toxic substance may not sound like a reliable way of reaching a just verdict. But at least the Azande's criminal-justice system does what is asked of it: civil society is upheld; victims are avenged; peace is preserved. And the system has other advantages: chickens are unswayed by racial or ethnic solidarity, cannot be influenced by inflammatory pretrial publicity, don't sign book contracts, and never conceal conflicts of interest.

Fowl are fair.

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

With violence affecting so many lives, one can understand the desire—driven by fear—to lock away young male offenders. But considering their impoverished, danger-filled lives, I wonder whether the threat of being locked up for decades can really deter them from crime.

—Evans Hopkins

Questions to Ponder

- How do you define *crime*?
- How do you define *punishment*?
- Imagine that you have been appointed to a legislative committee to find ways to reduce crime in New Mexico. Come up with several specific suggestions. Write a brief rationale for each suggestion.
- Consider your life and an action you have taken that harmed someone. Write it down on a piece of paper. Next write down how you might make amends to absolve you of guilt. Wad up the paper. Do what you need to do to get rid of your guilt. Toss away the paper!
- Create a ritual of forgiveness. Perform the ritual. Forgive yourself. Was punishment necessary? Why or why not?

Leader's Guide: Crime and Punishment

In this session, we'll be exploring what constitutes crime . . . and punishment.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

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

Help us to bring darkness into the light,
To lift out the pain, the anger,
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The balance-wheel for our vulnerable, aching love . . .

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—May Sarton

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask group members to check in, telling in one or two sentences how they are doing this week. Share information about absent members.

Silence (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it if you would like.

Shared Readings (5 min)

Read this statement: "These quotes may come from times when words like 'man' and 'mankind' were used generically. We present these quotes as written and intend them to apply to everyone."

Have 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)

Do three rounds of deep sharing and deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure that everyone gets a turn to share.

Round 1 (10 min): What elements do you believe are necessary for a true crime to exist?

Round 2 (40 min): What punishments do you believe are effective in deterring crime?

Round 3 (15 min): Tell what criminal acts would you be willing to do and why, or speak to something that has come up for you in this session.

Closing Words (1 min)

Read or ask someone to read the closing words.

For centuries the death penalty, often accompanied by barbarous refinements, has been trying to hold crime in check; yet crime persists. Why? Because the instincts that are warring in man are not, as the law claims, constant forces in a state of equilibrium.

—Albert Camus

Closing Song (1 min)

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.