

Bulletin for Letting Go

Business

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice in fellowship
in love, laughter and praise,
drawing from it inspiration and hope,
and strength for the days to come.

Howard Thurman

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence – holding ourselves and each other in silent support

Shared Readings

In the act of letting go of our lives, we return more fully to them. . . . Is not falling, as much as climbing, our birthright? . . . We have all suffered, and will suffer, our own falls. The fall from youthful ideals, the waning of physical strength, the failure of a cherished hope, the loss of our near and dear, the fall into injury or sickness, and late or soon, the fall to our certain ends. We have no choice but to fall, and little say as to the time or the means.

Phillip Simmons Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life

We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come. *Joseph Campbell*

People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward. *C. S. Lewis*

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. *Lao Tzu*

Letting go doesn't mean giving up, but rather accepting that there are things that cannot be.
Author Unknown

So often has it been displayed to us, the hourglass with its grains of sand drifting down, not as an object in our world but as a sign, a symbol, our lives drifting down grain by grain, sifting away – I'm sure everyone must see this emblem somewhere in the mind. Yet not only our lives drift down. The stuff of ego with which we began, the mass in the upper chamber, filters away as love accumulates below. Now I am almost entirely love. *Hayden Carruth*

We must always change, renew, regenerate ourselves; otherwise we harden.
Johann von Goethe

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1

What is one thing you have held onto that enriches your life? What is one thing you have let go of that has opened your life to new possibilities?

Round 2

Share more deeply feelings, stories, and attitudes on Letting Go in response to the preparation materials.

Round 3

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Mary Oliver, from "In Backwater Woods"

Song

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit.
- 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 do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others.
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart.
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice.
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Facilitator Notes for Letting Go

Business

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice in fellowship
in love, laughter and praise,
drawing from it inspiration and hope,
and strength for the days to come.

Howard Thurman

Sharing of Joys and Concerns (each person about 2 minutes)

Silence – holding ourselves and each other in silent support (3 minutes)

Shared Readings

In the act of letting go of our lives, we return more fully to them. . . . Is not falling, as much as climbing, our birthright? . . . We have all suffered, and will suffer, our own falls. The fall from youthful ideals, the waning of physical strength, the failure of a cherished hope, the loss of our near and dear, the fall into injury or sickness, and late or soon, the fall to our certain ends. We have no choice but to fall, and little say as to the time or the means.

Phillip Simmons Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life

We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come. *Joseph Campbell*

People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward. *C. S. Lewis*

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. *Lao Tzu*

Letting go doesn't mean giving up, but rather accepting that there are things that cannot be.
Author Unknown

So often has it been displayed to us, the hourglass with its grains of sand drifting down, not as an object in our world but as a sign, a symbol, our lives drifting down grain by grain, sifting away – I'm sure everyone must see this emblem somewhere in the mind. Yet not only our lives drift down. The stuff of ego with which we began, the mass in the upper chamber, filters away as love accumulates below. Now I am almost entirely love. *Hayden Carruth*

We must always change, renew, regenerate ourselves; otherwise we harden.
Johann von Goethe

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

In the 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 (each person about 2 minutes)

What is one thing you have held onto that enriches your life? What is one thing you have let go of that has opened your life to new possibilities?

Round 2 (each person about 5 minutes)

Share more deeply feelings, stories, and attitudes on Letting Go in response to the preparation materials.

Round 3

As time allows, share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Words

To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Mary Oliver, from "In Backwater Woods"

Song

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit.
- 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 do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others.
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart.
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice.
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Preparation for Letting Go

Holding on. Letting go. Holding on. Letting go. We do both throughout our lives, and both are needed. The right combination varies from person to person, and finding the right balance is tricky. We receive many messages about holding on. “Hold fast to your dreams.” “Persevere.” “Reuse and recycle.” “Work on your relationships.” Sometimes these messages are valid, and holding on strengthens our lives. Many times, though, we hold on to that which no longer has meaning for us or is hurtful to us.

The dilemma can be as concrete as our stuff. It would make no sense to buy/discard, buy/discard, and buy/discard. Yet many of us have houses filled with things that we no longer need and that no longer have meaning for us. What is it that keeps us holding on when letting them go would simplify our daily lives? Whether to hold onto or let go of relationships is another problem. If we let go of friends, relatives, and partners every time we are hurt, we would only have superficial, transitory contact with people. On the other hand, we sometimes find ourselves staying involved with people who are continually hurtful to us. What makes us hold on to them even when they bring pain instead of joy?

Some of us hold on to aspects of ourselves that keep us from being who we want to be. “I am an introvert so I can’t” “I am a capable person so I must” Sometimes we participate in activities we no longer enjoy. We may hold assumptions about life that worked well in the past but now keep us from moving into our futures. We sometimes hold on to pain and resentments. Why is it so hard to free ourselves of that which no longer serves us and let ourselves become who we are right now?

As we age, life forces us to let go of many things. Our opportunities diminish and we realize we will never achieve some of our dreams. Our bodies don’t work as well and we must give up some activities we love. Some of us will face the loss of our mental abilities and our independence. Society changes and things we love and believe in are now passé. More and more frequently we lose loved ones to death. Finally, we will all face death, the ultimate letting go.

Holding on. Letting go.

And we may start to feel that this is a time of always letting go, of one thing after another after another: Our waistlines. Our vigor. Our sense of adventure. Our 20/20 vision. Our trust in justice. Our earnestness. Our playfulness. Our dream of being a tennis star, or a TV star, or a senator, or the woman for whom Paul Newman finally leaves Joanne At several points in our life we will have to relinquish a former self-image and move on. *Judith Viorst in Necessary Losses*

Think about any attachments that are depleting your emotional reserves. Consider letting them go.
Oprah Winfrey

When cast into the depths, to survive, we must first let go of things that will not save us. Then we must reach out for the things that can. As to the former, until we free ourselves from an attachment to false sources of security and let go of our illusions, we will remain in the abyss. With respect to the latter, the most important thing to remember is that lifelines have two ends. To grasp one end, however tightly, avails us nothing unless the other end is secured. Unless we reach out to and for others, seeking meaning not in our own suffering but in our shared experience of the human condition, our lifelines will not hold.
Forrest Church

The birds are molting. If only man could molt also—his mind once a year its errors, his heart once a year its useless passions. *James Allen*

I opened the closet door
and there they were...
suits and dresses
standing like silent sentinels
in memory of a life I once knew.
Dressed professionally each day,
I went out to meet the world.
More casual and more comfortable now,
my garments speak of an easy day
with few deadlines to meet
and time between the daily chores
that make up my life now.
Yet I stand before that closet door
and mourn the death
of the one
who wore those clothes.
Molly Strode, Letting Go of Who We Were

No pain is greater than living a life without meaning or one filled with regrets. Pain always manifests itself when we refuse to grow. We need to learn to interpret our pain, be it emotional, physical, or spiritual, as a message from our intuitive self to change. Pain arises when something inside us is being denied. Moving beyond the pain, breaking old patterns, letting go of outworn beliefs, and following your heart is how to find true joy. *George Land and Beth Jarman*

... we deal most fruitfully with loss by accepting the fact that we will one day lose everything. When we learn to fall, we learn that only by letting go our grip on all that we ordinarily find most precious—our achievements, our plans, our loved ones, our very selves—can we find, ultimately, the most profound freedom. In the act of letting go of our lives, we return more fully to them
Phillip Simmons in Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life

Questions to Ponder

1. In the past, what have you successfully let go of in your life, and what do you think made letting go possible for you? What did you gain from letting go?
2. Think about aspects of your life in which letting go would be freeing. Consider relationships or dreams that no longer feed your spirit, ways of being or thinking that no longer fit who you are now, resentment or pain in your heart, or that closet full of stuff you no longer use.

To what are you holding on for dear life, and what needs are being served?
What does the prospect of releasing feel like?
What would you lose or gain?
What would help you let go?
3. What has life forced you to let go of, even though you haven't wanted to? How have you coped?
4. Do you think our society places too much emphasis on letting go? On holding on? How do you find a balance between the two?
5. What for you are the spiritual dimensions of letting go?