

Aging

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings:

We grow neither better nor worse as we grow old, but more like ourselves.

May Becker

Wholly unprepared, we embark upon the second half of life . . . we take the step into the afternoon of life.

Carl Jung

Albert Camus said that 'to grow old is to replace passion with compassion.'

To me old age is always fifteen years older than I am.

Bernard Baruch

Most of us go to our grave with our music still inside us.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

The older I grow, the more I listen to people who don't talk much.

Germaine Glien

Old age is like flying through a storm. Once you're aboard, there's nothing you can do.

Golda Meir

The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.

Muhammad Ali

"Aging and saging" ceremonies should be available men and women. To celebrate and mark aging gives us validity and worth. It's a sacred and pivotal moment.

Katherine Roback

Life should begin with age and its privileges and accumulations, and end with youth and its capacity to splendidly enjoy such advantages.

Mark Twain

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I In a few sentences tell about the part of aging most threatens you most?

Round II Each person will have a chance to share more deeply feelings, stories and experiences related to aging.

Round III A more general discussion

Group Business

Look over homework together

Closing – Meditation on Hands

Closing Words

Song "Go Now in Peace"

Covenant Groups

Aging

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 goodbye if I 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 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.



Leader's Notes for Aging

*** (Try to allow time for the third round – the discussion time. After the input of the two previous rounds, the discussion is likely to be very rich.)

*** **Before the meeting be sure to read over the Meditation on Hands used at the closing of the meeting. It can be a powerful ending to this session on Aging.**

Chalice Lighting: (2 min)

7:00-7:15

Ask a group member to read a chalice lighting reading from your manual. There is a separate copy in the pocket of the manual.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: (10 min)

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

Silence: (3 min)

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

Shared Readings: (5min)

7:15-7:20

Go around your group, letting persons in turn read one of the readings.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening: Do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening.

Round I (15 min)

7:20-7:35

In a few sentences tell about a part of aging most threatens you? You might choose a physical issue, mental issues, being productive, being needed, connecting with others, loss of security...? This may not be the most important one...simply one that comes to your mind just now. Take a minute to think about your response. (Pause) We'll go around the circle. I'll start.

Round II (40 min)

7:35-8:15

Each person will have a chance to share more deeply feelings, experiences and stories related to aging.

Round III A more general discussion

As time allows

Group Business:

8:20-8:30

Pass out Q and Q (homework) for next time. Preview it with the group. Tell them: Read over the homework, then respond to the questions you are drawn to. There is lots of material here, it is intended to give you fertile ground for thinking about this subject. You don't need to answer every question. You may want to respond to just one or two questions.

Closing: Meditation on Hands – by Christine Robinson, adapted

I invite you into a space of quiet and peace, to ground yourself by noticing your contact with chair and floor, by sitting straight, by becoming aware of your breathing. Look at your hands.

They've been through a lot, those hands ... they have strengths, scars, beauty.... I invite you to remember that it is your hands that do the work of love in the world. These hands may hold another's hands. These hands may type emails to politicians, sign cards of consolation and congratulation. These hands may patiently teach, quilt works of beauty or write words urging peace. These hands may bathe children, feed elders, nurse the ill, work the earth, organize communities. These hands clasp in prayer, open in release, grasp in solidarity, clench in righteous anger. These hands are God's hands, your hands, our hands; a great mystery of flesh and intention, a great potential of embodied love.

(Continue with a bit of silence.)

(The next part you'll have to just say since you'll be holding hands along with everyone else!) Now join hands around the chalice. Look at your partners hands, turning them so that you can both see each other's hands.

(After a minute or so, invite each person to say one or two words about an insight they have had this evening or the way they are feeling as we close.)

Sing: Go Now in Peace

Aging

Simone de Beauvoir states, "Old age was growing inside me. It kept catching my eye from the depths of the mirror. I was paralyzed sometimes as I saw it making its way toward me so steadily when nothing inside me was ready for it."

Billy Collins, the poet, suggests one loss of aging - forgetfulness:

...as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain...
No wonder you rise in the middle of the night
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

Athletes past their prime sometimes complain that it's the legs that go first. For me it's nouns, especially names of people, movies and books, also my knees, my hearing...and where did my waist go?

1. What about aging paralyzes you? Make a list of losses (for your eyes only).

Over the years, I've been watching church members, relatives, and neighbors age gracefully, or not. I'm amassing my list of successful strategies. So as I get old, please remind me...

- to keep making new friends, especially friends who are younger than I am. Young friends make for a younger mind-set, an up-to-date set of technological skills...Young friends...real friends...will tell me if my appearance has become eccentric or worse, and will lovingly warn me that I need to curtail my driving. And may I remember that by the first time somebody works up the courage to bring up this subject, it will be time to stop driving.
- to get rid of the things I don't need any more...my ladders when I don't climb, my car when I don't drive, my sewing machine (and my stash of fabric!) when I can't see. Remind me to do these things as they come along, when I can choose to whom I will give them and spare the ones who will have to help me pack up my home at last.
- to give up the idea, right now, that I will live independently in my own, too-big house all my life. To be ready to make the change to assisted housing in time that I'll have the energy to make new friends and enjoy new activities there.
- to stay in touch with my relatives.
- and to take care of my body. It's got to last as long as I do.

Portion of a blog, Graceful Aging, by Christine Robinson

2. What is on your To Do list for Graceful Aging? Are you already doing some of these?

3. Think back on your life so far. Did you have a favorite age, or is your favorite time always just where you are? Tell about that time.

4. Look at the decades ahead of you in your life. What does each decade bring from your present perspective – concerns, challenges, and opportunities? What is gained as you grow older?

5. What strategies do you use now and hope to use to “get through the rough places” as you grow older...courage, acceptance, flexibility, humor? How do they work for you?

6. As your parents aged, how did that affect your relationship with them?

7. Who has been a model for you in terms of aging...a parent, grandparent...? Tell a story about that person.