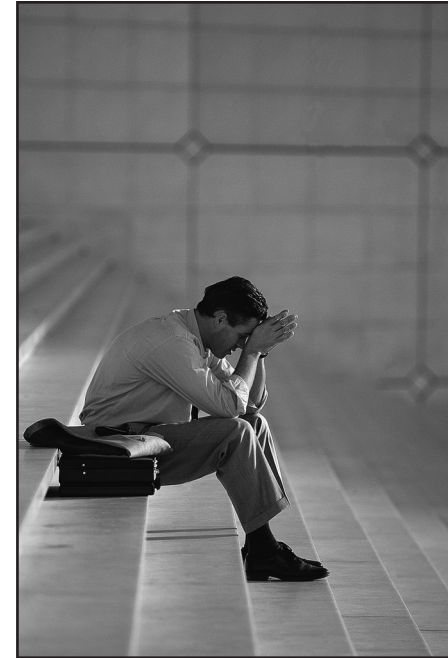


## The Covenant

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 avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- 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



# DEPRESSION

# DEPRESSION

## **Chalice Lighting**

*Take courage friends.*

*The way is often hard, the path is never clear,  
and the stakes are very high.*

*Take courage.*

*For deep down, there is another truth:*

*You are not alone.*

-Wayne Arnason

## **Sharing of Joys and Concerns**

## **Silence**

## **Readings**

*There is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and have recovered hope.*

-George Eliott

*There is no coming to consciousness without pain.*

-Carl Jung

*Melancholy thoughts carve out an interior space where wisdom can take up residence.*

-Thomas Moore

*So sometimes one has simply to endure a period of depression for what it may hold of illumination if one can live through it, attentive to what it exposes or demands.*

-May Sarton

*Perhaps the most damning consequence of depression's work on the human soul is the way it drains our ability to love. Depressed people lose the ability to love themselves, friends, family, and the larger world.*

-Andrew Solomon

*Instead of showing ourselves as we truly are, we show ourselves as we believe others want us to be. We wear masks, and with practice we do it better and better, and they serve us well – except that it gets very lonely inside the mask, because inside the mask that each of us wears there is a person who both longs to be known and fears to be known.*

-Frederick Buechner

## **Round 1**

Jot down descriptors of feelings and thoughts when you are depressed. Use metaphors if you like. For instance you might say a heavy coat you can't take off. Share a phrase that describes your feelings when you are depressed.

## **Round 2**

Please share your thoughts and stories related to any of the quotes or questions in the homework or bulletin.

## **Round 3**

Share anything significant to you that came up during the second round.

## **Closing Words**

## **Song “Go Now in Peace”**

## **Group Business**

## **Leader's Notes for Depression**

- Have pencils or pens available for use in Round 1.
- This can be a very intense session. If it seems that someone in your group has had serious problems with depression, you might want to be in touch with them after the session or in a few days. One way you might help is to ask, "If this session was difficult for you, have you ever thought about seeking counseling?"

### **Say to the group:**

Before we get started let's remind ourselves that we are not therapists. Our job is to listen in the healing way that deep listening provides. Although we want to help those we care about, we are not responsible for, nor necessarily capable of, making depressed persons in our lives feel better.

### **Chalice Lighting** (3 min)

### **Sharing of Joys and Concerns:** (10 min)

### **Silence:** (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. You might say these words:

- You have to be silent. You have to listen to the quiet callings of the heart.  
*Carlos Castaneda*
- Silence is the language of God; it is also the language of the heart. *Dag Hammarskjöld*

### **Shared Readings:** (5 min)

Go around your group letting each person in turn read from Shared Readings in the bulletin until all the readings have been read.

### **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening:**

**Round I** (10 min) On the front cover of the bulletin jot down descriptors of feelings and thoughts you have when you are depressed. Use metaphors if you like, for instance you might say *a heavy coat you can't take off*. Share a phrase that describes your feelings when you are depressed. Go around the group once.

**Round II** (45 min) Share thoughts and stories related to any of the quotes or questions in the homework or bulletin.

**Round III** (Optional) Share anything significant to you that came up during Round II.

### **Closing Words:**

May this place and this people be, for those enduring troubles, a place of comfort, community, peace.

May those currently navigating difficult waters—anxious, grieving, or hurt—find the connections they need to others and to their own deep wisdom.

And may our participation in this community of faith encourage us to live lives of connection, meaning, service, and truth.

Christine Robinson

### **Sing:** Go Now in Peace

### **Group Business:** Pass out homework.

## Depression

In this session we will be talking about our experiences of depression.

Depression is a serious problem for many. According to Andrew Solomon, research shows that about 3 percent of Americans – some 19 million people – find themselves in the clutches of chronic depression. Manic-depressive illness (bipolar disorder) afflicts 2.3 million. Depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States and abroad for persons over age five years adds Solomon.

Everyone has days of being “down in the dumps.” We all experience times of sadness and grief. Sometimes events in our lives are overwhelming and we succumb to pain and feelings of helplessness. We may feel hollow and empty and are unable to “shake the blues.” These are all feelings connected to depression.

There is no simple answer to what causes depression, because several factors may play a part in the onset of the illness of depression. These include: a genetic or family history of depression, psychological or emotional vulnerability to depression, biological factors, and life events or environmental stressors. Most therapy plans include both psychological therapy along with medication. Depression is very complex, both in cause and in ways to deal with it.

*New medications have helped literally millions of people, and understanding certain problems as physiologically rather than psychologically based has changed somewhat how we think about depression. Richard O'Connor*

*Depression is nourished by a lifetime of ungrieved and unforgiven hurts. Penelope Sweet*

*Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm. Steven Wright*

*Biography becomes biology. Our bodies contain our histories – every chapter, line and verse of every event and relationship in our lives. Caroline Myers*

Poets have tried for centuries to capture the angst and helplessness of depression. Rainer Maria Rilke perhaps does it best in this poem.

*It's possible I am pushing through solid rock  
in flintlike layers, as the ore lies, alone;  
I am such a long way in I see no way through,  
and no space: everything is close to my face,  
and everything close to my face is stone.*

Almost everyone has someone in their family or circle of friends who suffers from depression. Donald Hall, author, speaks of his wife who was depressed. Although she said her despair had nothing to do with him, he said it was heartbreaking not to be able to give her comfort.

*Depressed people lose the ability to love themselves, friends, family, and the larger world...it degrades one's self and ultimately eclipses the capacity to give or receive affection. It is the aloneness within us made manifest, and it destroys not only connection to others but also the ability to be peacefully alone with oneself. Andrew Soloman*

There can be an up side to depression.

*Learn from depression what qualities the soul needs...Depression may be as important a channel for valuable "negative" feelings, as expressions of affection are for the emotions of love...Melancholy gives the soul an opportunity to express a side of its nature that is as valid as any other, but is hidden out of our distaste for its darkness and bitterness. Thomas Moore*

*Paradoxically, depression may be just the motivation we need to re-examine things. Joan Borysenko.*

*No matter what you're feeling, the only way to get a difficult feeling to go away is simply to love yourself for it. If you think you're stupid, then love yourself for feeling that way. It's a paradox, but it works. To heal, you must be the first one to shine the light of compassion on any areas within you that you feel are unacceptable. Christiane Northrup*

*We would never look at a person in a wheelchair or on crutches and say, "You could get up and walk if you really wanted to." We'd never say to someone with Alzheimer's, "You'd remember my name if you just tried harder." But, with depression sometimes we do fall into the false idea that if the person just bucked up, just tried a little harder, just had some willpower, they'd be OK. Why do we slip into assuming that this illness can be treated with will-power when we wouldn't tell somebody with a broken leg to "walk it off"? Thom Belote*

## Questions

Today where are you on [this](#) scale of depression?

Very depressed \_\_\_\_\_ Not depressed

1. Describe your thoughts and feelings when you have been depressed. Often depression is best described by a metaphor. If you have such a metaphor, describe it here.
2. Think about a time when you were depressed. What triggered it?
3. When things get tough, I am most likely to \_\_\_\_\_. What else?
4. How important is it to talk to someone when you are depressed? Name three people you would be willing to talk to when things get bad.
5. How do you "come out of" the depressed time? What are some indicators that this time of depression is lifting?
6. What have you learned as a "gift" from depression?
7. If you have lived with someone who has depression, describe what this was like.