

Preparation for Endings

This session represents the last session for your covenant group. Our lives are full of beginnings and endings. We will spend some time in awareness, reflection, and appreciation as we consider the ending of this covenant group along with other endings in our lives.

Our time together will be a chapter in the stories of our lives. *Danita Nolan*

Beginnings and endings go together. We would like to imagine that our lives are a series of only beginnings, but the fact of the matter is that nothing begins without an attendant ending, and there are no gains in our lives that do not include losses. *Christine Robinson*

My friend, let's not think of tomorrow, but let's enjoy this fleeting moment of life.
Omar Khayyam

What is born will die,
What has been gathered will be dispersed,
What has been accumulated will be exhausted,
What has been built up will collapse,
And what has been high will be brought low.
Buddha

Appreciation can give a meaning to endings. *Patrick Dawson*

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it. *Gilda Radner*

Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh invented the word "interbeing" to describe sacred time. In every human experience, you cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be, to be in relationship with others or other things. Covenant groups are concentrated experiences of inter-being. We each bring our separate lives to create a life together. *Adapted from Rev. Thandeka*

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
T. S. Eliot

Throughout our lives we have to learn to say goodbye. Sometimes it is "Goodbye for now" and sometimes it is truly "goodbye." I remember as I got older and we would visit my grandparents at some point I became aware I needed to soak in my time with them, that when I said goodbye there was always the question of whether I would see them again. Our culture does not do a very good job with goodbyes. We resist them. We deny them. For to say goodbye is to realize that we live while we are dying. We are never assured another hello, another sunrise. I love in the Jewish prayer book that each morning you offer thanks for the opportunity to see another rising of the sun and you ask to see it rest in the west and that when darkness falls you ask for another dawning of light. Each day is a gift and a blessing and we are only assured the moment we are in right now. *Margaret Sequeira, UU minister, sermon at UU Congregation of the Outer Banks*

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked. . . . The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain. . . . When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy. When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight. *Kahlil Gibran*

Only as the old me dies, can the new me . . . be born. *Robert Raines, To Kiss the Joy*

We clasp the hands of those that go before us,
And the hands of those who come after us.
We enter the little circle of each other's arms
And the larger circle of lovers,
Whose hands are joined in a dance
And the larger circle of all creatures,
Passing in and out of life, who move also in a dance,
To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
Except in fragments.
Wendell Berry

Questions to Ponder

Endings in your life:

1. Do you remember a “goodbye” from your childhood? Who or what were you leaving?
2. Recall a good and an unsatisfactory “goodbye” from your adult years. What made the good one good? What made the unsatisfactory one less that satisfying?
3. Think of an ending that has occurred more recently in your life, and then consider:
 - The transition that resulted for you after the ending
 - What you learned from this ending and transition that has been (or might be) useful in responding to future endings
4. Think of a story in your life about the relationship of sorrow and joy.

Ending of our group:

5. What is something you appreciate about this group as it has been?
6. What are the insights and gifts of wisdom you've found during the year? In yourself? From the others in your covenant group?
7. As a result of this group, how have you changed?