

Bulletin for Endings

Business

Chalice Lighting

Spirit of life and love,
We have come together
In search of understanding,
In search of community.
We have come in search of hope and healing.
This has been a place
Not only of searching, but of discovery . . .
A place not only of learning, but of wisdom . . .
A place not only of meeting, but of connection . . .
We honor this circle of love, ever expanding, ever growing.
adapted, Sue Ayer

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence – holding each other in silent support

Shared Readings

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive at where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T. S. Eliot

Endings are a catharsis. They give meaning to what comes before, and change us from the way we were.
Steven Winn

Learning to live is learning to let go. *Sogyal Rinpoche*

People tend to be uncomfortable with endings, because every ending is a little death. That's why in many languages, the word for "goodbye" means "see you again." Whenever an experience comes to an end—a gathering of friends, a vacation, your children leaving home—you die a little death. *Eckhart Tolle*

Parting is such sweet sorrow. *William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet*

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

The things that matter most in our lives are not fantastic or grand. They are the moments when we touch one another, when we are there in the most attentive or caring way. This simple and profound intimacy is the love that we all long for. *Jack Kornfield*

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Round 1

Share a phrase or sentence from the readings.

Round 2

Share stories, feelings, and experiences of endings in response to the preparation about endings in your life.

Round 3

Take a moment for everyone to say one thing that they will remember from participating in the group.

Closing Activity

Closing Words

Here we finalize the venture we began together in the fall

We have opened our hearts by

Listening and sharing deeply from our hearts.

We have been patient with each other

And cheered one another.

We have celebrated and endured our transitions.

We have known joy in our exploring,

Energy in our quest,

Humor for our differences,

And compassion in our sufferings,

Always with a common caring that has held us

In our journey together.

adapted, Karen Lewis

Song or Chime

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 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?

Facilitator Notes for Endings

Before the Session

Make a large star for each person out of paper or card stock and bring the stars to the meeting. The star should be large enough for each person in the group to write a few words on, perhaps using front and back. Also bring enough pens or pencils for each person.

The star will be used in the Closing Activity near the end of the session. Read through this activity so that you are prepared to lead it.

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

Silence – holding each other in silent support – 3 minutes

Shared Readings

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Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

In the rounds of sharing, pay close attention to the allotted time so that all members have the opportunity to share. Note that the Closing Activity is expected to take about 10 minutes, so you may want to adjust times as necessary.

Round 1 (each person about 2 minutes)

Share a phrase or sentence from the Bulletin—the Chalice Lighting and the Shared Readings. Go around the circle several times with each person simply reading the phrase or sentence. Duplications are fine.

Round 2 (each person about 5 minutes)

Share stories, feelings, and experiences of endings in response to the preparation about endings in your life.

Round 3

Take a moment for everyone to say one thing that they will remember from participating in the group.

Closing Activity (about 10 minutes)

Pass out stars and pens around the circle. Ask everyone to put her or his name on a star.

Give instructions for how the group writes on each star:

Pass the star to the person on the left. Have each member write a word or two that characterizes the person named on that star. Then pass the star on to the next person. The star will eventually return to the original person, with six or seven descriptive words or phrases on it.

When all have finished and everyone has their own star, read this quote:

The only legacy we leave is the light that shines from our life.

Christine Robison

Then ask each person in the group to share his or her star, their legacy, by reading the words on their stars in this way: “This is my star; I am [*loving, deep, curious, caring, etc.*]” Go first to model the process.

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