

Facilitator Notes for Prayer

Before the Gathering

This session uses a Guided Meditation during the period of Silence. It is longer than the usual silence time – about 5 minutes. Practice reading it before the session so that you are comfortable with it.

Words of the Day

A practice in my life that might be called prayer is ...

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice to shine on our time together. In its light we celebrate the relationships and understanding we are creating in this place and time. May our sharing be deep. (*Light chalice*)

The Basket

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

The guided meditation for the time of silence is on the next page, so there won't be page-turning during this period.

Silence – Guided Meditation

During the time of silence read the following loving kindness meditation, about 5 minutes. Speak slowly throughout.

Pauses are marked: “...” indicates a short pause and “.....” indicates a longer one.

Instead of a time of silence, today we’re going to do a guided prayer or meditation which comes from the Buddhist tradition. It is called “metta,” or loving kindness meditation. I’ll guide you through the four parts, each of which will focus our loving kindness on a different person. The first person you will focus on is yourself. For the second part, choose a loved one to focus on. For the third, choose someone you encounter often but hardly know – your child’s teacher, perhaps, or a person who works down the hall from you. The fourth person you’ll focus on is someone you have anger or issues with. I’ll guide you through this, but before we start you need to have in mind your four people: yourself, a loved one, someone you don’t know well, and someone you have issues with.

Settle yourself comfortably, and take a few breaths. You may want to close your eyes.

.....

The first subject of our meditation is ourselves, so open your heart to yourself. Picture yourself in your mind’s eye as you listen to these words and repeat them to yourself. ...

May I be filled with loving kindness. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease. May I be whole.

.....

Now, focus your attention on the loved one you chose, picturing them in your mind’s eye. ...

May you be filled with loving kindness. May you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease. May you be whole.

.....

Now, change your focus to the person you chose who you encounter but don’t know well. Think of their name, picture their face. ...

May you be filled with loving kindness. May you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease. May you be whole.

.....

Now, change your focus again, to the person with whom you have issues. Try to keep that open heart, and picture their face in your mind’s eye. ...

May you be filled with loving kindness. May you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease. May you be whole.

.....

Now, as we end, I invite you to bring your awareness and your heart back to yourself. ...

May I be filled with loving kindness. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease. May I be whole.

.....

Open your eyes when you are ready.

Shared Readings

It is a personal matter, an intimate aspect of our living, and not the public proof of our righteousness. Prayer begins in the heart, that secret place within us all. Other living traditions have taught me that prayer is an honest expression of how we are in the very depths and doubts of our souls.

Rev. Daniel Budd

Prayer cannot bring water to parched land, nor mend a broken bridge, nor rebuild a ruined city, but prayer can water an arid soul, mend a broken heart, and rebuild a weakened will.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel

Love is our doctrine, the quest for truth is our sacrament and service is our prayer.

Unitarian Universalist affirmation

The Prophet Muhammad was once asked what was the one essential quality for prayers to be valid Muhammad's answer was: Presence in the heart. It is not so much presence of God.

God is always present. It is we humans who are absent from our own heart. *Omid Safi*

My sense of God has changed throughout my life, as I imagine it has for you, and yet something I've noticed is that my use of prayer has hardly changed at all. *Rev. Judith Meyer*

Prayer for me is an act of intimacy, and I leave space for something to break through, to break me open, call it insight, clarity, or God. *Rev. Joseph Boyd*

What I'd really like is for my life to be a prayer, an offering of thanksgiving. I could do it if I were always present, but I'm not. *Sylvia Boorstein*

The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken our inherent inner capacities strength, compassion and wisdom rather than to petition external forces. . . . Buddhist prayer is a form of meditation.

Roy Melvyn

After all, prayer is a way to gather power together, to name some deeper truths and to put words to the collective and personal yearnings of people. *Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1: Share your reflections on prayer and the preparation materials.

Round 2: Share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Circle

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again. (*Extinguish the chalice.*)

Song/Chime

Announcements

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 facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator 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, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”