

**Listening**  
UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Celebration and Closing Session for Small Group Ministry  
January 2014

*From the Minister:*

*This is your final session together as a group. It is time set aside to reflect on the year you have shared together, name any disappointments you may have experienced, and celebrate with pride what this group has come to mean to you, and what you have done together in service to others. Thank you for your ministry to one another! – Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur*

**Chalice Lighting**

We come together in an attitude of openness—not knowing quite what will happen, yet daring to receive a new idea, a new experience, sustenance for our minds and our hearts.

We come with an attitude of humility, knowing how much we need one another, how alone we can be in the world, how vulnerable if we face life only by ourselves.

We come in the spirit of love, seeking human warmth and fellowship in the hands and faces of those around us.

-Peter Lee Scott

**Covenant**

**Reflecting on Our Year Together** 5 minutes

Please take an index card and write a 1-2 sentence response to these two questions.

1. What would you like to hold onto about your time as a Small Group Ministry member this year? What was a highlight of this experience for you?
2. What would you like to let go of about your time with Small Group Ministry this year? What was disappointing or challenging about this experience?

**Lighting Candles** 5 minutes

As you light a candle, please share what you will hold onto about your experience here.

**Readings**

Listen softly. A bird is singing. A dog is barking; further away a dog barks in response.

Listen gently, with your entire body. Listen with your individual cells. Listen for what your fellow human being needs to say. Listen for what you need to hear, and at the same time, surrender all your needs. Listen with your heart.

-Jillian Brasch

We have begun to learn about a method of deep listening. As we already know, we have to practice before we can listen deeply. Sometimes we can also translate “deep listening” as compassionate listening, that is, to listen with compassion, or to listen with love. We hear

with one aim only; we don't listen in order to criticize, to blame, to correct the person who is speaking or to condemn the person. We listen with one aim, and that is to relieve the suffering of the one we are listening to.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again... Simple, truthful conversation where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each listen well.

- Margaret Wheatley

### **Questions for consideration:**

1. Describe a person in your life now, or in your past, who is a good listener. What was she or he like? How did you feel around this person?
2. Describe a time in your life when you did not feel heard or listened to. What was that like?
3. Do you agree that we can "change the world" by listening? How?

**Sharing** 40 minutes

### **Closing Ritual**

As you blow out a candle, please share from your card one disappointment you would like to let go of from our year together.

### **Warm Fuzzies**

As you toss the warm fuzzy to another person, please share one thing you appreciate or have learned from that person. Try to be as specific as you can. Then, pass it on!

### **Closing Words**

As we now part from one another, let these be our thoughts:

If that which is most holy lies within the human person, and if the greatest power in the world shines flickering and uncertain from each individual heart, then it is easy to see the value of human associations dedicated to nurturing that light: the couple, the family, the religious community.

For the power of good in any one of us must at times waver. But when a group together is dedicated to nurturing the power of good, it is rare for the light to grow dim in all individuals at the same moment.

So we borrow courage and wisdom from one another, to warm us and keep us until we're together again.

- Eileen Karpeles