

Prayer
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
February 2014

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

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

You may wish to bring your attention to your breath, or move a bit until you have found a comfortable seat. If silence is not a familiar experience to you, three minutes may seem long. If you are accustomed to silence, it may seem short.

On Our Hearts 20 minutes

Please share your name and where you live. This is also a time to share wonderful news or a heavy heart - the major highs and lows of your life you'd like everyone to keep in their hearts or in their prayers for you.

Covenant and Ground Rules

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 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 ask questions gently and only if necessary;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

- Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins, *Heart to Heart* (adapted)

Readings

Some of my best prayers have been arguments with God.

- as told to Gail Goodwin

Prayer doesn't change things. Prayer changes people, and people change things.
- Lon Ray Call, Unitarian minister

You don't have to believe in any prayer-answering god at all to benefit from speaking or writing out your problems or your pain. The experience of putting your thoughts in order is beneficial in itself. Even if nobody hears, you hear and become your own good listener. Helping professionals will tell you that much of their helpfulness is just that they listen, which allows people to talk and hear themselves and notice their own wisdom as it wells up from within them. Even if you don't want to call this activity prayer, it's good to know that it is identical to the activity that other people call prayer.
- Alicia Hawkins and Christine Robinson, *Soul to Soul*

Mother Teresa was once asked by an interviewer what she said to God when she prayed. "I don't say much," replied Mother Teresa, "mostly I just listen." "And what does God say to you?" asked the interviewer. "He doesn't say much," she replied. "Mostly He just listens."
- attributed to Mother Teresa

Questions for consideration:

1. Did anybody teach you to pray when you were a child? Did you ever try it? Did someone pray with you or require you to pray?
2. When have you been an answer to someone's prayer?
3. How do you pray - or not pray - in your life now?
4. What is the role of listening in your spiritual life? Does silence play a role?

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Reflecting On Our Time Together

Please share how you showed up in our time together. Do you wish you had said something more, less, different? How are you leaving our time together? Feeling words are ok: sad, mad, glad, peaceful, powerful, joyful.

Closing Words

We are really alive when we listen to each other, to the silences of each other as well as the words and what lies behind the words.
-Frederick Buechner, author and Presbyterian minister