

Loss: the practice of letting go
UU Community Church of Santa Monica Small Group Ministry
Adapted from *Heart to Heart: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing*
by Alicia Hawkins and Christine Robinson
October 2014

Chalice Lighting

This is the light of faith and hope and love, which shines in our lives even in the darkest times. This is the light of the gathered community, which holds us and comforts us when we grieve. This is the light of our ongoing search for truth and meaning, which gives a path even through loss. We light this light and invoke the light that illumines life and death and shines beyond both.

-Christine Robinson

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

On Our Hearts 20 minutes

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

We are not accustomed to thinking of grief in any way other than that associated with death. Nevertheless, people grieve when they clearly cease to have the protections of childhood. They grieve when they go away from home for the first time. They grieve when they have to give up their first love. They grieve when they suffer a serious illness or injury. They grieve when they leave each stage of life for another. People grieve when they change jobs or homes; when they leave one beloved and comfortable community for another. For a teenager the end of an infatuation or friendship can bring on a grief as profound and as serious as the grief which may follow the death of a grandparent.

-John Nichols

It doesn't interest me how old you are... I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and

closed from fear of further pain! I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it... It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.
-Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It's possible I am pushing through solid rock
in flintlike layers, as the ore lies, alone
I am such a long way in I see no way through,
and no space: everything is close to my face,
and everything close to my face is stone.

I don't have much knowledge yet in grief—
so this massive darkness makes me small,
You be the master: make yourself fierce, break in:
then your great transforming will happen to me
and my great grief cry will happen to you.
-Rainer Maria Rilke

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song.
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.
-W.H. Auden

Questions for consideration

1. When has loss been easy for you? Was there a time when you let go of a person, a community, a role, a significant material good, or an ability with gladness?
2. When has loss been hard for you? What losses of loved ones, moving away, material goods, role, or ability stand out in your life?
3. How have you honored the memory of what you have let go of in your life, including people?
4. How has your spiritual/religious life helped you, or not helped you, cope with loss?

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Reflecting On Our Time Together

Closing Words

To be human is to know loss, and, indeed, the more fully human we are, the more loss we will know and the deeper we will feel the losses; for the more we love and care, the more we have to lose.

-William Murray