

Hope
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Celebration and Closing Session for Small Group Ministry
December 2014

From Your Minister: As you gather for your final session together as a group, I hope you will 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.

*I am grateful for the ministry you have offered one another, and our church!
– Rev. Rebecca Benefiel Bijur*

Chalice Lighting

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

On Our Hearts

Reflecting on Our Year Together

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

1. What would you like to hold onto about your time in Small Group Ministry this year, including any service projects? What was a highlight of your year?
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

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

Readings

Causes and effects assume history marches forward, but history is not an army. It is a crab scuttling sideways, a drip of soft water wearing away stone, an earthquake breaking centuries of tension. Sometimes one person inspires a movement, or her words do decades later; sometimes a few passionate people change the world; sometimes they start a mass movement and millions do; sometimes those millions are stirred by the same outrage or the same ideal and change comes upon us like a change of weather. All that these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in hope. To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on the future, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty is better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk.

I say all this to you because hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. I say this because hope is an ax you break down doors with in an emergency; because hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal. Hope just means another

world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope.

-Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*

Hope has two beautiful [children]. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to see they don't remain the way they are.

- Augustine of Hippo

Rather than hope for eventual victory, for a world without injustice or serious conflict, I describe the power of having a more modest hope, a hope for resilience, a hope for company along the way.

-Sharon Welch, UU theologian

Questions for consideration:

1. Who or what gives you hope in this world?
2. When has there been in a time in your life when hope was “an ax you break down doors with”? A time of “more modest hope”?
3. What role does hope have in your spiritual life?
4. If hope were a living thing, instrument, or food, what would it look, sound, or taste like?

Sharing

Closing Ritual and Extinguishing Candles

When someone deeply listens to you
it is like holding out a dented cup
you've had since childhood
and watching it fill up with
cold, fresh water.

When it balances on top of the brim,
you are understood.

When it overflows and touches your skin,
you are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you
your barefeet are on the earth
and a beloved land that seemed distant
is now at home within you.

— John Fox

As you blow out a candle, please share from your card one disappointment or regret 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!