

**Hope**  
UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
December Celebration and Closing Session  
Heart to Heart Circles 2016

*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*

**Evaluations**

Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation survey provided by your facilitators. Thank you for helping us to continue to learn and improve this program.

**Chalice Lighting**

We light this chalice

To warm our memories of all we have shared this year

We light this chalice

To illuminate our challenges and disappointments, so we can face them together

We light this chalice

To spark a celebration of what we have done in service to one another and others

We light this chalice

To blaze a path for those who will follow after we are gone.

-Rebecca Benefiel Bijur

**Sharing Silence 3 minutes**

**On Our Hearts**

**Covenant and Ground Rules**

I commit myself:

- to give attendance at meetings a real priority knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to participate with my group in two service projects, one for our church community, and one for the wider community;
- 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, problem solving, or giving advice;

- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

## **Housekeeping**

### **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 Heart to Heart 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 our Heart to Heart Circles 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****Extinguishing Candles**

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. You may also blow out a candle silently.

**Web of Appreciation**

Facilitators will lead this embodied sharing of appreciation and connection. When all are connected, we will share our closing reading together.

**Closing Words**

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