

Grace
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
November 2013

Chalice Lighting

I am not fussy about forms or spiritual geography. Whether help comes from the outside or inside, by praying or willing, is not important. What is important is that help can come!
- Greta Crosby

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.

Check in / On Our Hearts 15 minutes

Covenant

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of our group.

Readings

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found
was blind, but now I see.
-- John Newton

A cartoon in the *New Yorker* a while back shows bicyclists in four panels. In the first, a young man in sleek cycling attire pedals away while the balloon over his head captures his thinking, "Fitness." In the second, a woman with baskets and saddlebags filled with bundles thinks, "Environment." In the third, a teenager thinks, "Independence." And in the last, a young child, smiling ear to ear, thinks simply, "Wind."
-- quoted by Jeanne Niewejarr, *Fluent in Faith*

In some Middle Eastern languages, the word for "rain" and "grace" are the same, suggesting invisible gifts falling on our ground, enriching the soil of our souls...There may be no more slippery and unnerving theological concept for Unitarian Universalists to address than "grace." Slippery, because grace is a blessing beyond our grasp and unnerving, because grace is beyond our achievement. To complicate matters, grace appears too mystical for our rational side and too passive for our activist bent.
-- Tom Owen-Towle, *Theology Ablaze*

Questions for consideration:

1. Describe “a moment of grace” in your life, when you received a gift unsought and perhaps unearned.
2. In your theology and/or personal experience, what does “grace” mean? Where does grace come from?
3. What does the song “Amazing Grace” evoke in you? What feelings come up for you when you sing or hear this song?
4. When you were growing up or now, did you share a table blessing or “say grace” before mealtimes? What words do you share, and how are these words important to you now?

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Reflecting On Our Time Together

Please reflect on how you experienced our time together. Do you wish you had said something more, less, different? How are you leaving our circle right now? Feeling words are ok: sad, mad, glad, peaceful, powerful, joyful.

Closing Words

Break not the circle of enabling love
where people grow, forgiven and forgiving,
break not that circle, make it wider still,
till it includes, embraces all the living.
- #323 Break Not the Circle, *Singing the Living Tradition*