

Joy
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
December 2013

Evaluation 10 minutes

Please pick up an evaluation and complete it at this time. When you are done, please put it in the envelope provided. When all are done, please retrieve your facilitator.

Chalice Lighting

I cannot believe that the inscrutable universe turns on an axis of suffering; surely the strange beauty of the world must somewhere rest on pure joy!

- Louise Bogan

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.

Check In / On Our Hearts 20 minutes

Housekeeping

- Final session in January, with closing celebration and ritual
- Sign-ups for Small Group Ministry 2014 – look for these in January!

Readings

Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself. – attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every child has known God—not the God of names, not the God of don'ts, not the God who never does anything weird. Rather the God who only knows four words and keeps repeating them: "Come, dance with me!"

- Hafiz, translated by Daniel Ladinsky

Joy and woe are woven fine, clothing for the soul divine:
under every grief and pine runs a joy with silken twine.

- William Blake

Problems arose for translators [of the Christian Bible] when they encountered certain words... for which there was no corresponding term in the Inuit language. For example, there's a passage that tells that the disciples are filled with joy upon meeting Jesus. Since

there's no word for joy in the Inuit language, the translators had to find some other way to express the meaning of the scripture.

In their research, they discovered that one of the most joyful times for an Inuit family is when the sled dogs are fed in the evening. The dogs come barking and yelping, running about and wagging their tails furiously; the children are squealing with delight, and the neighbors join the dreadful commotion as well... the translators used that particular event to help convey the meaning of the aforementioned biblical passage. As a result, when the scripture was translated [into] English, it read, "When the disciples saw Jesus, they wagged their tails."

- as told by Tom Owen Towle

Questions for consideration:

1. How have dancing, singing, laughing, playing, or any other "tail-wagging" practices been part of your life in the past? How about now?
2. What gave you joy as a child? Did you love playing sports, art, music, stamp collecting, fantasy games, surfing, clowning?
3. What shadowed your joy as a child – what were you told you just couldn't or shouldn't do? If you could try those things now, would you?
4. What relationship do joy and play have to your spiritual life? How does play nurture your soul?

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.

Extinguishing the Chalice

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*