

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

CONTENTS

EXPERIENCING YOUR VOCATION

WHAT IS MY FAITH IN THE FUTURE?

WHAT DO I BELIEVE ABOUT OTHERS?

WHAT AM I WILLING TO NOTICE IN MY WORLD?

LISTENING

BEYOND THE WORD “GOD” - ITS MEANING TO US

TRANSITIONS

ASK ME WHAT I’M LIVING FOR

POETRY

PROBLEMS AND GIFTS

RETREAT AND RENEWAL

TAKING TIME TO THINK

RECALLING CHILDHOOD

INTO ADULthood

INTO OUR OWN - THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING ADULTS

THE COLORS OF OUR LIVES

STEREOTYPING

WORSHIP

WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?

“EXTENDED” FAMILY

“OPEN TO THE SKY OF THE ETERNAL”

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

BRINGING TREASURES INTO OUR HOMES

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

SMALL GROUP SESSION – 1

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

EXPERIENCING YOUR VOCATION

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

We don't set out to save the world;
we set out to wonder how other people
are doing and to reflect on how our actions
affect other people's hearts.

Pema Chodron

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: A Vocation to be Fully Human?

The notion of vocation ...describes a "call," work that is given to us, that we are meant to do. We don't decide what our vocation is, we receive it. It always originates from outside us. Therefore, we can't talk about vocation or a calling without acknowledging that there is something going on beyond our narrow sense of self. It helps remind us that there's more than just me, that we're part of a larger and purpose-filled place.

Even if we don't use the word vocation, most of us want to experience a sense of purpose in our lives, (want to believe) there's a reason for (our) existence. If (we) can hold onto that sense of purpose, (we'll) be able to deal with whatever life experiences await (us). If we don't feel there's a meaning to our lives, life's difficulties can easily overwhelm and discourage us.

...I believe we become more fully human with any gesture of generosity, any time we reach out to another rather than withdraw into our individual suffering. To become fully human, we need to keep opening our hearts, no matter what. At this time when suffering and anxiety continue to increase, when there is always reason to weep for some unbearable tragedy inflicted by one human on another, I try to remember to keep my heart open.

In my own experience, I notice that I like myself better when I am generous and open-hearted. I don't like who I become when I'm afraid of others, or angry at them. There are many people whose actions anger me and make me afraid - but I don't like how I feel when I respond to them from fear. At those times, I don't feel more human, but less. I become more fully human only when I extend myself. This is how I define for myself what it means to have a vocation to be fully human."

adapted from Margaret Wheatley

Discussion:

How are you "called" to be in the world?

What is your experience of vocation?

How is that (or not) related to your job/work?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

Again, these words of Pema Chodron:

We don't set out to save the world;
we set out to wonder how other people
are doing and to reflect on how our actions
affect other people's hearts.

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 2

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

WHAT IS MY FAITH IN THE FUTURE?

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,
Therefore, we are saved by hope.
Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;
Therefore, we are saved by faith.
Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone.
Therefore, we are saved by love.
No virtuous act is quite a virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own;
Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.
- Reinhold Niebuhr

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS:

Where does the future come from? It often feels these days as if the future arrives from nowhere. Suddenly things feel unfamiliar, we're behaving differently, the world doesn't work the way it used to. The future doesn't take form irrationally... It materializes from the actions, values, and beliefs we're practicing now.... If we want a different future, we have to take responsibility for what we are doing in the present.

I believe...many of us have lost faith in the future. Whether we are economically poor, or leading lives of material advantage that seem meaningless, it is time for us to notice whether we feel hopeful about the future. There is much suffering in the world, and it is increasing...If we realize that suffering is common to the human condition, we could begin listening to each other for this shared experience. It would open our hearts to each other, and this would be a good start.

Sometimes we confront the pain of the present and counter it with blind faith. This is especially true in the United States, where it is

common to hear statements like: “I have faith in human ingenuity.” We aren’t lacking solutions. What we lack is the will to implement them.

For example, there are sufficient food and resources to provide for everyone on the planet. What we lack is the political will to use resources equitably, and to distribute them fairly.

Our ingenuity has already provided solutions to critical problems. We already know how to create a healthy, life-affirming future for all peoples. We have a different problem - developing the will to act once we know what to do. The gap between knowing and doing is bridged by the human heart.

It is time for us to notice what is going on, to think about this together, and to make choices about how we will act. We can’t keep rejecting solutions because they require us to change our behavior.

adapted from Margaret Wheatley

Discussion:

Are we able to live a life that has meaning for us?
And to help others live good lives?
How do our needs and behaviors affect others - those in our own families, and also in our global family?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“Faith is not just a leap in the dark. Faith is a leap made toward life, for the sake of living things, in the very shadow of the possibility of failure in any of our ventures.

For as long as we can believe and love, we can solve our problems - and do something that gives hope and courage as well.

from The Joy of Being Human - Eugene Kennedy

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 3

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

WHAT DO I BELIEVE ABOUT OTHERS?

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

How did the rose
Ever open its heart

And give to this world
All its beauty?

It felt the encouragement of light
Against its Being.

Otherwise, we all remain
Too frightened.

Hafiz

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: What Do I Believe About Others?

We have a great need to rely on the fact of human goodness.
Goodness seems like an outrageous “fact.” In these dark times we
are confronted daily with mounting evidence of the great harm we
do so easily to one another. We are numbed by frequent genocide,
ethnic hatred, and acts of violence committed daily in the world. In
self-protective groups, we terrorize each other with our hatred. Of
the 240 plus nations in the world, nearly 1/4th of them are at war.

In our daily life, we encounter people who are angry, deceitful,
intent only on satisfying their own needs. There is so much anger,
distrust, greed, and pettiness that we are losing our capacity to
work well together.... Yet this incessant display of the worst in us
makes it essential that we rely on human goodness. Without that
belief in each other, there really is no hope.

There is nothing equal to human creativity, human caring, human

will. We can be incredibly generous, imaginative, and openhearted. We can do the impossible, learn and change quickly, and extend instant compassion to those in distress. And these are not behaviors we keep hidden . We exhibit them daily.

Asking us to notice if we believe in human goodness is not a philosophical question. We will either retreat or move closer together, depending on what we believe about each other.

Courageous acts aren't done by people who believe in human badness. Why risk anything if we don't believe in each other? Why stand up for anyone if we don't believe they're worth saving? Who I think you are will determine what I'm willing to do on your behalf. If I believe you're not as good or important as me, I won't even notice you.

Oppression never occurs between equals. Tyranny starts with the belief that some people are more human than others.

We can help one another by trusting that others, too, are fully human. And then we can invite them to step forward with their goodness.... A hopeful future is possible. We can't get there alone, we can't get there without each other, and we can't create it without relying as never before on our fundamental and precious human goodness.

(from Turning to One Another - Margaret Wheatley)

Discussion: What is your belief about "the goodness in others?"
Cite examples, from your life, when you experienced "goodness."

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS: (same as Opening Words - Hafiz)

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 4

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

WHAT AM I WILLING TO NOTICE IN MY WORLD?

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

How did I get so lucky to have my heart awakened to others
and their suffering? - Pema Chodron

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: What am I Willing to Notice?

What's happening to us as we continue to be bombarded by so
much human suffering? What is our coping strategy, conscious or
not? I sense that more of us are shutting down. We have no other
way of dealing with the haunting faces and frightening images that
so frequently appear in our papers and on TV. We turn away, and
try to get on with our own lives. Or if the suffering is close to home,
we get angry and want to strike out.

Many times I have fled from others' grief and pain. I've seen this
behavior in many others. We don't know how to fix the situation or
make the pain go away. There is nothing we can do to help, so we
flee in the opposite direction, turn off the television, avert our eyes
from the pictures, stop talking to our grieving friends. I don't see
these actions helping anyone, even ourselves. It's impossible to shut
out the world. We are more aware of what's going on than ever before, and there's no way to
change that. As hard as we try to
close people out, we never really lose awareness of their suffering.
The world get in and gnaws at our insides.

The irony is that we want to help, but feel impotent, and so we
withdraw the one thing that does help, our companionship. If
you've experienced grief, you know how healing it is to just have
friends sit with you, not saying a word, not expecting anything from you. You don't need
them to do anything except be there, bearing
witness to your loss and sorrow.

How we respond to so much suffering is our choice. We can feel hopeless and overwhelmed by this world; we can turn away and just live the best life we can. Or we can learn to bear witness.

When I bear witness, I turn toward another and am willing to let their experience enter my heart. I step into the picture by being willing to be open to their experience, to not turn away my gaze.

If the world were going along smoothly, if life were growing easier, it wouldn't matter so much which way we were turning. But most of us feel that the world is deteriorating, and we don't expect it to be improving any time soon. Because this is a difficult time for so many, we need a better way to be with hardships and devastation.

We can turn away, or we can turn toward. Those are the only two choices we have.

adapted from Margaret Wheatley

Discussion: How have you felt about yourself, what you you experienced or learned, when you faced the suffering of others? Give examples from your life. What do you tend to avoid? What would strengthen you in turning toward rather than away from suffering?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS: Again, these words of Pema Chodron -

“How did I get so lucky to have my heart awakened to others and their suffering?”

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 5

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

LISTENING

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

I like to talk with you.

I like the way I feel
when you are listening
as if we were exploring
something in ourselves:

The plunge into a silence
and how you come up with words
I tried to find:

The otherness about us which makes
conversation possible.

When I talk with you,
the give turns into take
and borrow into lend.

Now and then, a phrase from you
will kindle like a shooting star;
the mornings in you rouse me from a sleep.

I like the babble and the banter when I greet you
at the door,
and when the room is filled with guests,
your quiet look,
as if there were a secret between us
of which nobody knows.

- from Raymond Baughan

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Listening

“When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn’t feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk or do - just hear me.

Advice is cheap. 10 cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper. (That dates this writing.)

And I can do for myself. I’m not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about the business of understanding what’s behind this irrational feeling. And when that’s clear, the answers are obvious and I don’t need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what’s behind them.

Perhaps that’s why prayer works, sometimes, for some people -- because God is mute and he/she doesn’t give advice or try to fix things. “They” just listen and let you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I’ll listen to you.”

- Ralph Roughton

Discussion: Have you ever felt like that? Examples?

Why do you think it is so hard to simply listen?

Who is the best listener in your life?

What can we do in this group to improve the quality of listening?

Note: you don’t have to use all these questions.

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

To communicate is the beginning of understanding.
To feel is the beginning of self-growth.
To touch is the beginning of involvement.
To love, the beginning of all that will ever be.

- Nancy Ceranowicz

May we learn to listen - to respond, to feel,
to grow, to touch the life that is everyone,
to love.

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 6

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

BEYOND THE WORD “GOD” - ITS MEANING TO US

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

We come together each time to honor and understand our lives.
We bring our pasts and share them; our dreams and express them.
We use words, silence, and gestures.
Words can't define our lives,
But they help us to reach out to each other,
That we may be renewed, connected, unburdened.
Apprehend with wonder our lives...
For “from wonder into wonder
Existence opens.”

-adapted from Judy Mannheim

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Beyond the word God - its meaning to us”

“How much did I hear of religion as a child? Very little, and yet
my heart leaped when I heard the name of God. I do believe
every soul has a tendency toward God.”

- Dorothy Day

“It isn't that I believe God is dead, but God is so silent, has been
for so long, and is so hidden, I take it as a sign I must watch in
other places or simply tend my small fires until the end.”

- Mary Micka

“God, I can push the grass apart / And lay my finger on Thy heart!”

- Edna St. Vincent Millay

Discussion: What do you feel about God, the idea of God, the place

of God in your life? What is the presence of God in your life?
If uncomfortable with the word, or its connotations, what do
you believe in, have faith in, beyond yourself?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to
call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

We wander through exile, through times without belief,
but sometimes we come home, to the spirit in our souls.
Let us keep our channels open and never view life as strange,
But, at each second, be aware how God is moving always
through us and through each flower.
Let us be in each other's presence with gentle hearts
and gentle hands,
For the living can be healed by love
And the healing can make us whole.

-adapted from May Sarton and Carolyn McDade

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 7

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

TRANSITIONS

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING

This being human is a guest house.
Every moment a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.
- Rumi

CHECK-IN (40 - 50 minutes)

FOCUS: "Learnings from Transitions"

"Change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the phoenix." - Christina Baldwin

Transitions are the cusp of change, a time of grasping and letting go, a time of sadness and of hope. Leaving home, leaving school, moving in with a partner, a new job, marriage, having children, moving away, a death of someone close, retirement - all times of transition in which we learn something about ourselves, about life. Our old patterns, momentarily swept away - were we cleared out for some new delight? How have we turned our transition reflections into guides from beyond?

How have your transitions changed your life?

CHECK-OUT: likes and wishes

CLOSING WORDS:

“The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.”

- Ivy Baker Priest

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 8

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

ASK ME WHAT I'M LIVING FOR

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

If I had known this most amazing you
was like the me I try to understand!

How could I know the livingthings
which through the years were met in you?

We only stood near one another
and spoke of weather,
games and local politics.

We did not trust each other well enough
to speak of self -
or did we doubt it mattered?

I wonder if we could have talked
of what you care for,
cling to with a fierce tenacity,

Of how you hurt inside,
sensing it hard to love, but wanting to:
living in ways which never worked too well
but ways you learned too well to leave too soon.

I wonder if I would have touched
the toughness in you leaning up against the world.

At least I would have found in you
the mystery I am.

Jacob Trapp

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Ask Me What I'm Living For.

If you want to identify me ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the things I want to live for. Between those two answers you can determine the identity of any person.

from "The Man in the Sycamore Tree" - Thomas Merton

Discussion

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS: "Revelation" by Robert Frost

We make ourselves a place apart
Behind light words that tease and flout,
But oh, the agitated heart
Till someone really find us out.

"Tis pity if the case require
(or so we say) that in the end
We speak the literal to inspire
The understanding of a friend.

But so with all, from babes that play
At hide-and-seek to God afar,
So all who hide too well away
Must speak and tell us where they are.

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 9

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

POETRY

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Everything is Waiting for You” - David Whyte

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely, even
you, at times, have felt the grand array; the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding out your
solo voice. You must note the way the soap dish enables you, or the window latch grants you
freedom.

Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.

The stairs are the mentor of things

to come, the doors have always been there to frighten you and invite you, and the tiny speaker in
the phone is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the conversation. The kettle is singing even
as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots have left their arrogant aloofness and seen the good in
you at last. All the birds and creatures of the world are unutterably themselves. Everything is
waiting for you.

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Poetry

This session is announced at the previous meeting. Each person is
asked to bring a poem that has changed or enriched their lives: a
simple poem from childhood, their own poem, a Psalm - simply a
poem that has changed their lives. Share the poems now and
discuss. As the session moves along, consider the question of
how each of the poems changes our lives or gives us a new insight
into them.

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“Where does real poetry come from? From the amorous sighs
in this moist dark when making love with form or spirit. Where
does poetry live? In the eye that says, ‘Wow Wee’ in the overpowering felt splendor every
sane mind knows when it
realizes our life dance is only for a few magic seconds; from the
heart saying, shouting, ‘I am so damn alive!’

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 10

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

PROBLEMS AND GIFTS

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant
if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would
not be so welcome.” Anne Bradstreet

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Problems and Gifts

“There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its
hands. You seek problems because you need their gifts.”
- Richard Bach, “Illusions”

DISCUSSION:

Can you think of the problems you’ve dealt with that held a gift
for you? Do you seek problems? Are there times when a problem
seems to have no gift attached?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to
call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“It’s a good thing to have all the props pulled out from under us
occasionally. It gives us some sense of what is rock under our feet,
and what is sand.” - Madeleine L’Engle

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 11

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

RETREAT AND RENEWAL

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drakes rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

“I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.”

- Wendell Berry

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

FOCUS: Retreat and Renewal

“When I go trout fishing, I carry everything I need for the day in my multipocketed vest and fanny pack. I begin at a place where a river crosses a road and hike upstream on an angler’s path, fishing as I go. Soon I am alone, with only the stream and the rest of nature as my companions. Fishing, I become one with my surroundings. I move carefully and quietly. At times, I pause to feast on wild raspberries or blueberries, enjoy the mating ritual of dragonflies, or drink in the fragrance of spruce trees and moss. Often, I just relax on a smooth rock in the sun, awash with the sights, scents, and sounds of the place. I feel in complete harmony with myself and all creation.

- Peg Thompson “Finding Your Own Spiritual Path”

DISCUSSION:

We are all in need of renewal. Some of us go on retreats, meditate, do yoga. Some go walking, or fishing, or canoing. When you need to be spiritually refreshed, renewed, re-born, what do you do? Share an experience of retreat or renewal that enhanced the zest or meaning in your life?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to

call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

Let us find time to settle, to sit quietly, or walk gently, letting distractions go, refusing busy thoughts and uninvited images, to listen for the deeper Self that lives below the clamor of voices crying for our attention. Let us find time and places to enter the nourishing quiet that lies in the center of us all.

adapted from Marv Hiles

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 12

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

TAKING TIME TO THINK

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Sit down and be quiet.
You are drunk, and this is the
edge of the roof.”

Rumi

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Taking Time to Think

“As a species, we humans possess some unique capacities. We can stand apart from what’s going on, think about it, question it, imagine it being different. We are also curious. We want to know ‘why?’ We figure out ‘how?’ We think about what’s past, we dream forward to the future. We create what we want rather than just accept what is. So far, we’re the only species we know that does this.

As the world speeds up, we’re giving away these wonderful human capacities. Do you have as much time to think as you did a year ago? When was the last time you spent time reflecting on something important to you? At work, do you have more or less time now to think about what you’re doing? Are you encouraged to spend time thinking with colleagues and co-workers, or reflecting on what you’re learning?

No one will give (you time to think) because thinking is always dangerous to the status quo. Those benefiting from the present system have no interest in new ideas. In fact, thinking is a threat to them. The moment we start thinking, we’ll want to change something. We’ll disturb the current situation.

Paulo Freire taught critical thinking as a non-violent approach to revolutionary change. He taught poor people how to think about

their lives and the forces that were impoverishing them. Nobody believed that exhausted and struggling poor people could become intelligent thinkers. But it is easy for people to develop this capacity when they see how thinking can save their life and the lives of those they love.

Our lives are not as desperate as those poor, and we may not notice that we're losing the possibility of a fully human life. To see whether you're losing anything of value to yourself, here are some questions to ask yourself: Are my relationships with those I love increasing or decreasing? Do I feel more or less energy for my work than a few years ago? Are those things which anger me different than a few years ago? Which of my behaviors do I value, which do I dislike? Generally, am I feeling more peaceful or more stressed?

DISCUSSION: (from the preceding questions)

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.

- Pablo Neruda from “Keeping Still”

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 13

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

RECALLING CHILDHOOD

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

Story Water by Rumi

A story is like water
that you heat for your bath.

It takes messages between the fire
and your skin. It lets them meet,
and it cleans you!

Very few can sit down
in the middle of the fire itself
like a salamander or Abraham.
We need intermediaries.

A feeling of fullness comes,
but usually it takes some bread
to bring it.

Beauty surrounds us,
but usually we need to be walking
in a garden to know it.

The body itself is a screen
to shield and partially reveal
the light that's blazing
inside your presence.

Water, stories, the body,
all the things we do, are mediums
that hide and show what's hidden.

Study them,
and enjoy this being washed
with a secret we sometimes know,

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Recalling Childhood

“If a family were a container, it would be a nest, an enduring nest, loosely woven, expansive, and open. If the family were a fruit, it would be an orange, a circle of sections, held together but separable - each segment distinct. If the family were a boat, it would be a canoe that makes no progress unless everyone paddles. If the family were a sport, it would be baseball: a long, slow nonviolent game that is never over until the last out. If the family were a building, it would be an old but solid structure that contains human history, and appeals to those who see the carved moldings under all the plaster, the wide plank floors under the linoleum, the possibilities.”

- Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Tonight we share another piece of our lives with each other. Rather than do the whole story at once, let's begin with our earliest years - up to being a teenager. This can be about our families, love given or denied; about the obedient child or the rebel; about our siblings, the crazy uncle or kind aunt; about the shape of our homes - the yard, the trees, the coal cellar, the music box, or attic; about our dreams, games, or the books we read; about who died, our pets, our friends; or about the little person we loved and lost, or the little person we find still playing in our lives today.

(Let's take about 5 minutes to jot down some of the highlights we'll want to remember and then share the memories.)

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

Whenever we are, our lives,
like the ground beneath our feet,
are steeped in layers of rock
and sand and clay:
ancestors in cemeteries,
our father's voice calling us in at night,
our mother's stern reproof.
The brick school, long razed to the ground,
crayons and little orange squares of letters,
falling in place in words and rhymes,

little friends quarreling, playing,
rolling in the grass, down hilly lawns,
gazing up in darkness at the stars.

All laid down like history, now,
as though fixed and settled:
done and over,
the Past -

Until we listen to the trembling of the ground,
magma still hot and coursing
through each layer:
reheating, mixing, bubbling,
surfacing
the rich deposits that feed our lives
and nothing is over,
everything reworked,
nothing laid down and forgotten,
everything reused like humus
in the garden.

And in the winter,
nights like this,
we recount these inventories:
so many tomatoes, beans, zucchini -
beginning when we were young,
a mother and a father,
a seed,
the story.
Play it again.
We will listen
The present will conjure up the past,
and the past reciprocate.

GHT

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 14

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

INTO ADULTHOOD

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,
going far ahead of the road I have begun.
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;
it has its inner light, even from a distance -

and changes us, even if we do not reach it,
into something else, which, hardly sensing it, we already are;
a gesture waves us on, answering our own wave...
but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

Rainer Maria Rilke - trans. R.B.

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Into Adulthood

“Perhaps, until one starts, at the age of seventy, to live on borrowed time, no year will seem again quite so ominous as the one when the formal education ends and the moment arrives to find employment and bear physical responsibility for the whole future. My parents had given me everything they could possibly owe a child and more. Now it was my turn to decide and nobody -not even the Oxford Appointments Board - could help me very far. I was hemmed in by the choice of jails in which to serve my life imprisonment, for how else at twenty can one regard a career which may last as long as life itself, or at the best until that sad moment is reached when the prisoner is released in consideration of good behavior, with a pension?”

Grahame Greene, *A Sort of Life*, 1971

We began, last week, sharing our earliest years - up to the early teens. Tonight, we pick up with our stories about coming of age: about the perplexities of adolescence, about our early attempts to establish our identities, make our own relationships, decide on our life-work, and gain control over our own lives. Where did we conform? Where did we rebel? How did we take leave of our families? How did we find

ourselves?

(Let's take about 5 minutes to jot down what we'll want to mention.)

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

Lisa Alther wrote in *Kinflicks* about becoming an adult and commented: "If this was adulthood, the only improvement she could detect in her situation was that now she could eat dessert without eating her vegetables."

Margaret Atwood noted: "We thought we were running away from the grownups, and now we are the grownups."

Next time we will talk more about the grownups we've become.

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 15

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

INTO OUR OWN - THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING ADULTS -

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

I live my life in growing orbits,
which move out over the things of the world.
Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
but that will be my attempt.

I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years,
and I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
or a great song.

Rainer Maria Rilke - trans. by Robert Bly

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: Into Our Own

"Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is the youth of old age."

"Well, here I am at thirty-eight,
Well, I certainly thought I'd have longer to wait.
You just stop in for a couple of beers,
And gosh, there go thirty-seven years.
Well, it certainly has been fun,
But, I certainly thought I'd have got a lot more done..."
- Ogden Nash -

We're all into this adult thing - except for the spread in ages and
stages - each with their challenges and regrets, puzzlements, and
wisdom. What have we gotten done? Where are we going?
What haven't we done that we'd like to have done? What's the nature of
accomplishment for us? Is it work, family, creativity, inner peace,
character? Does that change for us over time?

(Lets take about 5 minutes to jot down some of what we'd like to share.)

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

i am running into a new year
and the old years blow back
like a wind
that i catch in my hair
like strong fingers like
all my old promises and
it will be hard to let go
of what i said to myself
about myself
when i was sixteen and
twenty six and thirtysix
even thirtysix but
i am running into a new year
and i beg what i love and
i leave to forgive me

- Lucille Clifton -

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 16

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

THE COLORS OF OUR LIVES

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“When we are writing, or painting, or composing, we are, during the time of creativity, freed from normal restrictions, and are open to a wider world, where colors are brighter, sounds clearer, and people more wondrously complex than we normally realize.”

- Madeleine L'Engle Walking on Water

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: The Colors of our Lives (45 minutes)

Pass out paper and crayons, markers, etc. to each person in the group. The facilitator can say something like:

“Poet and author Mary Webb once wrote, “Green is the fresh emblem of well-founded hopes. In blue the spirit can wander, but in green it can rest.” Keeping in mind Madeleine L'Engle's thought that “during the time of creativity (we are) freed from normal restrictions,” let's take a few moments to think about our life story in terms of colors. What colors would depict our experiences in childhood or young adulthood? What colors would we use to describe our lives today? In previous sessions we've talked about our lives, but let's now look at them from another angle: the color of them.”

Encourage everyone to explore the three time-frames of their lives: childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, up to the present day. Take up to 15 minutes to create these color maps, then show them to one another without commentary, then discuss.

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“Saying something is pitch black is like saying something is green. what kind of green? Green like my bottles? Green like a grasshopper? Green like a cucumber, lettuce, or green like the sky is just before it breaks loose to storm? Well, night black is the same way. Might as well be a rainbow.”

- Toni Morrison

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 17

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

STEREOTYPING

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Don’t judge me by what you see
Like my religion or my race
There’s more beyond my looks
There’s so much more beyond my face
Don’t judge me by what I wear
How I do my hair and such
Because to me all those things
don’t even matter much
So if you were to get to know me
maybe you’ll like what’s inside
even though you cannot see
the fear and pain that I hide
It’s what you learn about me
That really does matter
Because when life feels empty
When your whole world shatters
you’ll have a friend to turn to
Who’ll show you that they care
all because you befriended them
when they were scared and insecure
so think twice before you judge
a great friend might be passing you by
Also, you wouldn’t like to be the one
standing there, being judged on the
other side”

Essay by a student on Martin Luther King Day

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Stereotyping”

How quickly the short-hand descriptive words fall from our lips:

“groupie..woo woo...Frog...welfare queen...fascist...nerd...egg head. Then there are dismissive categories, that are conjured with a tone of voice: lawyers, politicians, rednecks. What’s behind our using descriptive language in this way? What’s the feeling state behind stereotypical language? Do we think about how others will feel? We all do it to a greater or lesser extent. How might you be stereotyped? How do you feel when it happens? How prevalent is it where you live and work? There’s the Irish, Italian, and blond jokes. Innocent or demeaning? What’s the payoff? What do you do when your kids, your relatives, or you fall into stereotyping?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“The energy employed in the judging mind is sufficient to transform the world. It is an energy we need to rechannel. Forgiveness, tolerance, patience, and love bring us humility. They remind us that the person we see before us is simply ourselves in another form, someone who yearns for the same love, acceptance, and open-heartedness that we yearn for, is capable of suffering the same pain of rejection, judgment, and hatred that we are capable of suffering.

One of the great rules of the heart, one of the great laws of spiritual life, is that no matter what else happens never put anyone out of your heart.”

- from “Soul Food” by Jack Kornfield & Christina Feldman

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 18
By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

WORSHIP

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Here we are reminded of mystery
and of holy things,
of our finite nature’
of a love of God possible
only in love for one another.
A silent music moves among us,
a fragrance of invisible flowers.
A song of praise rises
from the darkness of our being.
So we are silent,
silent together,
until the silence deepens
to a wordless prayer.”
adapted from Jacob Trapp

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Worship”

“Worship,” writes Jacob Trapp, “is the mystery within us reaching
out to the mystery beyond.” Something draws us to this ancient
communion of hearts and minds. Something in us is searching
for sustenance for the soul.

Discussion: How do you experience worship? What do you want
to experience in a worship service? What feelings in you do you
want tapped, or affirmed, evoked, or supported? What are the
elements of worship that you find most helpful?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to
call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“.....may we grow to know and cherish
that unity which in each moment warms our hearts, flowing from each to each, making us, part
with part, a wholeness we could never be alone.
Thus may we find a kinship with all life, reaching across all barriers of race, philosophies and
creeds, making us one with everything that lives from the inmost atom to the brightest star.”

adapted from Robert Weston

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 19

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

“WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?”

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“I don’t know what sort of a God we have been talking about.
The caller calls in a loud voice to the Holy One at dusk.
Why? Surely the Holy One is not deaf.
He hears the delicate anklets that ring on the feet of
an insect as it walks.

Go over and over your beads, paint weird designs on
your forehead, wear your hair matted, long, and ostentatious,
but when deep inside you there is a loaded gun,
how can you have God?” - - - Kabir

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Who are we? What are we becoming?”

In a time of war, of uncertainty, of heightened hostilities in
the world, each of us are touched with heightened awareness
of what we value, what we believe in, about what kind of
people we are, what kind of people we would choose to be
as we face the heightened fear and hate that grips the world.

Discussion: How is it for you?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to
call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“We have all come to the right place,
We all sit in God’s classroom.

Now, the only thing left for us to do...
is to stop throwing spitballs.”

Hafiz

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 20

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

“EXTENDED” FAMILY

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other’s life. Rarely do members of one family grow up under the same roof.” --Richard Bach, “Illusions”

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Extended” Family

Marsha Norman, in her 1983 play “Night, Mother,” wrote, “Family is just accident...They don’t mean to get on your nerves. They don’t even mean to be your family, they just are.” On the one hand we have the image of “family” in which blood is thicker than water.” On the other we have the idea that “family is just accident” and that one’s true family” is the people with whom our lives most intimately touch, whether they are related to us by birth or not.

Discussion: What do you think of Bach’s assertion that “Rarely do members of one family grow up under the same roof”? Using this wider notion of family, who might you include in your “extended family”? Is there anyone in your “blood family” you would not include? Or, for better or for worse, are they simply a given?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.
Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.
Just walk beside me and be my friend.-- Albert Camus

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 21

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

“OPEN TO THE SKY OF THE ETERNAL”

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

"The Thread" by Denise Levertov

Something is very gently,
invisibly, silently,
pulling at me - a thread
or net of threads
finer than cobweb and as
elastic. I haven't tried
the strength of it. No barbed hook
pierced and tore me. Was it
not long ago this thread
began to draw me? Or
way back? Was I
born with its knot about my
neck, a bridle? Not fear
but a stirring
of wonder makes me
catch my breath when I feel
the tug of it when I thought
it had loosened itself and gone.

"A Walk" by Rainer Maria Rilke

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,
going far ahead of the road I have begun.
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp; it has its inner light, even from a distance -

and changes us, even if we do not reach it, into something else, which, hardly sensing it, we
already are; a gesture waves us on, answering our own wave...
but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

"A Man Lost by a River" - Michael Blumenthal

There is a voice inside the body.

There is a voice and a music,
a throbbing, four-chambered pear
that wants to be heard, that sits

alone by the river with its mandolin
and its torn coat, and sings
for whomever will listen
a song that no one wants to hear.

But sometimes, lost,
on his way to somewhere significant,
a man in a long coat, carrying
a briefcase, wanders into the forest.

He hears the voice and the mandolin,
he sees the thrush and the dandelion,
and he feels the mist rise over the river.

And his life is never the same,
for this having been lost -
for having strayed from the path of his routine, for no good reason.

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: "OPEN TO THE SKY OF THE ETERNAL"

"To worship is to stand in awe under a heaven of stars, before a flower, a leaf in sunlight, or a grain of sand. To worship is to be silent, receptive, before a tree astir with the wind, or the passing shadow of a cloud. . . .

Worship is the mystery within us reaching out to the mystery beyond. It is an inarticulate silence yearning to speak; it is the window of the moment open to the sky of the eternal."

--Jacob Trapp

Denise Levertov expresses "a stirring of wonder" as she feels the subtle pull of an invisible thread - a connection. Rilke speaks of being grasped by what we cannot grasp and how it changes us. Blumenthal strays from the path of the routine and hears a voice and a mandolin, sees a thrush and a dandelion, and feels the mist rise from the river and is never the same. Trapp speaks of reaching out to the mystery beyond. Is this our experience as well?

DISCUSSION:

-- when, if ever, has "the window of the moment" been "open to the sky of the eternal" in your life?

--what did it feel like? (if you have)

-- do you experience similar moments as just an appreciation of the beauty of the natural world or something more?

-- how does it change you and what does it mean about how you should live/change your life?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

"domestic poem" - Eileen Moeller

nightfall I sink
into diswash meditation
steaming china prayer wheels
crystalline bells for the lost horizon
crochery mandalas
chanting din and lull of running water
breathing slows
moist heat muscles soften
zen poems drip from silverware
my air humming out
in a cleansing melody
washing the frantic stew of a whole day
down the drain
along with the suds
those transient rainbow things
with the thin skin of
a passing instant

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 22

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Suggested one of the two sessions before Thanksgiving.

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Solstice”

Again did the earth shift
Again did the nights grow short,
And the days long.

And the people
of the world were glad
and celebrated
each in their own ways.
- Diane Le Moomey

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “RITUALS AND TRADITIONS”

The leaves have no sooner fallen than we are into the Fall and Winter celebrations. Each of us, having different origins and histories, have different traditions and rituals to mark these passages. Thanksgiving and Christmas are not the only holidays. Moreover, the holidays are not always experienced with unmitigated gratitude and joy. If you type “dealing with the holidays” into Google, what comes out are entries for holiday blues, stress, depression, and tips on diet.

Discussion: As we prepare for the Fall and Winter holidays, what are the traditions and rituals that we look forward to, that sustain us, and give meaning to our lives? What grates on our nerves, or depresses us?

What helps us through this season?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to
call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.

May we, in this season, be grateful for what we are given, and for the joy of giving.

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 23

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

BRINGING TREASURES INTO OUR HOMES

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

What sort of day was this?

Did you return home empty handed:

arms full of groceries, the newspaper,
empty gossip, work-weariness,
worries about the economy, the weather,
the high cost of gasoline?

What sort of day was this?

Was your heart's basket filled:

seeds for spring, flowers for the table,
lunch with a good friend, a book of poems,
a candle with a jasmine scent,
something like a prayer for a child?

You rise, you eat, you go out each day.

Is each trip a pilgrimage:

a hunger for connection, for service,
for eye-food - a tree against the sky,
deer in the woods, the sliver of a new moon -
bringing a hope, an idea, a resolution?

Treasures: as tangible as art, as soft as love - What do you bring into your home?

And, what might you leave at the door?

This is about intention.

And choice.

This is about your soul, your body, your home.

What do you bring into it?

GHT

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health,
cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining,
general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Bringing Treasures into our Homes”

Howard Thurman wrote a story about a man who “walked into an antique store and asked for permission to look around. It was a rather exclusive shop frequented only by those who could afford to purchase articles made rare by their scarcity and age. The visitor seemed strangely out of place because he was poorly dressed though clean; indeed it was clear from his appearance that he was a laborer whose face had been etched by sun and rain and whose hands were rough and worn. After more than a half hour, he left. In about ten days he returned. This time he found a beautiful piece of old glass and asked if he could make a deposit on it. Each week he made a payment, until at last the article was his. With much curiosity, the owner of the shop engaged him in conversation to determine, if he could, the use to which such a man would put his new purchase. ‘I bought it for my little room. It isn’t much, but I bring to it, from time to time, through the years, only the very best and most beautiful things. You see, that is where I live.’

To bring to the place where you live only the best and most beautiful things

- what a plan for one’s life! This is well within the reach of everyone.

Think of using one’s memory in that way. As one lives from day to day, there are all sorts of experiences, good, bad, beautiful, ugly, that become a part of one’s past. To develop the ability to screen one’s memory so that only the excellent is retained for one’s own room! All kinds of ideas pass through one’s mind, about oneself, about the world, about people. Which do you keep for your own room? Think it over now; which ideas do you keep for the place where you live? It is well within the mark to say that the oft-quoted words of Jesus, about laying up for yourself treasures in heaven deal with this same basic idea. The place where you live is where your treasures are. Where your treasures are is where your heart is. Where your heart is, is where your God is.”

from “Deep is the Hunger” - Howard Thurman

Discussion:

We know a little of Thurman’s treasures - stories and ideas such as these that he shares - but, we also have an opportunity to explore something in ourselves:

What are our treasures?

What are the precious things we bring into our homes?

What are the sustaining thoughts that we display prominently in our minds?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

It is our great...fortune that our lives are never left to themselves alone. We are visited in ways that we can understand and in ways that are beyond our understanding...by moments of inspiration, quiet assurances of grace, simple manifestations of the goodness of life and give to our ordinary experiences a strength that steadies and inspires.

May we offer to one another, and to ourselves, the fruits of our lives, that others, in return, may be a source of inspiration to those whose lives they touch.

adapted from Howard Thurman

SMALL GROUP SESSION - 24

By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Many people have said that prayer, like meditation, begins with silence. True silence is a far different experience from just being quiet or not talking. In the inner silence of just being, it is easier to find Authentic Presence. In order to reach this kind of profound silence, we clear out the extraneous, the clutter, from our heads and our hearts as we attempt to connect with our innate Buddha-nature, our natural goodness - the center of our being.

C. S. Lewis once wrote, “The prayer preceding all prayers is ‘May it be the real I who speaks. May it be the real Thou that I speak to.’” When someone is ill and you’re afraid, the real you - Authentic Presence - emerges. This is the true you speaking from the source within to the source of all blessings - Authentic Presence meets Divine Presence, Reunion.

So before we begin praying, we stop; we get silent. We become still. We get in touch with the divine within. Then with or without words, we unself-consciously speak what’s in our hearts. The authentic longing of the heart-spirit expresses itself. We listen. This is where real being comes in. Sometimes we pray silently. These can be our truest prayers. Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast once said to me, ‘Real prayer begins when one is no longer conscious of praying.’”

- Lama Surya Das - “Awakening to the Sacred”

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “Spiritual Discipline”

“In prayer, we come nearest to making a real clearance in the thicket of thought.”

-John O’Donohue

Discussion: Prayer, Meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi - there are many spiritual disciplines. What has been your practice?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“Go to a garden
And just stand in it.
Breathe in the air, the fragrances,
the light, the temperature,
the music of the different plants, insects, birds, worms,
caterpillars, grasshoppers, and butterflies.

Inhale the prana (cosmic energy) of all these abundantly
growing things.
Recharge your inner batteries.
This is the joy of natural meditation.