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Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA

### **Celebrating Transitions**

Wednesday, July 27, 2022, 1 PM, SKUUC, Kathryn LaMar

#### **CHALICE LIGHTING/INTRODUCTION**

##### **Reading in the Round (Each person read one line):**

For everything there is a season and a time for every position under heaven.

A time to dream and a time to be concrete,

A time to prepare and a time to reflect,

A time to inquire and a time to wait,

A time to time to stay and a time to leave,

A time to greet and a time to grieve,

A time to give and a time to receive,

A time to learn and a time to teach,

A time to cause change and a time to let things settle,

A time to minister and a time to be ministered to,

A time to be a neophyte and a time to be the sage.

For everything there is a season and a time for every position under heaven.

*Helen Zidowecki*

#### **OPENING SONG: CHANT FOR THE SEASONS {No. 73 in Grey Hymnal}**

#### **SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING (2 min)**

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in this session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

**CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)**

Round 1: Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. When you finish, choose who goes next.

Round 2: Now is the time to respond to what others brought up in their initial sharing, or to mention anything else you've been experiencing that you're ready to share.

**INTRODUCTION TO CELEBRATING TRANSITIONS**

From the SGM session plan entitled *Change*, by Rev. Margie Allen and Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson of the UU Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY (2013):

What a love/hate relationship we humans have with change! When our lives are happy and full, we want things to stay just as they are: like teenagers in love, we can't imagine our feelings ever changing. When life is messy and difficult, we pray that change will come soon, but find it hard to believe that it ever will. And in both cases the inevitable force of change rolls on, introducing some bittersweet into the happiness; some peace and joy into the despair.

Some of us take to change naturally, gladly, seeing excitement and interesting challenges in new situations. Others find change unsettling, disruptive, something to be avoided if at all possible – and slowed down if it can't be avoided. But change can often operate on its own time schedule, and at those times we can neither hasten it nor delay it to suit our own purposes.

How do we develop a relationship with change that allows for graceful acceptance, while giving us room to explore our feelings? How do we craft a rooted yet flexible approach to life that invites change in without risking our integrity? Here is where we start, in our sacred circle of trust, where we are free to explore our own path and learn from the paths of others.

**BY THE BYE: ABOUT EMERSON'S "FOOLISH CONSISTENCY" QUOTE****The Actual, Complete Passage:**

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. — 'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.' — Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance",  
Essays: First Series, 1841*

**And From A Wikipedia Article On The Subject:**

Most people who quote or misquote the famous part of this passage do so to criticize an argument for textual, stylistic, or other presentational consistency, and are usually doing so to

advance some alternative style in a mentally inflexible way. In doing so, they're foolishly displaying an ironic ignorance of Emerson's actual meaning and intent, which was criticism of refusal to change one's mind or adjust one's position in light of new facts or different situations.

Emerson was a professional writer, with a consistent style, and he was entirely used to formal writing that followed strict conventions (stricter than today), and without difficulty complying with the house style of whatever publication he was writing for. Misquoting him as some kind of authority against stylistic consistency is like somehow arriving at the idea that Karl Marx's out-of-context partial quotation "In bourgeois society, capital is independent and has individuality" is Marx strongly defending capitalism, or that the one by Charles Darwin that goes "The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us" is an argument in favor of creationism. It's a completely mistaken read.

### **QUOTES TO PONDER**

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*

Change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the phoenix.

*Christina Baldwin*

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

*Ivy Baker Priest*

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?

*Rev Glenn H. Turner*

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

*Maria Robinson*

All that you touch you change. All that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change.

*Octavia Butler*

Nothing endures but change.

*Heraclitus*

People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss.

*Ron Heifetz and Martin Linksy*

Every possession and every happiness is but lent by chance for an uncertain time, and may therefore be demanded back the next hour.

*Arthur Schopenhauer*

Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.

*Mary Shelley*

Be the change that you wish to see in the world.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

*Albert Einstein*

When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has happened or in saying that we are not yet ready. The challenge will not wait. Life does not look back.

*Paulo Coelho*

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.

*Lao Tzu*

The snake which cannot cast its skin has to die. As well the minds which are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be mind.

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Stepping onto a brand-new path is difficult, but not more difficult than remaining in a situation, which is not nurturing to the whole [person]. *Maya Angelou*

Right now I want a word that describes the feeling that you get--a cold sick feeling, deep down inside--when you know something is happening that will change you, and you don't want it to, but you can't stop it. And you know, for the first time, for the very first time, that there will now be a *before* and an *after*, a *was* and a *will be*. And that you will never again quite be the same person you were. *Jennifer Donnelly*

Sometimes the slightest things change the directions of our lives, the merest breath of a circumstance, a random moment that connects like a meteorite striking the earth. Lives have swiveled and changed direction on the strength of a chance remark. *Bryce Courtenay*

Change is the end result of all true learning. *Leo Buscaglia*

The changes we dread most may contain our salvation. *Barbara Kingsolver*

To change one's life: 1. Start immediately. 2. Do it flamboyantly. 3. No exceptions. *William James*

We would rather be ruined than changed. We would rather die in our dread than climb the cross of the moment and let our illusions die. *W.H. Auden*

The cloud is free only to go with the wind. The rain is free only in falling. *Wendell Berry*

All The Woulda-Coulda-Shouldas  
Layin' In The Sun,  
Talkin' 'Bout The Things  
They Woulda-Coulda-Shoulda Done...  
But All Those Woulda-Coulda-Shouldas  
All Ran Away And Hid  
From One Little Did.

*Shel Silverstein, Falling Up*

### **GROUP SINGING: Changes, by Phil Ochs (lyrics appended)**

### **PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION**

Read the Group Reflection questions, one by one.

### **BREAK**

### **GROUP REFLECTION / FEEDBACK**

Two rounds, or respectfully discuss each participant's ideas AFTER they have finished. Take a moment of silence and consider your response to one or more of these questions.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON TRANSITION AND CHANGE

- What are the best aspects of Rev. Maria Cristina's ministry, the ones you most want to carry forward as qualities of SKUUC through Pastor Ruth's interim ministry into that of our next called minister?
- Considering all of SKUUC's previous pastors, what are some characteristics of their ministry you regret that we seem to have lost, and would like to reinstate if possible?
- Consider the previous ministerial transitions at SKUUC or other congregations you have experienced. What factors made them smooth or not-so-smooth for you?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of ministerial transition you see for SKUUC this time around—for both leaders and members/friends?
- How does transition affect your sense of your own role(s) in the congregation? Your spiritual journey?
- How can you personally affect the transition process for yourself and others?

### COMMUNITY SINGING: RETURN AGAIN (No. 1011 in Teal Hymnal)

#### FUTURE PLANS

When/how should we introduce our group to Pastor Ruth, if she doesn't approach us first?

Suggestions for topics to be reflected upon at our fourth-Wednesday meetings?

Plans for second-Wednesday meal sharing and discussions—Restaurants, discussion topics.

#### SESSION FEEDBACK

What changes could we make to the session to make it more meaningful for you?

Is it time to revisit our covenant?

#### EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS

**All things change, all roles, all positions.**

Changes may come sooner or later. But they come.

We have an impact on change, whether by action or inaction.

We need to heed well our contributions to the change that is inevitable.

*Helen Zidowecki*

## **CHANGES (Phil Ochs)**

Sit by my side, come as close as the air  
Share in a memory of gray!  
Wander in my words, dream about the pictures  
That I play of changes!

Green leaves of summer turn red in the fall  
To brown and to yellow they fade!  
And then they have to die, trapped within  
The circle time parade of changes!

Scenes of my young years were warm in my mind  
Visions of shadows that shine!  
Till one day I returned and found they were the  
Victims of the vines of changes!

The world's spinning madly, it drifts in the dark  
Swings through a hollow of haze  
A race around the stars, a journey through  
The universe ablaze with changes!

Moments of magic will glow in the night  
All fears of the forest are gone  
But when the morning breaks they're swept away by  
Golden drops of dawn, of changes!

Passions will part to a strange melody  
As fires will sometimes burn cold!  
Like petals in the wind, we're puppets to the silver  
Strings of souls, of changes!

Your tears will be trembling, now we're somewhere else  
One last cup of wine we will pour  
And I'll kiss you one more time, and leave you on  
The rolling river shores of changes!

Sit by my side, come as close as the air  
Share in a memory of gray!  
Wander in my words, dream about the pictures  
That I play of changes!