

SMALL GROUP SESSION
DO YOU BELONG OR DO YOU FEEL ABANDONED?
PART I - Do You Belong?
Rev. Glenn Turner, First UU Church, Auburn, ME (May 2009)

Note: This session may take more than one meeting. If a subsequent meeting is needed, the opening and closing words can be repeated.

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“It doesn't interest me if there is one god or many gods,
I want to know if you belong or feel abandoned.” - David Whyte

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: ³Do You Belong?²

From the time we are born, we begin reaching out to connect with the world, to discover our place and purpose. We might belong to many things: family, neighborhood, school, a community of faith, country, the world, nature, the universe. We might. Do we?

Discussion:

Do you belong? With whom and with what have you felt a strong sense of belonging? How were you made to feel like you belonged? What were the messages from your family that said: “You are one of us.” How did your neighbors, friends, school, church, synagogue give you a sense of belonging?

How do you belong to a country? How do you sense a positive place for yourself in Nature? How have you been taken in by something larger? What actions did you initiate to connect, to belong?

Do you belong? Is that sense deeply rooted in you?

LIKES AND WISHES

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

CLOSING WORDS:

These last lines of Mary Oliver in her poem “Wild Geese”:

“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.”

from *New and Selected Poems* by Mary Oliver, Beacon Press, Boston

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FOCUS: ³Do You Feel Abandoned?²

I once asked in a sermon: "What is it like to feel abandoned?" To live in Maine with your parents in Florida or California - your family of origin, or children scattered around the country. Being single or divorced when that is not what you want. Being widowed. Working hard, but stressed out, not doing soul-work, not in touch with your own self, not doing what gives zest to your life. Having thoughts, ideas and feelings but no one to share them with. Coming into a new church and having no one to say ³hello² to you at coffee hour.

Over a century and a half-ago there was a theological crisis of faith which came during the scientific revolution. What if there is no God? A sense of being a spiritual orphan with no cosmic connection to this world.

Discussion:

Do you feel abandoned? When did that begin? Were you abandoned as a child, growing up, at school, at work, in your friendships, marriage, church? Do you feel abandoned by your dreams? Do you feel abandoned by how your nation has changed? Do you ever feel as if you've "lost your place in the family of things?"

Most important, how have you fed your sense of abandonment?

How might it be otherwise?

LIKES AND WISHES

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

CLOSING WORDS:

"No defeat is made up entirely of defeat – since the world it opens is always a place formerly unsuspected. A world lost, a world unsuspected, beckons to new places."

from *Paterson II* by William Carlos Williams