

Ending and Beginning

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

We have come to our last session of this Small Group Ministry series likely with a mixture of emotions. We may perhaps have gratitude for our time together, our learning, our sharing, and our connections. We perhaps may have disappointment and sadness that this is our last session, or that we did not get as much from our shared time as we had hoped. We might have a sense of relief that our sessions are ending, and we will be on to other experiences. May we honor our various experiences and feelings as we continue our personal and spiritual growth, and our varied connections with each other.

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

COMPLETION OF THE EVALUATION FORM FOR THE FACILITATORS AND THE PARTICIPANTS (Up to 20 minutes)

The evaluation forms may have been given or sent by paper mail or e-mail to group members ahead of time, or may be distributed at this session. Give the completed paper evaluation forms to the facilitator, who will take or send them to the SGM steering committee or the church office. E-mail evaluation forms can be forwarded to the chair of the SGM steering committee.

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 60 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

There's a trick to the 'graceful exit.' It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, or a relationship is over — and let it go. It means leaving what's over without denying its validity or its past importance to our lives. It involves a sense of future, a belief that every exit line is an entry, that we are moving up, rather than out.

-Ellen Goodman

What the trees can do handsomely -- greening and flowering, fading and then the falling of leaves -- human beings cannot do with dignity, let alone without pain.

-Martha Gelhorn

I guess I just don't get the point. It's like, why should you bother getting attached to anything if, A: It's never gonna last, and B: It hurts like hell when it's over?

-Alyson Noel

Everything comes to an end. A good bottle of wine, a summer's day, a long-running sitcom, one's life, and eventually our species. The question for many of us is not that everything will come to an end but when. And can we do anything vaguely useful until it does?

-Jasper Fforde

You're searching, Joe, for things that don't exist; I mean beginnings. Ends and beginnings — there are no such things. There are only middles.

-Robert Frost

There exists only the present instant...a Now which always and without end is itself new. There is no yesterday nor any tomorrow, but only Now, as it was a thousand years ago and as it will be a thousand years hence.

-Meister Eckhart

Healing comes from letting there be room for all of "this" to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.

-Pema Chodron

QUESTIONS (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. What did you hope to gain from and contribute to this SGM group experience, and to what extent have those hopes been realized?
2. What have you learned and experienced in your life that is helpful in dealing with endings and beginnings?
3. What else do you want to share at this last scheduled meeting of this group?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5 minutes)

-Any future gatherings of this group are entirely optional, and are not part of the SGM program.

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (1 minute for words, and closing)

We say thank you for the enrichment of our lives that we have experienced from our sharing together. May we be strengthened by our connections wherever our paths may lead.

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the lesson plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Dick Loescher, chair; Leora White).

March 18, 2013