

Friendship

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, April 2012

Rev. Margie Allen, Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson

Opening Words (The Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie)

Rev. Dan Kane was cooking, I was washing, and what happened next was definitely my fault, although he says “we” broke it. Drying on the counter was a hand-painted platter that Dan and Darin had brought home from Italy, a large, expensive piece of pottery with significant sentimental value. And “we”—that is, I—somehow unsettled it and it dropped like a little bomb onto their kitchen floor, shattering into shards and dust with a c-r-a-s-h. I couldn’t believe it.

Dan and Darin tried to reassure me, saying not to worry, but I was reeling; I felt horrible. Without missing a beat, my wife, my hero, opened her computer, Googled the artist, found their shop online, ordered a duplicate replacement, and announced that this one would have different sentimental value. All better.

Fast forward six months. A package arrives from Dan and Darin. What is it? No, not an Italian platter...well, not exactly. It’s a reincarnation. It’s a mirror, set into a mosaic of the broken pottery. It’s one of a set; they sent one to us, and kept one for themselves.

Dan wrote, quoting Terry Tempest Williams’s latest book, *Mosaic: Finding Beauty in a Broken World*, “A mosaic is a conversation between what is broken. I believe in the beauty of all things broken.”

Friend: the one who sees the beauty, even in the brokenness, and reflects that to us, like a mirror.

Chalice Lighting and Silence

[Covenant Review]

Check-in

Activity

[Facilitators: have some pens ready for those who don’t bring one. Distribute the work sheet and ask people to engage the two thought-exercises, giving them 3-5 minutes for each one, more time if needed. When both are completed use the following questions, or your own, to spark reflections on the experience. This is an introductory exercise, so you will probably want to keep the discussion on the short side.]

Did anything come up that surprised or intrigued you as you were engaging these exercises?

If you are willing, share with the group some of the qualities you listed. Are there some qualities that were listed by everyone? Some you’d never realized were important before? Any you have found to be unimportant or less important?

Topic Introduction

Friendship isn't always easily described. The Eskimos, they say, have a hundred different words for "snow." Unfortunately, the English language doesn't provide a nuanced vocabulary for the word "friend." Instead of using different words, we use a variety of descriptive adjectives. *Close friend. Best friend. Childhood friend. Intimate friend. Trusted friend. Beloved friend.*

We can't pick our family. Often we cannot pick the people with whom we work and spend a great deal of time. But over our lifetimes we have the opportunity to choose our closest friends and for most of us, our friendships have deeply affected our evolution as a human being. We are who we are today partly due to the companionship and the influence of our friends.

Quotes

Questions for Group Reflection

1. What were your childhood friendships like? What did you like doing best with your friends? What role did you play in your circle of friends?
2. During adolescence, what attributes attracted you as you chose your friends? Maybe they chose you—why?
3. Think of an important friendship you have had that did not endure. Why do you think it ended, and did its ending effect your choice of future friends?
4. Has a partner or spouse of yours ever felt threatened by a close friendship you have developed?
5. What gifts do you think your friends would say you offer them? What do they seem to treasure about who you are, how you think, what you do and say?
6. The lyrics of the song "For Good," from the musical *Wicked* go like this:
*I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn.
We are led to those who help us most to grow, if we let them, and we
help them in return.
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true, but I know
I'm who I am today because I knew you....
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
Because I knew you, I have been changed for good.*

Can you think of some ways that you were changed "for good" by one of your friends?

7. Have you ever experienced a "toxic" friendship? Some signs of a toxic friendship might be manipulation, boundary violations, or lack of mutuality.

Likes and Wishes

Closing Words and Chalice Extinguishing (The Rev. Kim Crawford-Harvie)

My spiritual companions,
a friend can save your life.
Friend: the one who sees the beauty, even in the brokenness,
and reflects that to us, like a mirror.
Friend: devotion.
Friend: the one who comes and sits and remains with us,
even in the face of terrible brokenness, and helps us to bear it.
Friend: the one who makes the world
a little safer,
the one who carries us when we can't, the one who makes us smile.
Friend: to look on all people
as all our relations:
to forgive, to bear hope,
and to work together
for a world at peace,
a world in love.

QUOTES

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust your friendship. ~Emerson

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of powerlessness. ~Henri Nouwen

It is not lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages. ~Nietzsche

The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart. ~Elizabeth Foley

Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: “What! You too? I thought I was the only one.” ~C.S. Lewis

It’s hard, but sometimes it is better to have no friends for a time than to have the wrong friends. The wrong group can lead you down all kinds of paths you really don’t want to be on. And retracing your steps can be a long hard journey. ~Sean Covey

Friends are those who treat you kindly behind your back. ~Unknown

Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to help pick up the pieces when it’s all over. ~Octavia Butler

Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born. ~Anais Nin

My friends are my estate. ~Emily Dickinson

A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words. ~variously ascribed

Friendship with oneself is all-important because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world. ~Eleanor Roosevelt

Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends. ~Shirley MacLaine

It's the friends you can call up at 4 a.m. that matter. ~Marlene Dietrich

“She is a friend of mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind.” ~Toni Morrison

Activity

1. Think about the friends you have treasured during your whole life so far. Think back to childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and beyond. Make a list of some of your most important friendships over the years. You might want to note the time of your life for each one and maybe the setting.

2. Write down 6 qualities that are the most important to you in a friendship.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.