

“Silence”

Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist
Congregation, Davie, FL

Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

Facilitator: For the opening, have the group sit as they would be comfortable, in silence (try to make sure the surrounding environment is kept as quiet as possible). Leading up to the session, maybe e-mail them with a question or two to about the role that silence plays in their lives; do they have negative or positive associations with the word?

Opening Words:

“The Zen Buddhist view of silence is captured best in the well-know remark that once we have pointed to the moon, the finger with which we have pointed is no longer necessary. Language is necessary--- if only to make itself unnecessary. We must speak to draw someone’s attention to the silence, but once we have done so the speaking may stop. We do not point to the moon in order to hold the viewer’s attention to our finger.”

- James P. Carse *The Silence of God: Meditations on Prayer*

Check-in/Sharing

Topic/Reading:

The writer is telling us about elementary school classes she has lead in which she asked the children to be very, very loud and then, alternatively, be still in silence. Here, she is relating their responses to the experience:

“Very few wrote with any originality about making noise. Most of their images were clichés such as “we sound like a herd of elephants.” But silence was another matter: here their images often had a depth and a maturity that was unlike anything else they wrote. One boy came up with an image of strength as being “as slow and silent as a tree,” another, “silence is me sleeping waiting to wake up. Silence is a tree spreading its branches to the sun.” In a parochial school, one third grader’s poem turned into a prayer: “Silence is spiders spinning their webs, it’s a silkworm making its silk. Lord, help me to know when to be silent.” And in a tiny town in western North Dakota a little girl offered a gem of spiritual wisdom that I find myself returning to when my life becomes too noisy and distractions overwhelm me: “Silence reminds me to take my soul with me wherever I go.”

- Kathleen Norris *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*

Questions for consideration: Our society is, by all accounts, a noisy place: TV, radio, cell phones, car horns, airplanes, talking heads, the list goes on.

- Why is silence so absent?
- What is lost when there is a “silence deficit”?

- Are we avoiding something by avoiding silence?

Reflect upon the role that silence plays in your life, what it signifies for you.

Likes and Wishes/Feedback

Closing Words:

If it is language that makes us human, one half of language is to listen.

Silence can exist without speech, but speech cannot live without silence.

Listen to the speech of others. Listen even more to their silence.

To pray is to listen to the revelation of nature, to the meaning of events.

To listen to music is to listen also to silence, and to find the silence deepened and enriched.

- Jacob Trapp, #482 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

Amen. May you live in blessing.