

Stay or Go?

Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern, UU Church of Palo Alto, CA, December 2011

Designed in conjunction with the 11/6/11 and 12/4/11 Sunday services

Chalice Lighting Erik Walker Wikstrom

We light this chalice for all who are here, and all who are not; For all who have ever walked through our doors, for those who may yet find this spiritual home, and for those we can't even yet imagine. For each of us and for us all, may this flame burn warm and bright.

Check-in *How is it with your spirit? What have been the high points and low points in your life since we last met?*

Reading Amy Zucker Morgenstern, sermon of 11/6/11 "Walk Out / Walk On / Stay Put"

A few weeks ago, I turned on the radio and heard a show I've never heard before—Freakonomics Radio—and the topic was "the upside of quitting." Perfect timing for these two services, which are about the challenge we all face at various times: looking at a job, a relationship, the place we're living, a religion, a political system, any number of life situations, and deciding, in the immortal words of The Clash, "should I stay or should I go?"

One of the experts on the show, Carsten Wrosch, is a psychology professor who studies the advantages of quitting. He estimates that we encounter about one unattainable goal per year, and the downsides of banging our heads against these unattainable goals are measurable. It's literally bad for your health.

But when to stay and when to go? As he says, that's the million-dollar question. The best he could offer was the observation that "People can make two different mistakes in the regulation of their life. They can quit too early when they should have persisted or they can quit too late."

This is not telling us the news—as the show's hosts observed. We all know that sometimes it's best to leave, but the hard part is knowing when. But as much as they enjoyed joshing Dr. Wrosch, he was hinting at a very important point: most of us tend to lean one way or another. Knowing our own tendencies can help us to perceive the situation more accurately and, maybe, act more wisely.

Sitting in Silence

Some questions you may want to contemplate:

- ♥ The novelist Wallace Stegner said people can be categorized as "boomers" or "stickers." Given a situation in which reasonable people might disagree on whether to cut your losses and leave (be a "boomer") or stay and try to make things work out where you are ("sticker"), which one do you tend to do?
- ♥ What have you experienced as some of the blessings and costs of this tendency?
- ♥ Can you think of an incident in your life when you made the opposite choice (stuck if you're a boomer, boomed if you're a sticker)? What was that like?

Sharing/Deep Listening *During this sharing, we will listen deeply without response or thought of response, as a gift to each other and ourselves.*

Sharing Together *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

Tending the Groups – Facilitators’ Session. *What’s happening in your group? Do you have any questions that the rest of us may be able to help with?*

Singing: “From You I Receive” (Joseph and Nathan Segal, #402 in *SLT*)

From you I receive, to you I give,
Together we share, and from this we live.

Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice Richard S. Gilbert

As we leave this community of the spirit,
May we remember the difficult lesson
That each day offers more things than we can do.

May we do what needs to be done,
Postpone what does not,
And be at peace with what we can be and do.

Therefore, may we learn to separate
That which matters most
And that which matters least of all.