

Letting Go
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Groups
October 6, 2015

Welcome and Orientation 10 minutes

This is a time when your facilitator/s introduce themselves and go over housekeeping details such as parking, meeting space, nametags, and confirming your contact information.

Chalice Lighting

Sitting silently, doing nothing,
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself.

-Matsuo Bashō

Sharing Silence

We open our time together with shared silence for about three minutes. This can be a time to meditate if that is part of your spiritual practice, reflect on your transition from where you have been during the day to where you are now, or to just be. If you are accustomed to silence, three minutes may feel short. If you are not, it may feel long.

On Our Hearts 10 minutes

Covenant 20 minutes

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of the group.

Adapted from *Heart to Heart* by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins

I commit myself:

- to give attendance at meetings a real priority knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to participate with my group in two service projects, one for our church community, and one for the wider community
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others;
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart;
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, problem solving, or giving advice;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Readings

A block to joy and love can be an unresolved sadness from the past. We told ourselves many things to deny the pain: "It doesn't hurt that much ...it's no big deal." But unfinished business does not go away; it keeps repeating itself until it gets our attention, until we feel it, deal with it. And then let it go.

- Melody Beattie (The Language of Letting Go)

Two Buddhist Monks were on a journey, one was a senior monk, the other a junior monk. During their journey they approached a turbulent river with no ferry and no bridge to facilitate the crossing. And on the river bank stood a young lady, clearly concerned about how she would get to the other side of the river without drowning. The junior monk walked straight past her without giving it a thought and waded across the river. The senior monk picked up the woman and carried her across the river. He placed her down on the opposite bank. Then the two monks parted ways with the woman and continued on their journey. After a long time walking in silence, the junior monk asked the other hotly, "How could you carry her like that? You know we can't touch women, it's against our way of life." The senior monk answered, "I left the woman at the river's edge a long way back, why are you still carrying her?"

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it
go,
to let it go.

-Mary Oliver (In Blackwater Woods)

Questions for consideration:

1. Describe a time when you were carrying something you needed to let go of and did. When you finally were able to let go, what moved or changed in you to allow you to let go? How does it affect who you are today?
2. Are you struggling right now to let go of something? How is holding on affecting your life? What are the advantages of holding on? What are the advantages of letting go?
3. What helps or supports you in letting go when you must: a belief? a faith? a practice? a perspective? past experience? the example of an admired other?
4. What role does the practice of letting go (of anger, attachment, control, ego...?) play in your spiritual life?

Sharing 60 minutes

Reflecting On Our Time Together

Closing Words

And now, as the fruit gathers
All the riches of summer
Into its compact world,
I feel richer than ever before,
And breathe a larger air.

I am not ready to die,
But I am learning to trust death
As I have trusted life.
I am moving
Toward a new freedom
Born of detachment,
And a sweeter grace—
Learning to let go.
- *May Sarton (excerpt, Gestalt at Sixty)*