



Branches Themes 2011-2012 DEATH

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

*I personally like the certainty of death. It is amazingly relaxing to realize that one can't do everything. If I knew I were going to live forever, I would feel obligated to fix all my imperfections. I would have to learn many more languages; I would worry about my teeth not holding out; I would have to make amends for **all** the mistakes I have made. ~Esther Dyson*

Check-In

How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences.) Please also take time to introduce yourselves. Suggest everyone try to wear a nametag so that you can learn names. If anyone is brand new to the group please ask them to tell a bit about how long they have been attending All Souls and how they found us the first time.

Business

Revisit Covenant (Please go over the culture of a Branches group highlighting: space in between speakers, popcorn style/Quaker style sharing, taking care of your own needs, speaking from *I*, no crosstalk, etc.) **Explain empty chair.**

Culture of group Are their things that need to be addressed? Starting and ending time, social opportunities before after meeting or at another date?, your service project inside and outside the church. Please refer to your facilitator manual for more information.

Tikkun Service projects are limited to the availability and interest and of the entire group. Please bring ideas for a service project next week.

Social Meeting Date? Time? Location? In order to assure the most availability, groups meet two weeks after their Church meeting at the same time at a chosen location.

Claim time for Deeper Listening Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to, uninterrupted, for what is essentially an extended check-in, if there is something going on in your life you would like to share. Encourage to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes. *Is there anyone who would like to claim time for deeper listening?* Ask for head nods to be sure.

Centering Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (Leave space for 8-10 breaths) The goal is to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings, and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

Readings (**Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between** followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

Summation by Susan Daily

"I have divided him up, "My grandmother speaks
Into the phone at 1:00 in morning.
"He is everywhere now, all over this world."

She has been moving around the house for days,
Classifying the many parts of you,
Sorting and making lists, making sense.

She tells me, rapidly, where you are,
Who has you. She talks extensively, down
To the very last item that you cared for.

And you are spread out all over this world.
Your eyeglasses are on the faces of
Six people in a third-world nation.

Your tee-shirts slouch across the chests of
thirty-five men in homeless centers
In large northern cities.

Your braces for arthritis steady
The wrists of nine patients, too sick
To leave their own homes.

Your gardening pants and wooly socks
are browsed over and examined by bent ladies
and young men in rural Salvation Army store.

The hundreds of babies brought into this world
By your strong, steady hands are grown and
Working in the gas station down the street.

Your dress shirts are being ironed for
Twenty men at Veteran's Hospital,
Getting ready for a big night on the town.

Your robes and pajamas and velvet slippers
Pad the nighttime wanderings of men
In Kentucky nursing homes.

Your suits are on my father as he goes
To his first job after being unemployed
For five impossible months.

Your red sweater rides on my sister's shoulders
As she hails a cab in New York City
On her way to one more audition.

Your wedding ring of fifty-nine years lies
In my cousin's bureau drawer, awaiting
The hand of his first bride.

Your one pair of good leather shoes twitch
On the feet of my brother, as he leans in to kiss
His first girlfriend under the glow of the porch light.

When death comes

by Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom; taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Questions

1. How does knowing that you are going to die affect the way you live?
2. What do you believe happens after death?
3. Have you been present when others have “stepped through the door?” How has that affected you?
4. What if the deaths of pets and people that touch our lives are also preparing us for our own death? What have you learned about death through the deaths of those you know and love?
5. Have you ever been to an All Souls Memorial service? How have you been touched by the memorializing of someone else’s life?

Deeper Listening

If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior.) Please state your name again for the group so that we might have yet another opportunity to put faces to names.

Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

Millions long for immortality who don't know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon. ~Susan Ertz

Death Evaluation

Sit down with your co-facilitator immediately following the session and reflect on the following questions. Please take a few notes so that you can discuss this session at the next facilitator connection circle.

1. How was the covenanting process? Troubles? Concerns?
2. Did you feel as though the components were well explained and that the model was followed?
3. Were there distractions in the group that may have prevented whole listening?
4. How do you feel the group connected? Who are your potential facilitators if your group births another group?
5. Did the group connect with the topic?
6. Anything else that you feel you need to bring up to the Facilitator Circle?
7. What was your experience in the circle this time? How were you ministering? Being ministered to?
8. Total attendance_____
9. Missing and need to be called?