

Branches Themes 2011-2012
HOPE

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

What is true of the individual will be tomorrow true of the whole nation if individuals will but refuse to lose heart and hope. ~Mohandas Gandhi

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 at this point to introduce yourselves. Suggest that everyone try to remember to wear a nametag so that you can learn everyone's names. If anyone is brand new to the group please ask them to tell us 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.**

The culture of your group: Are there 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 something is going on in your life that you would like to share. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes at this time. ***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.)

Embracing Hope

adapted from Harvey Simkovits by T. Lebak

With Hope

We see the world differently...

There is no blame or shame; life is experienced without hard judgment.

With Hope

There is caring compassion and curiosity for understanding and learning

With Hope

There are no enemies, resistance is approached as just information

With Hope

There is a calm, centered presence that opens space for new realities to surface

With Hope

There is an appreciation for what's working, and a respect for what's not.

With Hope

Trust and connection are generated, many more futures become feasible.

With Hope

Life expands, not contracts; there is room to approach, explore, and grow.

With Hope

One looks through the eyes of what can happen, not merely what has happened.

With Hope

One focuses on commonalities rather than differences, yet respecting the latter

With Hope

Life is entered and the moment is stepped into with an appetite for what is possible.

A Teaching Story from

Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace:

“Living in the Spirit of the Prayer of Saint Francis”

by Kent Nerburn

"We are not saints, we are not heroes. Our lives are lived in the quiet corners of the ordinary. We build tiny hearth fires, sometimes barely strong enough to give off warmth. But to the person lost in the darkness, our tiny flame may be the road to safety, the path to salvation.

"It is not given us to know who is lost in the darkness that surrounds us or even if our light is seen. We can only know that against even the smallest of lights, darkness cannot stand.

"A sailor lost at sea can be guided home by a single candle. A person lost in a wood can be led to safety by a flickering flame. It is not an issue of quality or intensity or purity. It is simply an issue of the presence of light."

Questions

1. What gives you hope?

2. What is the difference between faith and hope? Gratitude and hope?

3. Can you think of a time when you lost hope and regained it? Tell your story.

4. Has your definition of hope changed over your lifetime? What did you hope for as a child? A young adult? An adult? As a partner? parent? A grandparent?

5. Who inspires you to hope? What is their story?

6. Have you ever encouraged someone who was without hope? How do you share your hope with other people?

7. What are some of the practices or habits in your life that might keep you hopeful?

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

I have learned two lessons in my life: first, there are no sufficient literary, psychological, or historical answers to human tragedy, only moral ones. Second, just as despair can come to one another only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings. Eli Wiesel 32

Hope 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?