SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

On Aging

Aging brings the experiences of deprivation and loss: loss of beauty, physical strength and endurance, money, friends, and sometimes loved ones. We may also lose the hope that our lives will be perfect and that we will accomplish great things. This program is about the sadness and realizations that come with age, but also about how we accommodate and reap abundance and triumph in aging.

Chalice Lighting

Knowing there's only so much time,
I don't rejoice less but more.
Knowing how many things will now
not happen, I wish them Godspeed
and pass them on to someone
down the line. I honor my
regrets, the part of me that
never happened or happened wrong
and proceed on course though
the course is not known….
- Albert Huffstickler, "Don't Ask The Angels How They Fly"

Opening Reading

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and an empty cup
On the marble table-top.

While on the shop and street I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless
- William Butler Yeats, from "Vacillation"
in The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933)

Quiet Reflection

Sharing/ Check-In

Take two or three minutes to share how you are spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically. You can speak or you can pass. We want to know how you are in this moment.

Topic Reading

I am still every age that I have been. Because I was once a child, I am always a child. Because I was once a searching adolescent, given to moods and ecstasies, these are still part of me, and always will be... This does not mean that I ought to be trapped or enclosed in any of these ages...but that they are in me to be drawn on... Far too many people … think that forgetting what it is like to think and feel and touch and smell and taste and see and hear like a three-year-old or a thirteen-year-old or a twenty-three-year-old means being grownup. When I'm with these people I…feel that if this is what it means to be a

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grown-up, then I don't ever want to be one. Instead of which, if I can retain a child's awareness and joy, and be fifty-one, then I will really learn what it means to be grownup.
- *Madeleine L'Engle, A Circle Of Quiet*

Do not think of knocking out another person's brains because he differs in opinion from you. It would be as rational to knock yourself on the head because you differ from yourself ten years ago. - *Horace Mann*

Break/Quiet Contemplation

A person who is well-raised knows to respect the elders. It doesn't mean that you need to agree with anything—even a little bit—of what the elder says. But you respect the elder for surviving. – *Maya Angelou, from Iconoclasts: Episode 6: Dave Chappelle and Maya Angelou (Season 2)*

Sharing/Deep Listening

Speak about this topic in any way that is comfortable to you. If you choose to use the questions, focus on just one or two, as this will allow you to go deeper into the topic.

- What has been your experience of aging over the decades of your life? What has been surprising about it?
- What frightens you about aging?
- What comforts you about aging?

Discussion

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

Checkout/ Likes & Wishes

What did you like about this meeting? What would you like to see change at future meetings?

Announcements

Closing Readings/ Extinguish Chalice

A weed, dying of age and winter chill
Scrawled with black fingers on the snowy burial field:
"My seeds survive me.
They will rest green elbows on the pulpits of summer.
Heed my homilies:
Never to despair
But trust and praise forever
Sunlight, rain, earth, and air."
- *Virginia Hamilton Adair*

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Then here's a hail to each flaming dawn
And here's a cheer to the night that's gone
And may I go a roaming on - until the day I die!
- *Gravestone in the Adirondacks*