



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

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## Eating Mindfully

This food is the gift of the whole universe — the earth, the sky and much hard work. May we live in a way that is worthy of this food. May we transform our unskillful states of mind, especially that of greed. May we eat only foods that nourish us and prevent illness. May we accept this food for the realization of the way of understanding and love.

- *Buddhist Grace*

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### Opening and Chalice Lighting

Just as the sun bathes us in its light, its warmth and its love, so may the spirit of this chalice bless us with truth, life, and love.

- *Derek McCullough, Australian and New Zealand Unitarian Association*

### Quiet Reflection

There is a calmness to a life lived in Gratitude, a quiet joy.

- Ralph H. Blum

### 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.*

### Strawberry Meditation

*Take a strawberry or two, find a comfortable spot, and follow along with the guided meditation.*

### Topic Readings

Life itself may become a koan [a paradox] in which we try to answer the question of how to lead a life that balances our own needs with those of the people and beings around us. The buying, cooking, serving, and eating of food in ways that demonstrate our appreciation for our own lives and our care for the wellbeing of other sentient beings and the natural world is a way of contributing in a satisfying and practical way to achieving this balance.

- *Keizo Koyabashi, Three Bowl Cookbook*

One of the primary ways we connect with each other is by eating together...Much of our fundamental well-being comes from the basic reassurance that there is a place for us at the table. We belong here. Here we are served and we serve others. Here we give and receive sustenance. No small matter.

*Edward Espe Brown, Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings*

### Break/Quiet Contemplation

Food is intimately connected with sacraments and religious observations in all faiths. In addition to the Lord's Supper, almost all holy days/holidays are celebrated or commemorated with fasts, feasts and special foods such as lamb, wassail, matzoh, and horseradish. The homely ritual of "saying grace" reminds us of the holiness of every meal.

- *Molly Anderson, Grace at the Table*

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If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you,' it will be enough.  
- Meister Eckhart

How did we ever get to a point where we need investigative journalists to tell us where food comes from and nutritionists to determine the dinner menu?  
- Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

The molecules we consume — nitrogen fixed by a pea plant in a particular field, sugars produced as the sun ripens a pear in a particular orchard — become part of our bodies. Eating, drinking and breathing are the most intimate connections we have with the world around us. They are the acts by which the world is made flesh.  
- Molly Anderson, *Grace at the Table*

Cooking provides a metaphor and a vehicle for making our lives whole: finding pleasure in handling food instead of thinking that the pleasure comes when the work is over. Experiencing the simple joys of creating with wheat and corn, tomatoes and arugula, instead of thinking that joy is not having to relate to anything.  
- Edward Espe Brown, *Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings*

No one who cooks, cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, the wisdom of cookbook writers.  
- Laurie Colwin

Since the beginning of time, people who trust one another, care for one another, and are deeply connected to one another have shared food as a sign of and a reaffirmation of their relationship.

When attention is paid to this sharing, it takes on a ritual character. The nurturing of the body becomes a metaphor of the mutual nourishing of lives. Every time we hold hands and say a blessing before a meal, every time we lift a glass and say fine words to one another, every time we eat in peace and grace together, we have celebrated the covenants that bind us together.  
- Robert Fulghum, *From Beginning to End*

## 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.*

- How do you approach food in your life? Are there times you feel more connected to where the food came from?
- How important were meals with family and friends as you were growing up...and now? Does communal eating have a spiritual component for you?
- Our 7th principle honors the inter-connected web of life. How, if at all, does this shape your food choices?
- What, if anything, would you like to change about the way you eat?

## 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.*

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**Checkout/  
Likes & Wishes**

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

**Announcements**

**Closing Reading/  
Extinguish Chalice**

For the sun and the dawn  
Which we did not create;

For the moon and the evening  
Which we did not make;

For food which we plant  
But cannot grow;

For friends and loved ones  
We have not earned and cannot buy;

For this gathered company  
Which welcomes us as we are,  
from wherever we have come...

For all things which come to us  
As gifts of being from sources beyond ourselves;

Gifts of life and love and friendship  
We lift up our hearts in thanks this day.

- *Richard M. Fewkes, Singing the Living Tradition Hymnal #515*