



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

Compassion

All the great world faiths emphasize the importance of charity and loving-kindness because they work; they have been found to introduce us into a sacred realm of peace within ourselves. And they do that because they help us to transcend the demands of our insecure, greedy egotism that imprison us within our worst selves... - *Karen Armstrong, "Seeing Things as They Really Are" in Walking with God in a Fragile World*

Chalice Lighting

May this flame burn and remind us that each of us can offer goodness and love, and that each of us can be a blessing to the world.
- *Petr Samojsky (Religious Society of Czech Unitarians, from ICUU.net)*

Opening Reading

Kindness
- *Naomi Shihab Nye*

Quiet Reflection

The first duty of love is to listen.
- *Paul Tillich (1886-1965)*

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. Remember to be fully present and listen with intention as we talk about our experiences, thoughts and feelings.

Reading

When we see ourselves as we truly are--divinely perfect human beings struggling to live out the gifts of spirituality--we have an opportunity to crack open the door of compassion a bit. When we can compassionately see that we fumble, we make mistakes, or that we are (if only faintly and occasionally!) aware of a goodness within us that we do not always know how to express, we start to be aware of feelings of compassion for ourselves. Once we are aware of compassion for ourselves, it is only a very short step to begin to feel compassion for others.
- *Anne Wilson Schaefer*

Buddhist Guided Meditation

Loving-kindness & Equanimity
May _____ be filled with loving-kindness
May _____ be well
May _____ be peaceful and at ease
May _____ be happy

Reading

In cultivating compassion we draw from the wholeness of our experience--our suffering, our empathy, as well as our cruelty and terror. It has to be this way. Compassion into a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a

relationship between equals. Only when we know our darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.

- Pema Chödrön

Break/Quiet Contemplation

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 thoughts, feelings, memories, or images did you have while participating in the guided meditation?
- Think of time in your life when you were moved to compassion or when someone unexpected had compassion for you. How did feeling or receiving compassion affect your life? Your attitudes? Your perceptions? Your actions?
- What does it mean to have compassion for yourself? For others? For friends and family? For strangers? For enemies? Which of these is most challenging and why?
- How do you define compassion? What is the difference between compassionate feelings and compassionate actions?
- How might we cultivate compassion in our daily lives?

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. Remember to “share the air” with each other as we explore more fully our thoughts about cultivating compassion in our daily lives.

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

True compassion is not just an emotional response but a firm commitment founded on reason. Because of this firm foundation, a truly compassionate attitude toward others does not change even if they behave negatively. Genuine compassion is based not on our own projections and expectations, but rather on the needs of the other: irrespective of whether another person is a close friend or an enemy, as long as that person wishes for peace and happiness and wishes to overcome suffering, then on that basis we develop genuine concern for their problem. This is genuine compassion.

- H.H. the Dalai Lama