

HOPE
January 2017
USG Small Group Ministry

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness. -- Desmond Tutu

Check-in

Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We will listen to each other without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.

Thoughts for Contemplation

Hope is not like a lottery ticket that you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. Hope is an ax you break down doors with in an emergency, because hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, annihilation of the earth's treasures, and from the grinding down of the poor and the marginal. Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope. To hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment to the future makes the present inhabitable....anything could happen and whether we act or not has everything to do with it. The future is dark, with a darkness as much of the womb as of the grave. -- Rebecca Solnit

Look well to the growing edge.
All around us worlds are dying
and new worlds are being born;
all around us life is dying and life is being born.
The fruit ripens on the tree,
the roots are silently at work
in the darkness of the earth
against a time when there shall be new leaves,
fresh blossoms, green fruit.
Such is the growing edge.
It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung,
the one more thing to try when all else has failed,
the upward reach of life
when weariness closes in upon all endeavor.
This is the basis of hope in moments of despair,
the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint
and men and women have lost their reason,
the source of confidence when worlds crash
and dreams whiten into ash.
Such is the growing edge incarnate.
Look well to the growing edge.
-- Howard Thurman

In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again. --Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl

You may not always have a comfortable life. And you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once. But don't ever underestimate the impact you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own. --Michelle Obama

Spiritual Exercises

1. Think about the ways you or someone you know has been a bearer of hope. Do something to bring hope to your family, friends, community or the world. *Adapted from Foothills Unitarian Church.*
2. Read something about a time in history when things looked dire. What happened afterwards? Is there anything hopeful to be learned or done?

Questions

1. To what extent is hope the antithesis of fear? Is hope an antidote to fear? Could it serve that purpose in your life?
2. In the face of so much of the world's problems, what is the evidence for hope? Is there evidence? Does there need to be evidence? Why should we be hopeful?
3. How are hope and action tied together? What actions can you take that express hope?

Sitting in Silence

Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the topic while we listen in silence.

Reflection and 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.

Song #95, Singing the Living Tradition

There is more hope somewhere
There is more hope somewhere
I'm going to keep on 'til I find it
There is more hope somewhere

Closing reading/Extinguishing the Chalice

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. -- Martin Luther King, Jr.