

## Humor ~ USG Small Group Ministry ~ July 2018

### Chalice Lighting

Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you.  
~ Langston Hughes

### Check In

*Time to share briefly the highs/lows we have carried in our minds and hearts since we last met.*

### Quotes for Inspiration/Thoughts to Ponder/Readings

The most wasted of all days is one without laughter. ~ e.e. cummings

He who laughs, lasts. ~ Mary Pettibone Poole

Laugh as much as possible, always laugh. It's the sweetest thing one can do for oneself and one's fellow human beings. ~ Maya Angelou

Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is. ~ Francis Bacon

There is nothing like a gleam of humor to reassure you that a fellow human being is ticking inside a strange face. ~ Eva Hoffman

This I conceive to be the chemical function of humor: to change the character of our thought.  
~ Lin Yutang

I'm struck by how laughter connects you with people. It's almost impossible to maintain any kind of distance or any sense of social hierarchy when you're just howling with laughter. Laughter is a force for democracy. ~ John Cleese

### Readings

The old saying "Laughter is the best medicine" might have some truth to it, based on recent research at Loma Linda University in California that found much lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol in people who spent 20 minutes watching funny videos, compared to people who spent 20 minutes sitting quietly. A Vanderbilt University study estimated that just 10-15 minutes of laughter a day can burn up to 40 calories, and a University of Maryland study revealed that a sense of humor can protect against heart disease.

Indeed, according to Cardiologist Dr. Cynthia Thalk, "A good laugh can be compared to a mild workout, as it exercises the muscles, gets the blood flowing, decreases blood pressure and stress hormones, improves sleep patterns and boosts the immune system.

Furthermore, a study by Johns Hopkins University Medical School showed that humor and laughter can also improve memory and mental performance.... an old Yiddish proverb says, 'What soap is for the body, laughter is to the soul'. If you can find a reason to laugh every day, you'll find that your moods will improve, your relationships with others will seem more meaningful and effortless, and life's hurdles won't seem to daunting. Moreover, your body, mind and soul will reap the health benefits of this natural and free medicine.

## Spiritual Exercises

- 1) Laugh! Do this Laughter Meditation from Spirituality and Health magazine: "Raise both arms in the air and shout "yahoo!" several times. Then burst into laughter for absolutely no reason. Just start laughing. At the beginning it may seem weird, and you may have to force it a little, saying "Ha, ha, ha" or "Ho, ho, ho" to get the energy of the laughter moving. Soon spontaneous laughter arises. Try it for thirty seconds, for one or two minutes, or for three or five minutes. Just laugh for no reason at all. Laugh for the sake of laughing. The idea is to become a child again and to experience the natural spontaneity and joy of life that we were all born with". (for more information, see [http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/single\\_practice.php?id=25968](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/single_practice.php?id=25968))
- 2) Make someone else laugh! Bring your favorite joke or cartoon to your Small Group meeting and share it, post a joke or funny update everyday this month on Facebook or Twitter. Host a movie night to share your favorite comedy with friends and family.
- 3) Fill your day with humor! Make a point to laugh every day - seek out humor that best speaks to you and tickles your funny bone. Try *The Onion*, Dave Barry, Jon Stewart, Ellen Degeneres, David Sedaris, Abbott & Costello, Chris Rock, *Calvin and Hobbes*. Google "cat wearing shark costume riding a Roomba" (really, google it, you won't be sorry). Whatever makes you laugh, seek it out every day this month and escape into it.

## Questions

- 1) There is a saying that 'children laugh 300 times a day, adults less than 20'. There are many versions of this saying but no studies to verify the numbers, however, many adults find this to be true. Is it true for you? If so, how can you boost your daily laugh rate?
- 2) Did you try the laughter meditation Spiritual Exercise? What was your experience with it? Did you find it beneficial?
- 3) How important is humor and laughter in your life? Do you see humor in things every day, or do you seek it out?
- 4) Was there laughter in your home growing up? Is there laughter in your home now? Why or why not?

## Sitting In Silence

*Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon the readings and spiritual exercises.*

## Sharing/Deep Listening

*Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the topic.*

## Reflection

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

## Singing *The UU Pokey* (to the tune of the Hokey Pokey)

You put your open mind in  
You take your open mind out  
You put your open mind in and shake it all about  
You do the UU Pokey and you turn yourself around  
That's what it's all about!

You put your helping hands in, etc  
You put your loving heart in, etc

You put your whole self in, etc  
You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn the world around (different ending for the last verse)

## Extinguishing the Chalice

From there to here, and here to there, funny things are everywhere. ~ Dr. Seuss