

MINDFULNESS

USG Small Group Ministry - August 2017

Chalice Lighting

“For the person with attention, every day becomes the very day upon which all the world depends.” - Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro

Check-in

Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met.

Readings / Quotes

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally... When we commit ourselves to paying attention in an open way, without falling prey to our own likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices, projections and expectations, new possibilities open up and we have a chance to free ourselves from the straitjacket of unconsciousness.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

“Mindfulness is the energy that sheds light on all things and all activities, producing the power of concentration, bringing forth deep insight and awakening.” - Thich Nhat Hanh

“I am learning slowly to bring my crazy pinball-machine mind back to this place of friendly detachment toward myself, so I can look out at the world and see all those other things with respect. Try looking at your mind as a wayward puppy that you are trying to paper train. You don't drop-kick a puppy into the neighbor's yard every time it piddles on the floor. You just keep bringing it back to the newspaper. So I keep trying gently to bring my mind back to what is really there to be seen, maybe to be seen and noted with a kind of reverence.” - Anne Lamott

“Our minds are like crows. They pick up everything that glitters, no matter how uncomfortable our nests get with all that metal in them.” - Thomas Merton

Spiritual Exercises

1) In our busy lives, how often do we find ourselves doing more than one thing at a time? Many days, it seems that multitasking is an ingrained part of life. This month, experiment with “uni-tasking.” For example, work on the computer without the TV or radio on, or drive without listening to the news or music. Exercise or eat in silence. When you fold the laundry, only fold the laundry. How does it feel to do one thing at a time? Will you continue trying this beyond this month? Why or why not?

2) We can cultivate mindfulness or wakefulness by bringing more awareness to the moment by performing some daily tasks in a different way. Try eating with the opposite hand, walk or ride a bike instead of driving and notice things you may have missed from the car, or simply slow down and experience the journey of an errand. Did anything you noticed along your way surprise you? After experimenting with “falling awake” (as Jon Kabat-Zinn puts it), how did you feel? Did you sense any changes to your mind or body?

3) Thich Nhat Hanh wrote “Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.” Walking the labyrinth is a form of meditation that is said to be a metaphor for our spiritual journey: one walks to the center of the labyrinth (or one's heart or soul) and back out again into the world. Below is a small labyrinth that can be traced with your finger, as a start to experiencing this type of meditation. For larger walking labyrinths, visit one of the local places listed in Additional Resources.



Questions for Contemplation

- 1) What does mindfulness mean to you?
- 2) How do you cultivate it in your life?
- 3) Do you struggle to live with more mindfulness? How can you help your mind to turn off the background noise and focus on the present?
- 4) What roles do expectations and imagination play in mindfulness?

Sitting in Silence

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

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

Meditation on Breathing (Hymn #1009 Singing the Journey))

When I breathe in, I breathe in Peace

When I breathe out, I breathe out Love

Extinguishing the Chalice

“Be happy in the moment, that’s enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.” - Mother Teresa

Additional Resources: Walking Labyrinths

- 1) Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia – 7301 Germantown Avenue, located on the second floor rotunda of Krauth Memorial Library <http://ltsp.edu/labyrinth>
- 2) St Thomas’ Episcopal Church – 600 Church Rd, Flourtown, located behind the church, always open.
- 3) Bryn Mawr College, 101 N Merion Ave, Bryn Mawr, located on the campus and open to the public from sunrise to sunset.
- 4) For more locations, see <http://labyrinthlocator.com/locate-a-labyrinth>