

Covenant Group Session for November 2017  
Follen Community Church, Lexington, MA

## **Balance**

### **CANDLE LIGHTING AND OPENING WORDS:**

(To be read in unison) Here, in this circle of trust, we listen in silence, fully present. We open our minds and our hearts.

Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony.  
Thomas Merton

### **SILENCE**

### **Check in: Please respond to one of the following questions:**

1. Tell us about your experience with this month's spiritual exercise.
2. Or, what is draining your spirit or lifting up your spirit?
3. Or, does Merton's description of happiness reflect your own experience?

### **NOVEMBER SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: BALANCE**

Take a physical approach to this spiritual topic. Choose one or both of these activities: Balance on one foot for as long as you can—try to get to at least one minute. Or, balance a pencil or something small on the tip of a finger, for as long as you can, at least one minute. What do you notice about the act of balancing? What do you think about while you seek balance? What does finding physical balance tell us about the art of finding spiritual balance?

### **SILENCE**

### **MAIN READING:**

- 1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
- 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

- 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. Merton proposes that man has the power to make himself happy; Ecclesiastes says God has placed all life in order and man should not upset himself about what is not in his power to alter. Which view of the world most closely corresponds to your own?
2. In Ecclesiastes we have fourteen pairs of fixed contrasts , ranging from external circumstances to the inner affections of man's being. Do you find the constant, pendulum-like balance comforting or discouraging and why?
3. Can you explain why these lines from Ecclesiastes were used in a folk song under the title "Turn, Turn, Turn" as a plea for world peace and tolerance?
4. How did the Spiritual Exercise extend, deepen or relate to the Main Reading?

**AFFIRMATIONS:** This is a time for the whole group to consider quietly what was experienced or spoken, to describe what might have shifted for you or someone else, or to express gratitude or appreciation for something that you or another person revealed or expressed. The purpose of this section is to reflect silently on what was moving or meaningful, and then to offer a single comment into the circle without further response or conversation.

**CHECKOUT - LIKE/WISH/WONDER:** This is a time to consider the experience we have had together, and share gratitude, appreciation, concerns, or ideas. Try to start your sharing with "I like..." "I wish..." or "I wonder..."

## **CLOSING WORDS:**

Nature is ever at work building and pulling down, creating and destroying, keeping everything whirling and flowing, allowing no rest but in rhythmical motion, chasing everything in endless song out of one beautiful form into another. John Muir

Until we meet again, let us go forth, sharing the gifts of Sacred Listening.  
The light within me honors the light within you. Go in peace.

## **SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR DECEMBER: PROMISE**

This exercise is an opportunity for reflection.

Has anyone ever broken a promise to you? Have you ever broken a promise to someone else?

When you look back on the broken promises in your life, what did you learn from them?

How have these broken promises affected your faith—in others, in yourself, in the wider world? And how have you moved past them?