

Covenant Group session for February, 2018  
Follen Community Church, Lexington, MA

## SECRETS

### CANDLELIGHTING AND OPENING WORDS

“I don't think secrets agree with me, I feel rumpled up in mind since you told me that...”  
~Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

### SILENCE

#### Check in:

1. Tell us about your experience with this month's spiritual exercise. (See below) Or,
2. Have you ever been “rumpled up in mind” by a secret someone told you? What was that like? Or,
3. What is draining your spirit or lifting up your spirit?

### FEBRUARY SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: SECRETS

Contemplate, and discuss with loved ones and your covenant group, this question: What is the difference between privacy, secrecy, and confidentiality? And, if you believe in God (or something like God—Spirit of Life, Love, the Universe, Ground of Being...), do you have any secrets from God?

### SILENCE

### MAIN READING

We are all, in a sense, experts on secrecy. From earliest childhood we feel its mystery and attraction. We know both the power it confers and the burden it imposes. We learn how it can delight, give breathing-space, and protect. But we come to understand its dangers, too: how it is used to oppress and exclude; what can befall those who come too close to secrets they were not meant to share; and the price of betrayal.

We know the feel of secrecy, then—and yet the moral questions it raises puzzle and elude us. How far should one go in protecting one's secrets? Should one conceal all that friends and colleagues confide? When may promise of secrecy be broken? Are there times when it *must* be breached? Under what circumstances is it wrong to gossip about the secrets of others, or pry into them? Is secrecy corrupting when it permits the unchecked exercise of power? And do probing and secrecy raise different problems or pose greater risks when practiced by groups and entire governments?

Lies are part of the arsenal used to guard and to invade secrecy, and secrecy allows lies to go undiscovered and to build up... Whereas every lie stands in need of justification, all secrets do not. Secrets may accompany the most innocent as well as the most lethal acts. It is needed for human survival, yet it enhances every form of abuse.

Sissela Bok

*Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*

1. Have you ever revealed a secret? What made you do so? How did you feel afterwards? Would you do it again
2. What has been the effect on you of secrets you may have kept? Have some of those secrets have been ones you kept from yourself?
3. Think of a time when sharing a secret enhanced your connection to someone else.
4. How did the Spiritual Practice 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**

### **The Secret Sits**

We dance round in a ring and suppose,  
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.

~Robert Frost

**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.**

