

Covenant Group Session
Follen Church Lexington, MA
December 2017

CANDLE LIGHTING & OPENING WORDS

Covenants are promises made to be broken. And then we begin again in love.

“We cannot do both covenant and individualism; individuality, yes, but not individualism. Articulating and living our Principles as a commitment to covenant—creating and sustaining a community by “promising to one another our mutual trust and support”—this takes extra effort.”

Frederic Muir (<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/end-ichurch>)

SILENCE

CHECK IN:

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, has it taken extra effort this month to live the promise of mutual trust and support?

Spiritual Exercise for December:

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?

SILENCE

MAIN READING

Every Sunday morning, the church choir and I spend time in reflection and silence before we begin the first worship service. I often offer my thoughts on the day's theme or the state of the world, providing context to the message we bring.

On a recent Sunday, I said to the choir, "So often, we make the mistake of living according to our hopes instead of according to our realities." I didn't mean to say it, and I didn't know that I would. But as I did, the statement became immediately true.

I wonder if, in our efforts to "be the change we wish to see in the world," we stop short at our ideal selves: the idea of ourselves we are most comfortable with. I wonder how often I think I've already been the change — and I'm waiting idly for the tendencies of the world to catch up. I'm unsettled by how frequently I'm surprised by my own social idiocy. How many times need I screw up the same person's preferred pronouns, or note that I am not surprised that the person who just nearly ran me off the road is of a certain race and/or age, or make immediate assumptions about someone because of what I perceive to be their class?

Or maybe this is a better question: How many times do I need to make mistakes at the expense of other people, or people's groups, before I'm ready to admit that I'm not any better at this than the bigoted and willfully ignorant?

I am liberal. Often painfully so. I am not enlightened. I am not elevated. I am not better. But I believe, with everything I am, that I can be.

"Change" is a word on wheels. It's not a destination, but a journey. If I am to "be change," I must commit to humility and refuse to settle for my own comforting achievements.

DeReau K. Farrar (<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/change-world-wheels>)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How has being at Follen made you aware that we all fall short of our best intentions sometimes?
2. How do we begin again in love when we have broken a promise or someone has broken one to us?
3. How did the Spiritual Practice 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

Love is the doctrine of this church,
The quest of truth is its
sacrament,
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom,
To serve human need,
to the end that all souls shall
grow into harmony with each other
and our earthly home.
Thus do we covenant, together.

Adapted by Rev. Alison Wohler (Whose Are We? Sources of our UU Authority:
September 18, 2011, Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst)

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 Exercise for January -

Solitude

January is often a time for resolutions, so here is a tough spiritual exercise!
Spend one day **WITHOUT YOUR CELL PHONE.**

Don't look at it. Don't turn it on. Don't make a call. Don't receive a call. Don't text. Don't check facebook. Drive places using a paper map. Disconnect, detach, cut the tether...just for a day.

What happened? What did you notice? Did you find ways to get around the exercise—and why? Did you have any conversations or experiences you might not ordinarily had? And finally—would you try this again?