

ALL SOULS

UNITARIAN CHURCH

October Theme Death

Opening Reading/ Chalice Lighting

I personally like the certainty of death. It is amazingly relaxing to realize that one can't do everything. If I knew I were going to live forever, I would feel obligated to fix all my imperfections. I would have to learn many more languages; I would worry about my teeth not holding out; I would have to make amends for *all* the mistakes I have made. Esther Dyson

Check-In How goes thy spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? 2-3 sentences

Business

Branches Extravaganza September 14th 1-3 and 3-5

Revisit the Covenant

Claim time for Deeper Listening Deeper listening is a time at the end of our meeting where you can be listened to uninterrupted for what is essentially an extended check in if you have more you need to say than the initial check in. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes.

Centering Take a moment to breathe, feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair. After a few minutes of breathing, find your heartbeat (either by listening to your ear or placing your fingers on your pulse). See if you can hold the attention of your heartbeat and listen to the sounds in the room. (1-2 minutes) Our goal would be to bring this sense of calm and way of listening to the readings and to one another, keeping our attention toggling between self and what you are listening to.

Readings (Read through readings and questions twice, one time per facilitator, with reflection space in between followed by Quaker Style sharing. Try to stay in I statements and personal stories and not shift into third person and facts. Try to leave space between speakers.)

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Summation Susan Daily

“I have divided him up, “My grandmother speaks
Into the phone at 1:00 in morning.
“He is everywhere now, all over this world.”

She has been moving around the house for days,
Classifying the many parts of you,
Sorting and making lists, making sense.

She tells me, rapidly, where you are,
Who has you. She talk extensively, down
To the very last item that you cared for.

And you are spread out all over this world.
Your eyeglasses are on the faces of
Six people in a third world nation.

Your tee shirts slouch across the chests of
thirty-five men in homeless centers
In large northern cities.

Your braces for arthritis steady
The wrists of nine patients, too sick
To leave their own homes.

Your gardening pants and wooly socks
are browsed over and examined by bent ladies
and young men in rural Salvation Army store.

The hundreds of babies brought into this world
By your strong, steady hands are grown and
Working in the gas station down the street.

Your dress shirts are being ironed for
Twenty men at Veteran’s Hospital,
Getting ready for a big night on the town.

Your robes and pajamas and velvet slippers
Pad the nighttime wanderings of men

In Kentucky nursing homes.

Your suits are on my father as he goes
To his first job after being unemployed
For five impossible months.

Your red sweater rides on my sister's shoulders
As she hails a cab in New York City
On her way to one more audition.

Your wedding ring of fifty –nine years lies
In my cousin's bureau drawer, awaiting
The hand of his first bride.

Your one pair of good leather shoes twitch
On the feet of my brother, as he leans in to kiss
His first girlfriend under the glow of the porch light.

When Death Comes

Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common

as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth
tending as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it is over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Questions

- 1. Do you think about your own death? How does knowing that you are going to die affect the way you live?**
- 2. How would you live your life differently if you knew you would live forever?**
- 3. What do you believe happens after death?**
- 4. Have you been present when others have “stepped through the door?” How has that affected you?**
- 5. When have you felt as though you were simply “visiting the world?”**
- 6. Have you ever been to an All Souls Memorial service? How have you been touched by the memorializing of someone else’s life?**

Deeper Listening If time is claimed by an individual, group listens to speaker uninterrupted for that designated time. It is best to have a timer of sorts so that facilitator can listen fully as well.

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Check Out

One sentence about where you are now that we have been together for the past hour and a half. (How did you show up? Would you share more or less? Would you do anything differently? Focus your likes and dislikes on your own behavior)

Closing reading/Chalice Extinguishing

Death cannot be understood without compassion. Compassion teaches me that when my brother dies, I too die. Compassion teaches me that my brother and I are one. _Thomas Merton