

Milestones Circle - April 28, 2024

Sharing Our Lives Now: Facing the Fact of Death

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one, even as the river and sea are one.

—Kahlil Gibran

Song (TBA)

Welcome & Introductions: The what, who, and why of the Milestones Circle. Older adulthood is a time to take stock of one's journey and to affirm that which is of most importance. It can be a rich time in the lives of adults- a time when we are often open to new learning and discovery, a time of deepening friendships and relationships, a time of theological reflection as we explore questions of meaning and purpose. The Milestones Circle is an open, drop-in small group for older adults to meet, share thoughts and concerns, and receive support and friendship in a UU setting.

Our proposed Covenant Statement: *(to be read silently and discussed if there are questions or concerns.)*

- We will use “I” statements when speaking and avoid interrupting others while they are speaking.
 - What we say in this Circle will be held in confidence so that we all will feel free to share our truth openly.
 - We will listen with compassion and empathy because we understand that all human beings are fallible and need the kindness offered in friendship.
 - We acknowledge the right to pass or not share, when that feels appropriate.
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First Reading: From A Book of Comfort by Dr. R. Brasch

“The trauma of grief is an experience we must all share sooner or later. It (can) make us feel at one.

...It is one of the paradoxes of human existence that everyone wants to live long but no one wants to grow old. We almost expect those fortunate enough to be blessed with an abundance of years to go on living for ever. Therefore, when the moment of passing arrives, it still comes as a blow. Everyone’s lifespan is limited even if it exceeds the biblical three score years and ten or by reason of strength, four score years.

Wisely we must be ready to accept death as a reality and indeed be grateful for the privilege of having enjoyed their company for so many years – far beyond the allotted time. If on the other hand, death relieves suffering, we should thankfully acknowledge it. As life is a privilege, death is sometimes a blessing. Never abandon a rational approach to death.”

Check-in: State your name and briefly describe where you are in your life now.

Second Reading: Quoting from Tips for coping with grief and loss in our later years... (from the website: wildpineresidence.com)

As we get older, we experience more losses as a result of accidents, illnesses, and old age. And the older we get, the more people we will know with chronic and terminal diseases. Unfortunately, grief and aging tend to go hand in hand. But while we lose more loved ones as we age, this is a time to live, love, and heal. It’s important to accept that there will be difficult times ahead so you can grow and adapt, and be better able to handle these challenges.

Unfortunately, death is a part of life. And if you’re unprepared for how to handle the loss of a loved one, you may experience depression.

But if you develop an approach to cope with death, you can improve your wellbeing and get through life’s challenges in a healthy way.

Third Reading: Facing your fear of death (from the UUA.org website)

Two of the big questions religions have sought to answer over the years are: “Why does life exist as we know it?” and “What happens after we die?” Unitarian Universalism won’t promise you ironclad answers to these questions. But we will promise you a community of learning and support to explore what matters most.

Unitarian Universalist minister Dr. Forrest **Church** described **religion** as "our **human response** to the dual reality of being alive and having to die."

Unitarian Universalist views about life after death are informed by both [science and spiritual traditions](#). Many of us live with the assumption that life does not continue after death, and many of us hold it as an open question, wondering if our minds will have any awareness when we are no longer living. Few of us believe in divine judgment after death. It’s in our religious DNA: the Universalist side of our tradition broke with mainstream Christianity by rejecting the idea of eternal damnation.

Quiet Reflection: *Take this time in silence to reflect on the readings, and the questions to consider which are below. (It is recommended that the song be repeated here.)*

Sharing/Listening round our Circle *We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. You may wish to address one of the*

questions above or you may wish to offer your own unique thoughts on the theme of “Sharing our lives now.”

Questions to Consider:

Question 1: If you feel comfortable doing so, please, share your own experiences with death?

Question 2: a) After his/her death, how can you find out who you are, apart from your loved one? b) how can one move forward?

Question 3: What have you learned from the stories of death today shared or from death in your past experiences?

Open Discussion/reflections *We will share additional thoughts on our theme, this time in no particular order.*

Final Reading: Joseph Campbell, the American mythologist, wrote, “Life is without meaning. You bring the meaning to it.” Grief has taught me that. Life just is. The question is not what is the meaning of life? but rather what are we going to do with this life to create meaning?

Last thoughts/Check Out *As time allows, we are invited to give expression to appreciations on the sharing that has been offered or offer our own final thoughts.*

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice

There is a love Holding me. There is a love Holding you. There is a love Holding all. I rest in this love.

—Rev. Rebecca Parker, Unitarian Universalist..

Next meeting will be on Sunday, May 26, 2024 after the worship service
The topic will be “Planning & Making decisions for the final years”

Thanks to Joan Mudrick and Kathie Bergman for planning and facilitating today’s meeting