

Milestones Circle: Sharing Our Lives Now - March 23, 2025

Developing the practice of listening. Building our relationships (human and fur friends)

Newcomer 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.

As an experiment, we have agreed that if our group exceeds 12 in number we will try splitting into 2 groups for the discussion and coming back together for our sharing of final thoughts. We hope that this move satisfies our goal of allowing enough time for everyone to thoroughly express their personal points of view on the topics.

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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Opening Words and Chalice Lighting: Responsive Reading no. 557 in the grey hymnal “A Common Destiny”

Song no. 402 “From You I Receive” (sing through 3X)

Check-in: Participants are invited, as we go around our circle, to state your name and to share something important in your life currently. Because we are a community of care, also indicate if there is anything that you might expressly need from this group to address what you have shared. *We might need to take a significant amount of time in our check in with the goal of becoming known and knowing our fellow participants. (approx 20 -30 minutes)*

Following the check in, if necessary, the group will split into two for today’s discussion.

Reading no. 1: Healthy relationships are not found but built. A healthy relationship needs commitment and willingness to be accommodating to each other’s needs. Whether romantic or platonic, relationships thrive when people feel genuinely heard and understood. Investing in active and empathetic listening fosters trust, reduces conflict, and deepens bonds, creating connections that endure life’s challenges. Congregational life gives us many opportunities for building the authentic relationships that bond us to one another in community.

Symbolically speaking, think of listening like building a bridge between two people. The stronger the bridge, the better the connection between them will be. By practicing active listening and engaging with what someone has to say, we can build stronger bridges in our relationships. The benefits of relational listening are plentiful.

There are three main components of successful listening.

1. Listen for total meaning
2. Respond to feelings
3. Note all cues (verbal and nonverbal)

There are multiple websites for information on how to develop listening skills. In fact, on March 9th there was a Deep Listening workshop offered here in the church to help develop those skills. As our allotted time is short, we will need to forego exploring those skills in any depth.

Question for your consideration:

Reflect on the relationships that work best in your life, what qualities do these relationships have, and how can you bring these qualities into other relationships?

Silent reflection (2-3 minutes) You are encouraged to jot down your thoughts if that is helpful.

Sharing/Listening round our Circle We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. *Please be mindful to allow time for everyone to share. (approx. 20 minutes)*

Reading no. 2: www.agingcare.com > Articles > [benefits-of-elderly](http://www.agingcare.com/benefits-of-elderly) [The Healing Power of Pets for Seniors - AgingCare.com](http://www.agingcare.com/benefits-of-elderly)

There is one source of comfort and companionship that benefits seniors in countless ways: pets.

Animals

can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and increase social interaction and physical activity. Pets provide other intangibles, too.

- Author: Barbara Ballinger

Questions for your reflection:

If you have now or have ever had a pet in your life, describe how you believe it was beneficial to you.

Share, if you can, how you were able to cope after the passing of a favorite pet.

Sharing/Listening round our Circle We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. *Please be mindful to allow time for everyone to share. (approx. 20 minutes)*

Open Discussion/reflections We will share additional thoughts on our theme, this time in no particular order. (approx 10 minutes)

Returning together: *We invite each group to provide a synopsis from your separate discussions. (approx. 10 minutes)*

Possible further information? As time allows, please share your recommendations of books, movies, writers, websites, etc. that offer more on today's theme.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice: Reading no. 713

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith; be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

~1 Corinthians 16

Next meeting will be on Sunday, April 27, 2025 at noon.