

## Silence / Solitude –UUFVB Covenant Groups—February 2015

### Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,  
but connected, in mystery and miracle,  
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

### Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

### Opening Reading

If it is language that makes us human, one half of language is to listen.  
Silence can exist without speech, but speech cannot live without silence.  
Listen to the speech of others. Listen even more to their silence.  
To pray is to listen to the revelation of nature, to the meaning of events.  
To listen to music is to listen also to silence, and to find the silence deepened and enriched.  
(Jacob Trapp, Reading #482, *Singing the Living Tradition*)

### Silence and Meditation

Find a comfortable position with your feet on the floor and your back in an upright but relaxed posture.  
Become aware of your breathing. Close your eyes. We shall sit in silence for approximately 3 minutes,  
until the facilitator announces the end of silence.

### Questions / Sharing

1. How did it feel to you to sit in silence?
2. In your everyday life, what is your relationship with silence? Does it make you uncomfortable, or do you seek it?
3. Share any experience you have had with a meditation practice. What would it take for you to sit in stillness for 5 to 20 minutes each day?

### Solitude vs. Loneliness

“There is a world of difference between solitude and loneliness. From the outside, they make look alike. But all resemblance ends at the surface. Loneliness is a negative state, marked by a sense of isolation. It is possible to be with people and still feel lonely--perhaps the most bitter form of loneliness. Solitude is the state of being alone without being lonely. It is a positive and constructive state of engagement with oneself. Solitude is refreshing; an opportunity to renew ourselves and give us a chance to regain perspective. It renews us for the challenges of life. Solitude restores body and mind. Loneliness depletes them.” (Adapted from Hara Estroff Marano, editor at large, *Psychology Today* magazine.)

4. Do you find it easy or difficult to distinguish loneliness from solitude? Do you have both in your life?
5. What is the value of solitude for you?
6. Some people are fearful of being alone, or stressed without other people around. Do you feel that way? Are you reluctant to embark on solo activities?
7. Is nature actually healing to our lives? Do large cities create stress?
8. Do different personalities require different levels of silence and solitude?
9. Some people are fearful of being alone, or stressed without others around. Do you feel this way? Do you need sound to be happy? Are you reluctant to embark on solo activities? Why?

### **Closing Reading**

“As we progress on the spiritual path, periodic withdrawal from the world, in time, becomes a necessity. The occasional retreat from the world will benefit us, we will come out stronger and clearer. If we desire to find the highest within ourselves we must separate ourselves from the clamorous atmosphere of the world, in search of the quieter places within. Most often our inner voice will speak to us in absolute quietness. When we cultivate time for silence we begin to learn the art of being still, the art of being alone, the art of communion with God. This discipline will help balance us and ground us.”

(Natasha Dern, blogger, *The Huffington Post*)

### **Extinguish the Chalice**

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,  
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.  
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

### **Housekeeping**