

Stuff and Us—UUFVB Covenant Groups—January 2017

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?

Review or creation of covenant

Opening Reading

For many people, gathering possessions is just the stuff of life. We cherish things and accumulate them. We move them from shelf to shelf, and from home to home. The federal government estimates that a quarter of Americans with two-car garages don't use them for automobiles but for storage. The average U.S. household has 300,000 things, from paper clips to ironing boards. U.S. children make up 3.7% of children on the planet but have 47% of all toys and children's books.

People develop attachments to other people, to places, and to things. While the personal and intimate attachments between people and places are rarely questioned, attachment to things is an entirely different matter. Those who save the majority of their possessions for long periods of time, either for sentimental reasons or frugality, can easily earn the label of “pack rat” – while others live in the opposite extreme, throwing things away right after (or even before) they have served their purpose. Our things can give us a sense of security, connection to the past, to the people we love.

Topic Exploration

The majority of people go through cycles of accumulation and dispersion. Attics, garages, and basements become the retirement centers for all the stuff we no longer use. At some point, these storage places need a good cleaning out, which can be a daunting task for some and a relieving exercise for others. What makes some people more attached to their stuff than others? It depends, of course on personality.

While hoarding can be a serious psychological problem, for most people figuring out what to discard and being able to actually toss stuff is difficult. Yet experts say it is crucial to an ordered, happy life. What about collectors? For many people who amass collections, the value of their collections are not monetary but emotional —and often, not for sale. There's nothing wrong with having a collection, but it becomes a problem when it overwhelms your space. When you're not displaying it properly, you're not enjoying it and it turns into clutter.

(Niecy Nash)

Silent Reflection: Think about your responses to the following questions before you decide what life experiences you will share with the group.

Questions / Sharing

1. Where would you place yourself on this continuum?
Hoarder / Pack Rat / Avid Collector / May Need It Someday / Keep What's Useful / Minimalist / It's ALL in the Suitcase
2. What experiences did you have that made you that way? Have you changed from time to time?
3. Is it difficult for you to discard things?
4. Do you have a 'getting rid of' technique that has worked for you?
5. Do you have some things you will never discard?
6. If your home was threatened by fire or flood and you had to evacuate, what are the first three things (other than family, cash, ID, legal papers, medicines, spare clothing) you would grab to take along?

Closing readings

My advice to anyone who wants to declutter is to really get in touch with how short life is. We never know when our time will come. Think of that a lot. Post a sign on your bathroom mirror. Life is NOT about stuff; it's about doing what makes you happy and that always boils down to love—doing what you love, and being with people you love. (*Joshua Becker*)

No one ever says, "I wish I'd kept more stuff." (*Marilyn Bohn*)

Simplicity does not mean getting rid of all your possessions, but rather integrating them into your life's purpose. (*Mary Gregory*)

Check-out and reflections on today's session

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