

## End of Life Planning—UUFVB Covenant Groups—February 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?

#### Opening Reading

I got out of bed on two strong legs.  
It might have been otherwise.  
I ate cereal, sweet milk, ripe, flawless peach.  
It might have been otherwise.  
I took the dog uphill to the birch wood.  
All morning I did the work I love.

At noon I lay down with my mate.  
It might have been otherwise.  
We ate dinner together at a table with silver candlesticks.  
It might have been otherwise.  
I slept in a bed in a room with paintings on the walls, and planned another day just like this day.  
But one day, I know, it will be otherwise. (*Otherwise by Jane Kenyon*)

#### Topic Exploration

If you are like 70 percent of Americans, you dream of spending your final days at home, in peace and comfort, surrounded by loved ones who care for you compassionately until your last breath. But in reality, the CDC reports that 70 percent actually die in a hospital, nursing home or long-term care facility. Further, half of all Americans die without a legal will in place. To save yourself and your loved ones stress and conflict, start now to put in writing how you want to deal with relationships, asset allocations, and final arrangements. The future doesn't take form irrationally. It materializes from the actions, values, and beliefs we're practicing now. If we want a different future, we have to take responsibility for what we are doing in the present. (*Aging with Dignity*)

Think about your death and the possibility that this day might be your last. Ask yourself: 'Is there anything I need to say or do if today is my final day?' Thinking about death like this isn't morbid, as some believe. The point isn't to dwell on death but to take its reality seriously in order to live more fully. Pondering your own inevitable death is an age-old practice, called "*memento mori*" ("remember that you will die") that has helped people embrace life through the realization that they do not have all the time in the world. (*Kevin MD.com*)

#### Questions / Sharing

1. How comfortable are you dealing with death, either your own or that of loved ones?
2. Which part of planning causes you most discomfort—dealing with relationships, dealing with asset allocations, making final arrangements, or dealing with the reality of death itself? Why?
3. Share any experiences you have had with persons whose unexpected deaths created difficulties and suffering for survivors.

**Deal with Relationships.** Think about what personal friendships and family connections you want to nurture now so they will be there at the end of life.

4. Do you have positive relationships with family and friends?
5. Do you need to make amends to anyone, and when do you think that might begin?
6. Will religious differences with family complicate end of life planning?

**Manage Assets.** Once you are assured that your assets are sufficient to sustain you through your senior years, think about how the remaining assets and personal items will be distributed.

7. How will your bequests mirror your strong connections with individuals and institutions?
8. Have you talked with family about how cherished possessions will be distributed?
9. Do you believe the way you divide your assets may create conflict among your survivors, and what steps can you take to minimize such conflict?

**Specify Final Arrangements.** Here are some suggestions to consider in making your final arrangements.

- a. Complete the Florida Advance Directive or Five Wishes documents. These govern health care decisions at end of life-
- b. Think about under what circumstances you might want a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order.
- c. Consider prearranging and prepaying funeral, burial and cremation expenses.
- d. Make sure your beneficiaries are up-to-date in all places where called for—bank and investment accounts, insurance policies, property records, investment plans, etc.
- e. Work with an attorney to create a last will and testament, to assure adherence to your wishes.
- f. Write your own memorial service and obituary if those actions would be meaningful to you.
- g. Share copies of documents with appropriate parties.

**Reflection:** What is your attitude about end of life planning, and how committed are you to beginning or continuing such a process?

### **Closing Reading from UU Minister Kathleen Korb**

And do I die? How should I die?

My atoms are the same that existed on the first day of the universe.

My elements are identical with the make-up of the stars.

I am one with all that is, and my brief life a comet's trail across the starry universal night.

I do not die. My elements are scattered. New lights, new comets' trails will use them.

There is, because of me, a new note in the song sung by the morning stars.

### **Check- out and reflection 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**