

## Technology's Effect on Personal Relationships—UUFVB Covenant Groups April 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**

Technology has changed the way we make and maintain social contacts, the way we get information, do research, pursue hobbies, games and entertainment. It has changed the way we do our banking, investing, shopping, keeping of health and family records. In all of the uses of technology, the one most debated is the use of social media and its effects on personal relationships.

In a time where traveling for work has become the norm and so many people are required to be in a different place multiple times each month, social media allows individuals the chance to stay close with their family and friends. It allows them to share what's going on in their life in the most convenient way... Social media accounts enable people from all over the world to foster and maintain relationships without letting distance become a barrier.

### **Topic Exploration**

Proponents of social networking sites say that the online communities promote increased interaction with friends and family; offer teachers, librarians, and students valuable access to educational support and materials; facilitate social and political change; and disseminate useful information rapidly.

In fact, the Pew Research Center claims, "There has been a great deal of speculation about the impact of social networking site use on people's social lives, and much of it has centered on the possibility that these sites are hurting users' relationships and pushing them away from participating in the world... We've found the exact opposite – that people who use sites like Facebook actually have more close relationships and are more likely to be involved in civic and political activities. Social networking sites have become increasingly important to people as they find ways to integrate check-ins and updates into the rhythms of their lives... People use them now to stay in touch with their best friends and distant acquaintances alike."

Opponents of social networking, such as Theo Priestley, former VP of Marketing at Software AG, says, "Social media has turned a lot of us into a reflex-based automaton...It's become easier to scribble a couple of sentences for all to see rather than pick up the phone and have a real conversation with someone on the other end. And what's actually pretty frightening is how we've come to accept opening our front door to the world as the norm. Social media has turned the art of expression into a post-it note...Social media is an addiction, but not a good one...Social media is rapidly becoming as bad as smoking for the human condition...Social media is just another habit to kick"

Further, for those who become addicted to the computer and the internet, compulsive use can lead to a number of lasting consequences in work, home and social life. Some persons may lose the ability to interact socially except when online in chat groups or social networking sites. This could lead, and has led, to loss of in-person relationships due to spending too much time on the computer and not enough time with a friend or loved one.

**Silent Reflection:** Let's be silent as we focus on our responses to the topic exploration and the following questions. How will we share our life experiences in response to them? When the facilitator calls for discussion, let us give full attention to each other and begin.

### **Questions / Sharing**

1. How has technology and social media changed the way you make and maintain social contacts?
2. What positive or negative effects has technology had on your personal relationships?
3. What concerns do you have or dangers do you see in the use of social media and the internet?
4. How would you advise youngsters and teenagers you know about the use of social media?
5. Do you have concerns about computer/internet addiction among those close to you? How do you feel about a "technology free" vacation? How long would it take before you suffered symptoms of withdrawal?
6. What is your prediction of how computers and social media will function in the future on the personal, national and world level?
7. Have you googled yourself lately? What were the results?

### **Discussion**

#### **Closing readings**

I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots. (*Albert Einstein*)

Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them. (*Steve Jobs*)

### **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**