

Gratitude—UUFVB Covenant Groups—August 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 Readings

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world. (*John Milton*)

When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude. (*Elie Wiesel*)

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. (*John F. Kennedy*)

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good." (*Maya Angelou, Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer*)

Moment for Reflection: Take a few moments to reflect on what you are most grateful for today. When you are done, take another moment to list the top 5. Going clockwise around the circle and without pausing between people, read aloud one item from your list. When we have gone around the circle 5 times and the lists have been completed, say together: "We give Thanks"

Topic Exploration

Whatever one's beliefs about faith and grace, gratitude is basic. Like hope, trust, and love, gratitude is both a feeling and a spiritual practice. Though we have little control over our immediate feelings, we can decide to cultivate the ground in which those feelings thrive. We are taught as soon as we can speak to say "thank you" when we are helped or given something. A young person who does not say "thank you" convincingly is considered spoiled, and an older person who does not have this habit is considered arrogant. Why? Words of thanks signal acknowledgement of another's part in benefiting our lives.

"Thank you" adds a human connection. It says, "I noticed you were there, and I am glad." Our thank-yous remind us that we are dependent on those around us. The words acknowledge the web of relationships in which we live. To neglect one's thank-yous is not only rude; it is out of touch with reality, an implicit claim of independence and privilege. The practice of saying "thank you" is good for our souls and a reality check on our tendency to think we don't need others. This is not only important in our relationships with other people, it is important in our relationship with God, the universe, our life.

(*Rev Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins*)

Questions / Sharing

1. Can you remember a time when you felt gratitude and took the opportunity to express it or were unable to express it? What are your feelings about either or both of those experiences?
2. Share a story about a time when you have been able to find people and things you are grateful for even in the midst of pain or trouble. How do you think this happened?
3. Do you employ gratitude as a spiritual practice? Have you developed any rituals that have helped?
4. How do you think your behavior is affected when you choose gratitude?
5. What non-verbal expressions of gratitude are most meaningful to you? Are you able to accept with grace, or do you sometimes push back?

Closing Reading *singing optional*

For all that is our life we sing our thanks and praise, for all life is a gift which we are called to use to build the common good and make our own days glad.

For needs which others serve, for services we give, for work and its rewards, for hours of rest and love; we come with praise and thanks for all that is our life.

For sorrow we must bear, for failures, pain and loss, for fearful hours that pass: we come with praise and thanks for all that is our life.

For all that is our life we sing our thanks and praise, for all life is a gift which we are called to use to build the common good and make our own days glad.-- *Hymnal #128*

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