

Friendship—UUFVB Covenant Groups—November 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

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust your friendship. (*Emerson*)

“She is a friend of mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind.”
(*Toni Morrison*)

Topic Exploration

Friendship isn't always easily described. The Eskimos, they say, have a hundred different words for “snow.” Unfortunately, the English language doesn't provide a nuanced vocabulary for the word “friend.” Instead of using different words, we use a variety of descriptive adjectives. *Close* friend. *Best* friend. *Childhood* friend. *Intimate* friend. *Trusted* friend. *Beloved* friend.

We can't pick our family. Often we cannot pick the people with whom we work and spend a great deal of time. But over our lifetimes we have the opportunity to choose our closest friends and for most of us, our friendships have deeply affected our evolution as a human being. We are who we are today partly due to the companionship and the influence of our friends.

An exercise in Identifying friends (paper and pencils will be provided)

A. Think about the friends you have treasured during your whole life. Think back to childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and beyond. Make a list of some of your most important friendships over the years. Note the time of your life for each one and maybe the setting.

B. Write down qualities that are the most important to you in a friendship.

1. Did anything come up that surprised or intrigued you as you were doing these exercises?
2. Share with the group some of the people and/or qualities you listed and why.

Questions / Sharing

3. During early childhood, our friends are often chosen for us, by our parents or by their proximity to our homes or school. What role did convenience have in choosing friendships, and what roles did you play in your early circle of friends?
4. During adolescence, did your definition of friendship change, and if so, how? Have your choices of friends been consistent throughout your life?
5. Think of an important friendship you have had that did not endure. Why do you think it ended, and did its ending affect your choice of future friends?

6. Have you ever experienced a “toxic” friendship? Some signs of a toxic friendship might be manipulation, boundary violations, or lack of mutuality. What factors led you to make poor choices?
7. When is it possible to tell a friend something that may be hurtful, or critical of them? Do you avoid such encounters?
8. Have you been aware that a partner or spouse had an aversion towards one of your friends, and how did that tension affect your relationship with the friend?
9. Would you categorize your friendships differently, or as existing at different levels? For example, as social, or activity companies, or project collaborators, or mentors/ advisors, or soul mates. Can relationships of various kinds be called friendships, or does your definition of friendship have a deeper meaning for you?
10. What kind of friend do you think YOU are? What makes you a good friend to others?

Closing Reading, from UU Minister Max Coots

“Let us give thanks:

For generous friends with hearts and smiles as bright as blossoms;

For feisty friends as tart as apples;

For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us
that we’ve had them;

For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn, and
the others, plain as potatoes and as good for you;

For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels sprouts and as amusing as Jerusalem artichokes,
and serious friends, as complex as cauliflowers and as intricate as onions;

For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley,
as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to
see you throughout the winter;

For old friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts, and
witherings.

And, finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, and who
fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter. For all these we give thanks.”

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