



Endings, Good Goodbyes

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Written by: Denise Frick, based on the Endings chapter in *Heart to Heart*, by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins and the Endings sessions from First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, NM.

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

To live in this world, you must be able to do three things: To love what is mortal. To hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.

~Mary Oliver

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Do you have a particular gesture, blessing, or turn of phrase that you like to use when saying goodbye? If so, why is it meaningful for you?
2. Recall a good and an unsatisfactory “goodbye” from your life. What made the good one good? What made the unsatisfactory one less than satisfying?
3. Share about a time when you brought awareness, reflection or appreciation to an ending in your life.
4. Think of an ending that has occurred more recently in your life, and then consider the transition that resulted for you after the ending. What have you learned from this ending and transition that has been (or might be) useful in responding to future endings?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings see below

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share responses to one or more of the session questions.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from. ~T.S. Eliot

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

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.

Readings

There's a trick to the "graceful exit." It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, or a relationship is over – and let it go. It means leaving what's over without denying its validity or its past importance to our lives. It involves a sense of future, a belief that every exit line is an entry that we are moving on rather than out. ~Ellen Goodman

I guess by now I should know enough about loss to realize that you never really stop missing someone – you just learn to live around the huge gaping hole of their absence. ~Alyson Noël

There's no such thing as a happy ending. The songs, books, and movies with "happy endings" all stop at the moment of triumph ... There are, however, good stopping places. ~Shaun Hamill

Every one of us is losing something precious to us. Lost opportunities, lost possibilities, feelings we can never get back again. That's part of what it means to be alive. ~Haruki Murakami

Our lives are full of transitions. We sometimes find ourselves in a time of simultaneous endings and beginnings. We benefit by taking the opportunity to mark these important turning points with awareness, reflection and appreciation. ~Rev. Dr. Julie Kain, UU Minister

Throughout our lives we have to learn to say goodbye. Sometimes it is "Goodbye for now" and sometimes it is truly "goodbye." I remember as I got older and we would visit my grandparents at some point I became aware I needed to soak in my time with them, that when I said goodbye there was always the question of whether I would see them again. Our culture does not do a very good job with goodbyes. We resist them. We deny them. For to say goodbye is to realize that we live while we are dying. We are never assured another hello, another sunrise. I love in the Jewish prayer book that each morning you offer thanks for the opportunity to see another rising of the sun and you ask to see it rest in the west and that when darkness falls you ask for another dawning of light. Each day is a gift and a blessing and we are only assured the moment we are in right now. ~ Margaret Sequeira, UU minister, sermon at UU Congregation of the Outer Banks

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious Ambiguity. ~Gilda Radner

How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard. ~ A. A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

A good goodbye is not only a sad acknowledgement of change, but also an opportunity for gratitude and for finishing any unfinished business of the relationship. It is when we say goodbye that we realize what we valued this person for and what gifts he or she gave us. If we share that, the other person is likely to share in turn, so that we hear what gifts we gave. ~Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins in *Heart to Heart*

Further references

Goodbyes are Hard by Lauren Robbins. <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/goodbyes-are-hard>
Endings, Bridges Four Facets of the Ending process, by Gisela Wendling, <https://giselawendling.com/endings/>
How We Say Goodbye, Audio recording of sermon by Rev. Dr. Julie Kain, <https://uupensacola.org/services/how-we-say-goodbye/>