** (TIME)LESSNESS**

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC.

Session lovingly written and offered to UU Covenant Groups by Victorio Cabrera and Veronica Sampson.

May 2019

**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.

**Check In:** Share something from your life since we last met or how you are feeling in this moment.

**Opening Words**

“Time is one of the most haunting things about human life...The only time we have is the time that is now. The present time is the only real time. The Eastern tradition has been helpful in drawing our attention to breathing as the activity of gathering presence toward attention...The secret of your identity lies not in the time that you have lost, nor in the time that lies ahead of you. The secret and substance of your identity is hidden in the time you have here and now.”

*~From Breath and Time, John O’Donohue, Four Elements: Reflections on Nature*

**Questions to prompt and guide discussion:**

1. ***Considering the nature and passage of time: in space galaxies form and fade away, stars blaze into being and burn out... on earth, sequoias grow over many hundreds of years and we witness the cycle of birth and death over and over in many forms. How does this make you feel?***
2. ***How do decisions on how I spend my time affect others?***
3. ***How has the interpretation of memory influenced how you value time?***
4. ***What daily life shifts could connect you more frequently to the present moment?***
5. ***If you were immortal, how would things be different? Does mortality have blessings, or could you do without it?***

**Readings:** See below

**A time for silence and reflection prior to sharing**

**Sharing:** This is a time for individuals to speak and for others to practice deep listening. Deep listening invites a refraining from interruption, fixing, saving, and/or advising. Sharing can include responses to one or more of the session questions.

**Break**

**Post Break Discussion:** This is a time to respond to individual responses to readings. Continue to practice deep listening.

**Closing reading:**

And while thy willing soul transpires

At every pore with instant fires,

Now let us sport us while we may,

And now, like amorous birds of prey,

Rather at once our time devour

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.

Let us roll all our strength and all

Our sweetness up into one ball,

And tear our pleasures with rough strife

Through the iron gates of life:

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.

*~Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress*

**Announcements/Plans**

**Check out:** As we close our session, how are you feeling now?

**Extinguish the Chalice**

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**Readings:**

After a long winter, giving

Each other nothing, we collide

With blossoms in our hands

*~Chiyo, 1703-1775*

“Where does it all lead? What will become of us?...It leads to each other. We become ourselves.”

*~Patti Smith, Just Kids*

“At my fortieth birthday, I gathered with my closest women friends and held a ritual for myself. I decided that this would be the last time I celebrated my birthday with a party. I wanted out of the whole system! I was going to revise my relationship with time. I no longer wanted to live year to year, from birthday to birthday, or even from one season to the next. I wanted to live each day, moment to moment, enjoying the fact that nothing ever stays the same and nothing ever turns out the way we expect. I decided to experiment with a major attitude shift.

*~ Elizabeth Lesser, co-founder of Omega Institute, from “Broken Open” on how she came to throwing herself an un-birthday*

If I have not time

To come, I’ll go.

I want to learn the way

Of writing poems

As a way to you

*~Izumi Shikibu 10th/11th C.*

“One of the haunting aspects of time is its gradualness, this is how the invisibility of time moves. Water reflects change and change often moves in a circular motion.”

*~From Water and Time, John O’Donohue, Four Elements: Reflections on Nature*

# “Things have their shape in time, not space alone. Some marble blocks have statues within them, embedded in their future.”

# *~ Dr. Manhattan, Watchmen*

Like as the waves make towards the pebbl'd shore,

So do our minutes hasten to their end;

Each changing place with that which goes before,

In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

# *~ excerpt from Sonnet 60: William Shakespeare*

# “I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip. And the highest enjoyment of timelessness―in a landscape selected at random―is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain. It is like a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love. A sense of oneness with sun and stone. A thrill of gratitude to whom it may concern―to the contrapuntal genius of human fate or to tender ghosts humoring a lucky mortal.”

*~Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory*

I’m partial to what’s possible,

he thought

--Not the ineffable,

distant, devoid of insistence

and temperament that tampers,

Or tramples

--Not the impersonal,

but that which hovers here--

Between the “I” of the opening

And the “us” of your possible listening

Now, or in the imperfect

Tense and tension of what

In fact articulates the eternal

That abstract revelation

And slippery duration

To which, it seems, I’m given

And because of which I’m never

Finished with anything, as though living

Itself were an endless translation.

*~Peter Cole, “On Being Partial”*

“Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire.”

*~Jorge Luis Borges, “A New Refutation of Time,” Other Inquisitions*

Of course, it’s amazing when anything survives to the age of eighty.

*~Clifton Fadiman, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, reported in Anne Fadiman, The Wine Lover’s Daughter*

What else can we do

But garden our shadows

While far away

The universe burns and vanishes

What else can we do

But visit with time

While nearby

Time times us to death?

What else can we do

But stop at the horizon

While far away

And nearby…

The real collision

*~Andree Chadid, Egyptian-French poetess (1920-2011)*

“Einstein said that time was relative, right? Maybe I’m not late. Maybe you guys are early.”

*~ Miles Morales, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*