

## Loss and Grief

### Chalice Lighting

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns

### Silence

Holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

### Shared Readings

You residing here go with me and I, leaving, remain with you. –Shakespeare

Doesn't everything die at last, and all too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? –Mary Oliver

When death, the great reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness we repent of, but our severity. George Eliot

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

You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying overhead, but you can prevent them from making nests in your hair. –Chinese Proverb

### Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Going around the circle, look at the losses which you have written in the stained glass picture, and to simply name one, if you are willing. If you are not willing, to simply shake your head when your turn comes. Go around the group several times, or until most people no longer have losses to share.

End this by reading, yourself, the prayer which is on the back cover of the bulletin. This prayer is an expression of hopes; whether you think that God has anything to do with this or not is irrelevant. Let this express your own hopes, as a leader in your group, for the healing of the people in your group, and for your own healing.

Round II Each person will have a chance to share more deeply about feelings and experiences of loss in response to the homework questions.

Round III A more general discussion

### Group Business

### Closing Words and Song "Go Now in Peace"

## *The Covenant*

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent and to come to the group one last time and say goodbye if I need to quit.
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.

I pray for all of us who mourn.

May we face each day with courage, strength, and hope.

May nothing destroy what we have been given.

May nothing erase our memories of joy.

May all the good of the past overpower the fear of the future.

May our current laments of grief eventually change into prayers of thanksgiving.

I pray for all of us who mourn.

–Manual of Grief counseling

## *Covenant Groups*

### **Loss and Grief**



## ***Leader's Guide - Loss and Grief***

As people come in, give them a bulletin and a pencil and tell them to write one thing or person they have grieved for in each of the stained glass segments. (The object of this exercise is to get people in touch with losses and griefs in their life.)

Light the Chalice. You can choose your own words, or use these, which we often use to begin memorial services:

This is the light of faith and hope and love, which shines in our lives even in the darkest times. This is the light of the gathered community, which holds us and comforts us when we grieve. This is the light of our ongoing search for truth and meaning, which gives a path even through loss. We light this light and invoke the light that illumines life and death and shines beyond both.

Ask if there are joys and concerns people want share. Remind people to share just a few words. Then ask people to look at the losses, which they have written in the stained glass picture, and to simply name one, if they are willing. If they are not willing, to simply shake their head when their turn comes. Go around the group several times, or until most people no longer have losses to share. Then say, "Let us keep silence and hold each other in our hearts."

Without breaking the quiet mood, let people read the quotes, one by one. End this by reading, yourself, the prayer which is on the back cover of the bulletin. This prayer is an expression of hopes; whether you think that God has anything to do with this or not is irrelevant. Let this express your own hopes, as a leader in your group, for the healing of the people in your group, and for your own healing.

Do your rounds of deep sharing and listening.

You could end the session in the usual way, by inviting people to say one word into the circle, or you could read the prayer again, or, both.

## Homework: Loss and grief

I have found a mourning process for oneself as one gets older and must come to terms with change resulting from this unavoidable progression. One might describe this process as mourning for former states of the self, as if these states represented lost objects. George Polloch

And we may start to feel that this is a time of always letting go, of one thing after another after another: Our waistlines. Our vigor. Our sense of adventure. Our 20/20 vision. Our trust in justice. Our earnestness. Our playfulness. Our dream of being a tennis star, or a TV star, or a senator, or the woman for whom Paul Newman finally leaves Joanne. We give up hoping to read all the books we once had vowed to read, and to go to all of the places we'd once vowed to visit. We give up hoping we'll save the world from cancer or from war. We even given up hoping that we will succeed in becoming underweight – or immortal. Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses*

Practice all the letting go's you can. From letting go of your thoughts in a meditation practice to letting go of your attachments to the things and relationships that leave our lives constantly, practice letting go. Every goodbye you say is a practice for the big goodbye. Don't let a day go by without letting go of something! Christine Robinson

Next to the encounter of death in our own bodies, the most sensible calamity to an honest man is the death of a friend. The comfort of having a friend may be taken away, but not that of having had one. It is an ill construction of providence to reflect only upon my friend's being taken away, without any regard to the benefit of his once being given me. He that has lost a friend has more cause of joy that once he had him, than of grief that he is taken away. Shall a man bury his friendship with his friend? -Seneca Roman playwright.

Questions to Ponder:

- What endings/losses have you experienced in your life?
- What helps you through endings/losses?
- What are you in the process of letting go of, right now?
- What is a loss you have experienced recently?
- How do you feel when you experience a significant loss? How do you deal with these feelings?
- What has the healing process looked like for you? What have you done which helped? What have others done which helped?