

Many of us are in the midst of transitions. The death of someone close to us, the departure of a child from the family nest, or our own serious health issues all are challenging because of the changes and uncertainties they present. *The bird cries I must go and the nest cries please stay.* What do we need in times of transition to help us let go of what we are clutching in order to be present to what is unfolding? What helps us get through these times?

Some of us find prayer to be a great comfort. Others are not sure what it is. What is happening in prayer for those of us who intentionally do it? If we prayed harder, or to a different divine figure, would our child be healed? Can one bargain with God? We rationally tend to think that asking the Divine for specifics doesn't affect outcomes, even though we deeply long for some sort of control. We do find comfort, strength, and courage in asking that we and those whom we love and hold in the Light be given what we need to get through the difficult times. Still, sometimes we doubt whether this is *enough*. *What more could we be doing to help those whom we love recover, heal, or thrive?* We would do it – anything -- if we knew what it was, especially for our children.

Hearing or reading about the near death experiences of others – these comfort us. We heartedly agreed with one of us who said, "I feel so jealous of those people! I know that if I had one of those experiences, I'd forever trust that no matter what, it'd be okay in the end. I would live the rest of my life in bliss and tranquility!"

We agreed with another of us who said that seeking moments of the Sacred, trying to be open so that they see more of them, is what they strive to live into. Even the briefest of moments of grace comfort and inspire us. Still, we know we're missing such moments all of the time – even when we occasionally encounter them. These experiences, more than theology or knowledge, satisfy our yearnings. But because they are experiential, they are harder to share with others. How can we possibly convey experiences of that of God to each other? Over time, we seem to be increasingly doing that for each other here.

Some of us do not label ourselves any particular faith tradition. We hear in each other a religion of Love. We wonder if this might be enough. We urged each other to remember to have compassion for ourselves as well as others. Mostly, we are doing the best we can. We are grateful for the hope and strength we gain from being in this sacred fellowship.

Our next gathering will be on Monday, February 1 at 7pm in the Community House. All are invited to join us. No specific topic was set.

Gretchen Baker-Smith