

We start our evening gatherings with a round of check-ins where we share whatever we feel moved to say about our current lives and spiritual journeys. As time goes on, these have become fuller and deeper. We try to allow each other to share joys, sorrows, confusion, or wonder – whatever feels right. Sometimes, like tonight, this means one person's delight in the sacred thisheretow of the garden is followed by the next person's raw grief over losing a beloved pet and the following person's awe for an opening to share ministry. Each one could be – is – a tender meditation. By the end of the circle, we are like full sponges of heart, life and grace.

We are delighted with the early spring, grandchildren's innocent questions, and improvements in our own health. We are grateful for vacations and times to reflect on the passing of time as we watch the next generations in our families grow and come into their own. We are amazed at the unexpected turns in our lives, especially when new opportunities to share our hearts and wisdom open in ways we never considered. We are so delighted for each other's joys.

We share much compassion for each other's grief, which is exhausting, consuming, and solitary. It is also so very universal. We gently remind each other that the depth of our sorrow is a gift. It shows us how deeply we have loved and been loved. It is so hard to see people we love struggle; we want to find quick fixes through suffering. We are in awe of those who in the midst of pain, poor health, and impending death still exhibit extraordinary grace, cheerfulness, and concern for others. We laughed deeply this evening and are grateful for humor which can often be an exquisite window of Light in the darkness.

We love life, in all of its messiness.

We feel honored and blessed to hear each other's honest stories and to be given a loving space in which to tell ours. We are delighted with our courage in not relying on chosen "themes" for our conversations. It requires us to listen deeper and wider and rely on our own stories, rather than the readings, as offerings of compassion, wisdom, and companionship. As one of us reflected, this has been like watching a baby bird hatch and find its wings. This group gives us courage and joy to continue our journeys, in all of life's confusion, wonder, and love.

Our next gathering will be on Monday, April 4, 2016 at 7pm in the Community House. There will be a labyrinth set up in the hall for those who would like to come and experience it before our meeting. Feel free to come at 6 or 6:30 if you would like to do this.

There will also be a conversation on Sunday, April 10, 2016 at 11:30 in the Community House on Friends' worship. We'll share lunch (bring your own or something to share) and consider "What are all those people doing with their eyes shut?" Short readings will be shared in the coming weeks for this one.

All are most welcome.

Gretchen