

## Chalice Lighting & Opening Words:

### **A Yom Kippur Prayer**

Birth is a beginning, and Death a destination;  
From childhood to maturity and youth to age,  
From innocence to awareness and ignorance to knowing.  
From foolishness to discretion and then, perhaps, to wisdom.  
From weakness to strength or strength to weakness, and back again.  
From health to sickness and back, we pray, to health again.  
From offense to forgiveness, from loneliness to love.  
From joy to gratitude, from pain to compassion.  
From grief to understanding, from fear to faith.  
From defeat to defeat  
Until looking backward or ahead, we see that  
Victory lies not at some high place along the way,  
But in having made the Journey, stage by stage.

## Check-in/Sharing: How is it with your spirit?

### 5 Short Pieces to Read Before We Meet:

“Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman’s dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. That is called *pentimento* because the painter “repented,” changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again. {In writing this autobiographical expression I recognize that} the paint has aged now and I wanted to see what there was for me once, what there is for me now.”

- *The playwright Lillian Hellman*

“Ever since the age of six I have had a mania for drawing the forms of objects. Towards the age of fifty I published a very large number of drawings, but I am dissatisfied with everything which I produced before the age of seventy. It was at the age of seventy-three that I mastered the real nature and form of birds, fish, plants, etc. Consequently, at the age of eighty, I shall have got to the bottom of things; at one hundred I shall have attained a decidedly higher level what I cannot define, and at the age of one hundred and ten every dot and every line from my brush will be alive. I call on those who may live as long as I to see if I keep my word.”

- *Japanese painting master Hokusai, who lived to be ninety*

**‘What is the greatest blessing that getting older has given you and what is its greatest curse?’**

### **Food for Thought**

In Robert Fulghum’s book, *From Beginning to End*, he makes an interesting observation, speaking of himself in the third person:

“I speak of (myself) in the third person because I often think of him in the third person. He is the man in the bathroom mirror I see everyday. For as long as I can remember, I have gone to meet him each morning; and I see him each night before I go to bed. Sometimes I ask myself, ‘Who is he? What will become of him?’ This daily conversation with the man in the mirror is the oldest ritual in my life. It is a sacred habit.

“I recall when I was a kid going through puberty I anxiously checked to see if he was becoming taller, growing hair, and getting pimples. I felt older than the kid in the mirror. Now, it’s another story. Now I notice the man in the mirror is going through middle age, and I worry when I see he’s growing older, losing hair, and getting wrinkles. Actually, that man in the mirror is older than I am now. While I’ve been thirty for many years now, he’ll be 58 next June.”

It’s old news that aging has so much emotion, so many cultural stereotypes, and so much misconception surrounding it that it’s rarely a topic for serious conversation. It’s just too hard to sort out. No matter what age we are, we are getting older. Fact. It affects how we think and act. Fact. But almost everything else surrounding age is so culturally-driven, individually perceived and experienced, that we find we’re often not speaking the same language about it. That’s true between cultures, between generations, and even between individuals in the same generation.

In the Western culture, aging is emotionally loaded. Our culture values strength, independence, and above all, contribution and productivity. An example: In the 1960’s, if you were over 30 you were washed up. But even as the 60’s generation glorified youth, it heard its own words and now, definitely over 30, are wondering about their own value in the world. “Will you still need me when I’m 64?” Paul McCartney wondered when he was twenty.

There are many examples of this type of thinking and acting in our cyber age, thinking that leads us to what we have to lose in the aging process, rather than what we have to gain. But there are other models, models that lead us to recognize and appreciate the achievement of wisdom, insight, and the journey inward. In our next covenant group session, we’ll explore both types of thinking.

### **Issues to Consider**

1. How old is your ‘person’ in the mirror? If there’s a difference from your actual age, what’s the reason for the disparity?
2. What’s your view of aging? Can you sum it up or is it too complicated? What do

you think influenced you toward this view?

3. Do an “aging” inventory for yourself. Make two painfully honest lists: What’s BAD about aging for you? What’s GOOD about aging for you? If you feel comfortable, bring the list to the group discussion.

4. How can we approach aging in a life-affirming way?

“Wholly unprepared, we embark upon the second half of life . . . we take the step into the afternoon of life . . . with the false assumption that our truths and ideals will serve as be-fore. But we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life’s morning—for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at the evening have become a lie. For a young person it is almost a sin, or at least a danger to be too preoccupied with [the] self; but for the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to [the] self”

--- *Carl Jung*

## **Across the Great Divide**

By Kate Wolf, Sundown Publishing

I’ve been walking in my sleep, counting troubles instead of counting sheep.  
Where the years went, I can’t say.  
I just turned around, and they’d gone away.

And I’ve been sifting through the layers of dusty books and faded papers.  
They tell a story I used to know, and it was one that happened so long ago.

It’s gone away, Yesterday. Now I find myself on the mountainside, where the rivers change direction, across the Great Divide.

Now I heard the owl a’calling, softly as the night was falling.  
With a question, and I replied.  
But he’s gone across the Borderline.

He’s gone away, Yesterday. Now I find myself on the mountainside, where the rivers change direction, across the Great Divide.

The finest hour that I have seen is the one that comes between  
The edge of night and the break of day, it’s when the darkness rolls away.

It’s gone away, Yesterday. Now I find myself on the mountainside, where the rivers change direction across the Great Divide.

**Closing Words:**

Autumn, we know, is life en route to death.  
The asters are but harbingers of frost.  
The trees, flaunting their colors at the sky,  
In other times will follow where the leaves have fallen,  
And so shall we.

Yet other lives will come.  
So we may know, accept, embrace,  
The mystery of life we hold a while.

Nor mourn that it outgrows each separate self,  
But still rejoice that we may have our day.  
Lift high colors to the sky! And give,  
In our time, fresh glory to the earth.

- *Robert T. Weston*

**Resources from: Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website**

- 1) A Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation
- 2) Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL CCUU Covenant Group Session