**Small Group Ministry**

**Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church**

December 16, 2014 By Heidi Green

**WELCOMING** (3 min) Heidi & Doug

**OPENING READING/CHALICE LIGHTING** (1 min) Heidi

**SILENT REFLECTION** (1 min.) Doug

**PERSONAL SHARING** (20 min.) Doug

*30 seconds of silence to gather our thoughts.*

What life experiences are you bringing with you today?

**FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION** (15 min) Doug

What more do you want to know?

**BREAK/ GETTING ACQUAINTED** (15 min.)

Let’s try something new – get a drink and fill out a bingo sheet

**LIFE STAGES AND AGING** (35 min) Heidi

Read quotes on back

*30 seconds of silence to gather our thoughts.*

Consider the following as you talk about your experiences of life’s stages and aging:

1. What has been your experience of aging over the past decade of your life? What surprises has it held?
2. What frightens you about aging? What comforts you about aging?

**FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION** (15 min) Heidi

What more do you want to know?

**ERRATA** (5 min) Doug / Heidi

 Topic for 1/5/15

**CLOSING READING** (5 min.) Doug

**Aging / Life Stages**

There's a trick to the Graceful Exit, I suspect. It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, a relationship, is over and to let it go. It means leaving what's over without denying its validity or its past importance in our lives. It involves a sense of the future, a belief that every exit line is an entry, we are moving on rather than out...It's hard to learn that we don't leave the best parts of ourselves behind, back in the dugout or the Capital or the office. We own what we learned back there, the experience and the growth are grafted onto our lives. And when we exit, we can take ourselves along. Quite gracefully."

*-Ellen Goodman*

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts.

-*Bertrand Russell*

Remorse is the poison of life.

*-Charlotte Bronte*

Aging is the consequence, for better or worse, of not dying younger than you are right now. Go in peace. Go with gratitude.

The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.”

*-Ivy Baker Priest*

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

*-Maria Robinson*

Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.

The last goodbye is the hardest one to say.

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*

Moving on doesn’t mean you forget about things, it just means you have to accept what happened and continue living.

Every exit is an entry somewhere.

*-Tom Stoppard*

The art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.

*-Havelock Ellis*

At some point, you’ll have to realize that some people can stay in your heart, but not in your life.

*-Ashley Hodgeson*

Our only security is our ability to change.

*-John Lilly*

**Chalice lighting**

Day passes into day,

becomes night slipping into night.

Eternity happens.

This nanosecond of life is precious and fleeting.

Can we embrace it without grasping?

Can we fill it without cramming?

Can we ingest it without gorging?

Can we receive it without hording?

Can we let it be without fretting?

Can we let it go with grace—

gratified, grateful?

Shall we be together as we try?

**Topic: Aging and Life Stages**

Madeleine L’Engle, author of *A Wrinkle in Time,* wrote in *A Circle of Quiet*:

“I am still every age that I have been. Because I was once a child, I am always a child. Because I was once a searching adolescent, given to moods and ecstasies, these are still part of me, and always will be…This does not mean that I ought to be trapped or enclosed in any of these ages…but that they are in me to be drawn on… Far too many people…think that forgetting what it is like to think and feel and touch and smell and taste and see and hear like a three-year-old or a thirteen-year-old or a twenty-three-year-old means being grownup. When I’m with these people I…feel that if this is what it means to be a grown-up, then I don’t ever want to be one. Instead of which, if I can retain a child’s awareness and joy, and be fifty-one, then I will really learn what it means to be grownup.”

Fifty-one may sound like a “young chick” to us. For Madeleine L’Engle, 51 stretched into an age just shy of 89.

When we were children, time passed ever so slowly. How we longed to be “grown up” and do grown up things. It happened quickly. We’re grown-ups, more or less. Aging is inevitable if we are among the fortunate. How we age is a shifting venture of choice and circumstance.