

UUCMC Covenant Circle Session
March 2018: Balance

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.

Reminder of our Covenant

Check-In (3-4 minutes each)

Topic: Balance

Word Roots

From Latin bi (two) and lanx (plate or dish) to balance scales, both sides being equal. Add to this the idea of a still point from stille (at rest) and peuk (which includes the idea to mend).

Readings

I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world.
This makes it hard to plan the day. ~ E.B. White

There is peaceful
There is wild
I am both at the same time ~ Nayyirah Waheed

To do two things at once is to do neither. ~ Publilius Syrus

All of a person's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to sit quietly in a room. ~ Blaise Pascal

Work, love and play are the great balance wheels of our being. ~ Orison Swett Marden
The key to keeping your balance is knowing where you lost it. ~ Anonymous

Letting go helps us to live in a more peaceful state of mind and helps restore our balance. It allows others to be responsible for themselves and for us to take our hands off situations that do not belong to us. ~ Melody Bettie

I am trying to remember you
and
let you go
at the same time. ~ Nayyirah Waheed

I try to take only as much as I can give. ~ Anonymous

Balance is not better time-management, but better boundary-management. ~ Betsy Jacobson

Busy people have goals; productive people have priorities. ~ anonymous

Wrap your summer fingers around her wintered soul. ~ Sub Rosa

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was often times filled with your tears.
And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.
~ Khalil Gibran

The spiritual life is, in part, about seeing our lives as an invitation to the best party in town. Our challenge is to stay awake to that, to continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It's all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done. We are also called to look around and see all that has been given. ~ Rev. Scott Tayler

It's dark because you are trying too hard. Lightly child, lightly. Learn to do everything lightly. Yes, feel lightly even though you're feeling deeply. Just lightly let things happen and lightly cope with them. I was so preposterously serious in those days... Lightly, lightly – it's the best advice ever given me... to throw away your baggage and go forward. There are quicksands all about you, sucking at your feet, trying to suck you down into fear and self-pity and despair. That's why you must walk so lightly. Lightly my darling. ~ Aldous Huxley

When I was little my mother put me in several ballet classes in hopes to bring some grace to my stumbling gait. I grew up walking on eggshells, wobbling to keep my balance on a tightrope that never really ended. My instructor pinched my thighs and shook her bony finger at me every tuesday and thursday for three and a half years. 4 am, I'm still tiptoeing around the creaks in the stairs as if anyone would notice an empty bed. This Christmas I came across the broken remnants of the ballerina ornaments my younger sister used to play with. I never did master the delicate posture I was expected to adopt. My feet fell a bit too heavy, I suppose, on the ice tonight. I'm not cold anymore, just exhausted from attempting to balance the wrong things for too long.
~ Rebecca Suzanne

Speak the truth, but not to punish. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

[Thich Nhat Hanh] looked at me in a quiet, piercing way that stopped my breath, and said slowly: "Speak the truth, but not to punish"... Understanding this koan is a work in progress for me but the more I ponder it, the more it seems to be about balance, speaking up against injustice with courage and passion but with greater awareness of the dangers in becoming overly adversarial and treating those who disagree as foes... We must be willing to stand in the shoes of others if we are to debate controversial issues with equanimity and avoid gridlock... Thich Nhat Hanh's koan brought me back to his advice to hold our anger with an energy of mindfulness, like the sun shining upon a flower, penetrating deeply until the petals open. Anger can give us the mettle to speak with courage and conviction, but also the venom that blinds us to the views of others. ~ James Hoggan

Nothing Forced Works ~ Kay Ryan

Nothing forced works.
The Gordian knot just worsens
if it's jerked at by a person.
One of the main stations
of the cross is patience.
Another, of course, is impatience.
There is such a thing as
too much tolerance
for unpleasant situations,
a time when the gentle
teasing out of threads
ceases to be pleasing
to a woman born for conquest.
Instead she must assault
the knot or alp or everest
with something sharp
and take upon herself
the moral warp of sudden progress.

Life is glorious, but life is also wretched. Appreciating the gloriousness inspires us, encourages us, cheers us up, gives us a bigger perspective, energizes us. But if that's all that's happening, we

get arrogant and start to look down on others, and there is a sense of making ourselves a big deal and being really serious about it, wanting it to be like that forever. The gloriousness becomes tinged by craving and addiction. On the other hand, wretchedness—life’s painful aspect—softens us up considerably. Knowing pain is a very important ingredient of being there for another person. When you are feeling a lot of grief, you can look right into somebody’s eyes because you feel you haven’t got anything to lose—you’re just there. The wretchedness humbles us and softens us, but if we were only wretched, we would all just go down the tubes. We’d be so depressed, discouraged, and hopeless that we wouldn’t have enough energy to eat an apple. Gloriousness and wretchedness need each other. One inspires us, the other softens us. They go together.
~ Pema Chödrön, *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living*

One of the truths we know is that we live in an enchanted universe. The up-there and down-here mingle, the earthly and the heavenly mirror each other. We have no choice but to continue to redeem the world, to save the world from our own selves. We are, ironically, the cause of the breaking and just might be the channel of healing. To make the world whole, we ourselves have to become healed, become whole. Our well-being and the world being well are linked together. To tend to our own inner lives is not selfishness; it is wisdom, it is essential [for the sake of the world]. ~ Omid Safi

Dark and Light, Light and Dark ~ Jacqui James
Full text here: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/5934.shtml>

“We shape language and we are shaped by it. In our culture, white is esteemed. It is heavenly, sun-like, clean, pure, immaculate, innocent, and beautiful. At the same time, black is evil, wicked, gloomy, depressing, angry, sullen. Ascribing negative and positive values to black and white enhances the institutionalization of this culture's racism.

Let us acknowledge the negative connotations of whiteness. White things can be soft, vulnerable, pallid, and ashen. Light can be blinding, bleaching, enervating. Conversely, we must acknowledge that darkness has a redemptive character, that in darkness there is power and beauty. The dark nurtured and protected us before our birth...

The words black and dark don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. The words white and light don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. Imagine a world that had only light—or dark. We need both. Dark and light. Light and dark.”

I Remember Galileo ~ Gerald Stern
Full poem found here:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=34304>

I remember Galileo describing the mind
as a piece of paper blown around by the wind,..
but yesterday I saw the mind was a squirrel caught crossing
Route 80 between the wheels of a giant truck,
dancing back and forth like a thin leaf,..

It was the speed of the squirrel and his lowness to the ground,
his great purpose and the alertness of his dancing,
that showed me the difference between him and paper...
Paper will do in theory, when there is time
to sit back in a metal chair and study shadows;
but for this life I need a squirrel,...

Balanced ~ Denel Kessler

Beyond the thoughts
that keep us bound
fear
suffering
anger
love
we will fly
though it be fleeting

we savor
the height
while craving
the ground below
knowing
it takes both
to make
a soul

An intellectual is a man who says a simple thing in a difficult way; an artist is a man who says a
difficult thing in a simple way. ~ Charles Bukowski

Balance
Charles Barnett

It's always been like this.
The intellectual and the artist
ripping each other to shreds in my head
like wolves in winter, so desperate to eat.

Roundtable
James Broughton

It's all in your head, the first man said.
It's all in your heart, said another.
It's all in your stars, said the man with scars.
It's all in your guts, said his brother.
It's all in your soul, said the man who was slow.

It's all in your balls, said the fast one.
It's all in your things, said the fellow with rings.
It's in no thing at all, said the last one.

We are very good at preparing to live, but not very good at living. We know how to sacrifice ten years for a diploma, and we are willing to work very hard to get a job, a car, a house, and so on. But we have difficulty remembering that we are alive in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive.

~ Thích Nhất Hạnh

Equanimity doesn't mean keeping things even; it is the capacity to return to balance in the midst of an alert, responsive life. I don't want to be constantly calm. The cultural context I grew up in and the relational life I live in both call for passionate, engaged response. I laugh and I cry and I'm glad that I do. What I value is the capacity to be balanced between times.

~ Sylvia Boorstein, from Don't Just Do Something, Sit There

Silent Reflection

Questions to prompt discussion (choose ones that work for you)

1. What if the problem is not about being busy and all those balls you're juggling? Could the balance you seek be about connecting who you are inside with how you use your time outside? Are you sure that you are overwhelmed, or just out of alignment?
2. What "congruence" is calling to you? What "alignment" is your deepest self longing for?
3. As a kid, when did you have that feeling of everything being in perfect balance? Is that just a nice memory? Or might it be a guidepost to what you need in your life right now?
4. What happens when you sit quietly in a room? Do the voices you hear center and balance you? Or leave you off-balance and pulled off-center?
5. We struggle between our desire to save the world and savor the world. But what if it's really a matter of listening better to both of them? How is what you savor calling you to save or protect something? How are your efforts to save world asking you to get better at finding moments of personal balance and joy?
6. Psychologists say we need a balance of work, love and play. Which of these three legs needs more of your attention? Have you become a one or two-legged stool?
7. Are you trying too hard to make something work? Might balance for you be a matter of accepting defeat or finally letting it go?
8. Are you off-balance because you're in a tug-of-war? You do know that you're allowed to simply let go of the rope, right?
9. What if balance isn't about doing a better job juggling what is, but instead a matter of returning to something that was?
10. Is it time to give up one of your passions so the other can fully live? Is trying to balance them all cutting you off from connecting fully with any one of them?
11. Are you out-of-balance because you've taken on too much or taken on too much that is not really yours to do or fix?
12. Is your life out of balance because you are taking on too much or because you want too much?

13. Do you really need better time-management? Or could better boundary-management be your true work?
14. Is time to toss balance to the side and go all in?
15. Do you ever get sick of people telling you that you need more balance in your life?
16. Are you trying to both hold on to and let go of someone at the same time?
17. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Housekeeping Details How goes your service project plans? Do you need ideas? Lisa, Michelle or Virginia are happy to help!

Check-out

Closing Words

Pause.
Breath.
Repair your universe.
Proceed.
~ Anonymous