

UUCMC Covenant Circle Session

November 2018: Memory

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting

Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

~ Steve Jobs

Reminder of our Covenant

Check-In (3-4 minutes each)

Topic with Readings

Word Roots:

Memory derives from the Latin word *memor* (mindful, remembering), from Proto-Indo-European *smere-* (to remember). The Sanskrit word *chitta* is often translated as memory. It carries the idea of consciousness or awareness, to remember is to bring to awareness.

Memory is intelligent. It's a knowledge seated neither in the senses, nor in the spirit, but in collective memory. It is communal, though deeply personal. Involved with the self, though autonomous. At war with death.

~ Etel Adnan

There are lots of people who mistake their imagination for their memory. ~ Josh Billings

The difference between false memories and true ones is the same as for jewels: it is always the false ones that look the most real, the most brilliant.

~ Salvador Dali

We are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them.

~ Joan Didion, from "On Keeping a Notebook" in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*

To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves.

~ Alice Walker

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

~ George Santayana

ask not what your country can do for you
ask if your country is your country
ask if your country belongs to your country folk
ask if your country is addicted to blood
ask if your country is addicted to forgetting...

~ Danez Smith

Memory invites us to maintain our grip on the past, but it also calls us to pay attention to the present. Memory's question is not just "Do you remember?" but "How do you want to be remembered?"

~ Rev. Scott Tayler

In times like these, I look to the past. I come from people not meant to survive, and here is our bloodline, stronger than ever.

~ Brittany Packnett

Silent Reflection

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

1. What memory has been with you the longest? What does it want from you so badly that it has held on this long?
2. How has your memory changed as you've grown older? Do you think of childhood memories more or less? Is it stories or images you now remember more? Has your confidence about the accuracy of your memory grown or lessened? Or is that no longer a question you worry so much about, as long as the "truth" of those memories remain?
3. What memories have been entrusted to you? Families pass down stories. Old friends look to one another to remember each other's childhoods. Spouses safely house their vulnerable stories and secrets with each other. We are all protectors and sustainers of memories that keep pieces and parts of others alive. What precious memory have you been asked to keep alive?
4. What memory will die with you if you don't pass it on? Is this the month you finally make a concrete plan to make sure it lives on the memory of another?
5. What memory holds your truest self? For some, it comes from childhood, like that time we were handed a paintbrush and canvas and felt a strange sense of home. For others it is from our adult adventures, maybe that time we bravely walked away. We don't just have personality traits, we hold tight to our defining traits through memory. What memories help you hold on to yourself?
6. What is your favorite shared memory? Memory is the glue that binds our friendships, marriages and partnerships. Is it time to take your friend or partner out for lunch to reminisce and toast the way that memory's magic has held you together?
7. Is it time to admit that your memory may not be the complete picture of what happened?
8. What if the question isn't, "Did it really happen that way?" But instead, "Why do you want to remember that it happened that way?"
9. Have you figured out the story you want to be remembered by?

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

Check-out

Closing Words

Time does not heal all wounds but gives us the tools to endure them. I have found this to be true in the greatest and smallest of matters.

~ Patti Smith