

**Quote on
innocence from
"The Quiet
Answer" by
Hugh Prather**

There is no fear greater
than the fear of being happy.
There is no reluctance more deeply seated
than the unwillingness to see all faults
and sins as simply mistakes.

Who could honestly denounce another
if it was admitted that all he had done
was make a mistake?

Instead, the other is seen
as selfish and internally dark,
a thing unworthy of life,
to be attacked and weakened.

To have any hope of happiness,
we must first recognize those times
we are afraid
of the innocence of others.

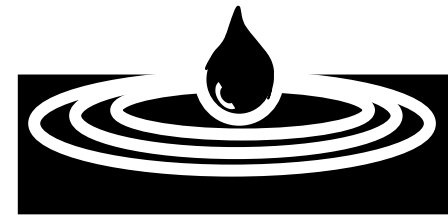
They are the same moments
as when we ourselves
resist feeling gentle and free.

We mistakenly believe
that our sense of self-worth
comes from how we compare to others,
and that to see them as innocent
would reflect badly on us.

So we remain hard and exacting
in order not to allow
any evidence of guilt
to go unnoticed.

But our fear of the sinlessness
of what God has created
also leaves no possibility
of recognizing our own
inherent worthiness.

Let us therefore practice
genuine self-interest.
Let us renounce anxiety
and try in its place
an experiment in kindness.



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

Presuming Innocence

“Try fascination before fear.”
- Holly Near

Preliminaries Announcements, chalice lighting, opening words, feedback, reading round the circle, closing words

Opening / Chalice Lighting
- Hymnal #418,
Adapted from Israel Zangwill
Come into the circle of love and justice.
Come into the community of mercy, holiness, and health.
Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Check-in Take a minute or two to briefly share the high point or the low point of your life since we last met.

Reading Round the Circle Read the poem on the back cover.

Sitting in Silence

Sharing / Deep Listening Please share your responses you have to the questions you answered prior to the session.

Responsive Reading
- Hymnal #664
Sara Moores
Campbell
Give us the spirit of the child. Give us the child who lives within:
The child who trusts, the child who imagines, the child who sings.
The child who receives without reservation, the child who gives without judgment.
Give us a child's eyes, that we may receive the beauty and freshness of this day like a sunrise;
Give us a child's ears, that we may hear the music of mythical times;
Give us a child's heart, that we may be filled with wonder and delight;
Give us a child's faith, that we may be cured of our cynicism;
Give us the spirit of the child, who is not afraid to need; who is not afraid to love.

Feedback You may wish to acknowledge one another in a very brief response. For example, I was touched when you said...

Singing
- Hymnal #318,
"We Would be One"
We would be one as now we join in singing our hymn of love, to pledge ourselves anew to that high cause of greater understanding of who we are, and what in us is true.
We would be one in living for each other to show to all a new community.

We would be one in building for tomorrow a nobler world than we have known today.
We would be one in searching for that meaning which binds our hearts and points us on our way.
As one, we pledge ourselves to greater service, with love and justice, strive to make us free.

Closing / Extinguishing the Chalice
Join hands or link arms as you read the closing words together.

- Luke
From another religious tradition, we were taught:
Judge not, and you will not be judged yourselves...
Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

And now, in our chosen faith, we affirm our intention to put these words into action:
We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: ...the inherent worth and dignity of every person ...justice, equity, and compassion in human relations ...