

Preparation for G249 – In Community

For this preparation we give you a reading to ponder. No questions. This was written by one of your Pacific Central District Board members, Mary MacKay, Come prepared to reflect on this reading.

Beyond simple geography or accident of birth – we come together by choice to create this religious community. We are not bound by creed, we are not the saved or the chosen. We are gloriously, and sometimes appallingly, human here. We are free to leave, but most of us stay. We give of ourselves to create and sustain this community. Why? Why not seek spiritual sustenance in solitary prayer and meditation. Seek love and companionship from friends. Intellectual stimulation from a good book. We do that too of course – but still we long for community. For that half- forgotten mythic past of neighbors on front porches, kids showing up at whatever dinner table is closest, barn raisings and quilting bees. Suffused with a golden glow, they use it to sell us toothpaste, coffee, pickup trucks. The next best thing to sex.

But what we get is not the glossy Wall Street version of updated Amish life. What we get is us. In all our wonderful, mystifying and sometimes infuriating humanness. We get kids that squirm and adults that chew with their mouth open. We are challenged to love those who drive us just a little bit crazy because they talk too much or too little. Those who have to run everything and those who never volunteer. The ones who are always first in line, who park crooked, who jingle their keys, who sing off key. This is not a flaw in our community, this is (and always was) community. More like family than friendship.

We choose friends, almost by definition, by our comfort in their presence, common interests and similar habits. Often friends reflect (in a favorable light of course) an aspect of our own personality or a quality we admire and aspire to. Families, on the other hand, can drive us nuts. It's easy to love our friends, we chose them for their loveliness. But it is in family, in community, in loving around the awkward, uncomfortable, and sometimes not particularly likeable bits that we become more truly human. We learn to love, not in spite of, but because of, those very human failings.

This then is a plea for forgiveness, for grace. For love that transcends grammatical errors and poor table manners. Not that we can't (gently) nudge one another toward perfection, but it may be a while...

Mary MacKay, Oct 24, 1999
First Unitarian Church of Honolulu