



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

A Child Leaving Home

"... Parting is such sweet sorrow ..."
- William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

"For parents whose children have left the home,
there is no empty nest -- the nest has simply
expanded further out into the world."
- Fr. Angelo Artemas

"The nest may be empty but it's full of possibilities."
-Reg Henry, columnist for the Pittsburgh Post-
Gazette

Preliminaries

We need a volunteer to read opening poem. Sharing is limited to the person whose child is leaving home.

Opening

- Aubrey
Atwater,
Don't Bother the
Phoebe

Laundry

I have folded a generation of clothing
for today is your twentieth birthday
and I am looking at old photographs
Here you are on the ferry
with your light blue, oversized T-shirt
I remember its slow thinning over years through
washing
How you loved that shirt and then one day
you put a green garbage bag in the kitchen and
said,
"These are clothes you can give away"
I remember, also, the gradual growing of the
trousers
They were so little at first, easy to wash
Holding them fresh out of the laundry
I would snap the legs to remove creases
Then when the pants got bigger and exceeded my own
I was the tiniest person in the basket
How many times
I have stood at those machines,
folded your briefs three ways
and wondered how you were doing
in fourth grade, in seventh grade,
in high school
The years chronicle themselves
by clothing and haircuts
Here you shaved one side of your head
and for months wore a shirt
that said WHATEVER
Now, only weeks ago,
you have moved out
soon to buy your own garments,
perhaps trade with friends
And when you visit to use the machines
you will carry your soiled laundry
packed tight into the black hamper
and pass over my threshold
in stranger's clothing
a T-shirt I don't know,
unacquainted frayed pants,
and mismatched socks I never bought.

Sharing

(optional and
only for person
with child
leaving)

**Holding in
Silence**

Leader: Would you like to talk about your child's leaving?

Take a minute of silence for everyone to hold the member in their thoughts.

**Closing/
Responsive
Reading**
- Kahil
Gibram, The
Prophet

Divide group into two halves, and alternate lines.

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They came through you but not from you.
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you,
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and bends you with might that the arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as the archer loves the arrow that flies, so the archer loves also the bow that is stable.