

Session 6
Looking Back and Moving Forward

Opening Prayer

Holy God, this has been a rich and challenging six weeks of Lent. As we have walked through the wilderness of dying and death, we have struggled, we have cried, we have laughed, we have grieved. And, yes, we have felt you with us on this journey. As we come to this final session today/tonight, help us to look at those areas that have been the most difficult for us. Help us to shine a new light upon our living and our dying. Help us to move forward, confident that our loved ones will know our wishes concerning how we want our earthly bodies treated as we near the end of our life, and promising that we will continue to discuss our wishes with them if our thinking and circumstances change. This is a gift that we are giving them, so that they may rest assured that they are making the right decisions for us, knowing also that you too will be there with them and with us as we continue our journey to you. Help us in this final session as we look back and look forward. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reading Ps 139:1-18, 23-24

This is a session to look back and see where we have been and to begin to find out what you think about these various end of life issues. As you know, in the spring the UCC will be conducting a survey and each church will have an opportunity to let the denomination know where we stand on the various issues we have been discussing. So we will eventually look to see what we have consensus on and what we don't.

But, before we do that, let's take some time and talk about what this experience has been like for you. (Once people have had a chance to talk, please move into the following questions and try to note the "sense" of their responses, if not the substance.)

Have you completed your Health Care Proxy?

If not, do you plan on completing one?

Have you discussed your wishes with your family members?

Have you completed an Advance Directive?

If not, do you plan on completing one?

What was the most difficult issue for you to consider? Why was it hard?

What was the easiest issue for you to consider? Why was it easy?

Have you thought more about using hospice if the need arises?

Have you made a decision to utilize hospice if the need arises?

Do you believe in organ donation?

Have you thought about becoming an organ donor?

Have you decided to become an organ donor?

If you have decided to be an organ donor:

Have you talked to your family about your decision?

Have you filled out an organ donor card?

Do you believe that the UCC should be engaging congregations around issues like Health Care Proxies, Living Wills, Hospice, and organ donation?

Do you want your clergy person to preach about dying and end of life issues from time to time?

Have you expressed any concerns or fears you might have about death or dying to your family and/or your clergy person? (If not, why not?)

Do you have a better understanding of the arguments for Physician Aid in Dying that outline the potential benefits to a dying person having a legal choice to request a hastened death if their suffering becomes unbearable?

Do you have a better understanding of the arguments against Physician Aid in Dying that outline the potential risks to people who are terminally ill of even the most carefully crafted laws?

Do you think that the law should allow doctors to write a lethal prescription for a terminally ill patient who has been told they have six months or less to live and asks to have his or her life ended?

Do you think that terminally ill patients who have been told they have six months or less to live and take a lethal dose of medication prescribed for them by their physicians at their request are committing suicide?

Do you think that terminally ill patients who have been told they have six months or less to live and in unbearable suffering seek medication to hasten their death should be characterized as committing suicide when they are simply asking for a peaceful relief from their suffering?

Do you think that the UCC should take a public stand endorsing Physician Aid in Dying?

Do you think that the UCC as a denomination should devote any of its limited staff and conference resources to actively work for the passage of Physician Aid in Dying in every state?

Do you think that the UCC should not endorse Physician Aid in Dying?

Do you think that the UCC as a denomination should devote any of its limited staff and conference resources to work actively against the passage of Physician Aid in Dying in individual states?

Do you feel more educated about end of life issues now?

Do you feel more educated about end of life options now?

Do you think that you are now better able to advocate for yourself or an ill loved one since you have taken this series?

Do you have less fear about dying since this series of Lenten sessions?

Would you like the UCC to provide other educational sessions for our denomination? If yes, please list the topics you would like us to consider.

Closing Prayer

Dearest God, as we walk through the rest of this Holy Week and witness your Son's dying and being resurrected, we thank for our denomination and for all of those who serve you through the UCC. We also thank you for this opportunity to walk with Jesus through this Lenten wilderness in a new and different way. We may have been challenged, scared, perplexed, and uncertain as to what the end of our life on earth may be like, but one thing we do know is that we will not go through the wilderness of dying on our own. You will be there with us every step of the way, carrying us when we are unable to carry ourselves and watching over us and our loved ones as we face our dying and death. Help us to remember in those most bleakest moments that you are awaiting our soul's entry into whatever you have in store for those who love you and who know that, through Christ, all things are possible. Amen.