



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY  
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF  
SAN JOSE

## **Parenting & Mentoring: The Most Important Job of All**

"To nourish children and raise them against odds is in any time, any place, more valuable than to fix bolts in cars or design nuclear weapons."

- Marilyn French, as quoted in *Woman to Woman*, by Julia Gildea & Mark Riedman

"Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another."

- George Eliot

"Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted."

- Garrison Keillor

**Preliminaries** Select chalice lighter and readers for the opening words and the second reading.

**Opening / Chalice Lighting**  
- Alta  
One hesitates to bring a child into this world without fixing it up a little ... paint a special room ... stop sexism ... learn how to love ... vow to do it better than it was done when you were a baby ... vow to make, if necessary, new mistakes ... vow to be awake for the birth ... to believe in joy even in the midst of unbearable pain.

**Check-in**  
Take 1 or 2 minutes to share briefly the high point or low point of your life since the time we last met.

**Responsive Reading (or listen to recording)**  
- Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet  
(adapted)  
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 carries 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.*

**Sitting in Silence**

**Sharing and Deep Listening**

**Feedback**  
After all have shared, you may wish to acknowledge one another in a very brief response. For example, "I was touched when you described ..." or "I really felt connected with you when you said ..." or "When you said ..., I remembered something that happened to me."

**Reading**  
- Alice Miller  
Someday we will regard our children not as creatures to manipulate or change but rather as messengers from a world we once deeply knew, but which we have long since forgotten, who can reveal to us more about the true secrets of life, and also our own lives, than our parents were ever able to. We do not need to be told whether to be strict or permissive with our children. What we do need is to have respect for their needs, their feelings, and their individuality, as well as for our own.

**Singing**  
Sleep My Child,  
Hymnal #409  
Sleep, my child, and peace attend you, all through the night.  
I who love you shall be near you, all through the night.  
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping, hill and vale in slumber sleeping,  
I my loving vigil keeping, all through the night.

Mother, I can feel you near me, all through the night.  
Father, I know you can hear me, all through the night.  
And while I am your age nearly, still I will remember clearly,  
how you sang and held me dearly, all through the night.

**Closing / Extinguishing the Chalice**  
- Author unknown  
One hundred years from now, it will not matter what kind of car I drove, what kind of house I lived in, how much money I had in my bank account, nor what my clothes looked like, but the world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child.