

*Poem at
Thirty-nine*
- Alice Walker

How I miss my father
I wish he had not been
so tired
when I was
born.

Writing deposit slips and checks
I think of his.
He taught me how.
This is the form,
he must have said:
the way it is done.
I learned to see
bits of paper
as a way
to escape
the life he knew
and even in high school
had a savings
account.

He taught me
that telling the truth
did not always mean
a beating;

though many of my truths
must have grieved him
before the end.

How I miss my father!
He cooked like a person
dancing
in a yoga meditation
and craved the voluptuous
sharing
of good food.

Now I look and cook just like him:
my brain light;
tossing this and that
into the pot;
seasoning none of my life
the same way twice; happy to feed
whoever strays my way.
He would have grown to admire
the woman I've become;
cooking, writing, chopping wood,
staring into the fire.



SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

Our Fathers

“It no longer bothers me that I may be
constantly searching for father figures; by this
time, I have found several and dearly enjoyed
knowing them all.”

-- *Alice Walker*

“It doesn't matter who my father was; it
matters who I remember he was.”

-- *Anne Sexton*

Preliminaries Announcements, chalice reader, reading from Common Bowl, reflecting

Opening / Chalice Lighting We come together to acknowledge the fathers who helped give us life, to validate their “worth and dignity,” and to ask, perhaps, for their forgiveness, in our humble efforts to “grow into harmony with the divine.”

Check-in Take a moment to share briefly something that has been on your mind recently, or a high or low point since we last met.

Reading
--Li-Young Lee Chinese-American poet Li-Young Lee wrote, “To pull the metal splinter from my palm, my father recited a story in a low voice. I watched his lovely face and not the blade. Before the story ended, he’d removed the iron sliver I thought I’d die from. I can’t remember the tale, but hear his voice still, a well of dark water, a prayer.”

Reading from The Common Bowl Each person may select a quote from the common bowl and read it aloud to the group.

Sitting in Silence In his poem, Li-Young Lee wrote of his father’s gentle hands as measures of tenderness and flames of discipline. None of us is one-dimensional. In honoring our fathers, we may share stories of human frailty as well as strength. Let us reflect on our fathers for a few minutes in silence.

Sharing/ Deep Listening (The object you brought to represent your father may be placed on the altar during your time of sharing.)

Reflecting This is a time to reflect on something another person has said or to relate additional thoughts that occurred as others shared.

Singing
-Hymnal #23
Bring many names, beautiful and good,
Celebrate in parable and story,
Holiness in glory, living, loving God:
Hail and hosanna, bring many names.

Warm father God, hugging ev’ry child,
Feeling all the strains of human living,
Caring and forgiving till we’re reconciled:
Hail and hosanna, warm father God!

Old, aching God, grey with endless care,
Calmly piercing evil’s new disguises,
Glad of new surprises, wiser than despair:
Hail and hosanna, old aching God!

Great, living God, never fully known,
Joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
Closer yet than breathing, everlasting home:
Hail and hosanna, great, living God!

Closing / Extinguishing the Chalice
--Barbara Pescan
(Link arms and read together)
Because of those who came before,
we are;
in spite of their failings, we believe;
because of, and in spite of the horizons
of their vision,
we, too, dream.

Let us go remembering to praise,
to live in the moment,
to love mightily,
to bow to the mystery.