

Joys and Sorrows

Statement of Understanding

Our life in community is a tapestry woven of shared joys and sorrows. We rejoice together in times of celebration, and we offer comfort and support in times of grief.

Within the worship service, the ceremony of Joys and Sorrows is a *symbolic* enactment of our community's common life. Some of us choose during this ritual to share joys and sorrows, which can be done in a variety of ways, including speaking them aloud, writing them on a card (for a service leader to read), silently lighting a candle, and/or releasing a stone in a bowl of water.

Whether sharing aloud or writing on a card, we share *in a sentence or two the joy or sorrow of a significant life event*. Each of these events is inevitably associated with a rich story, but the ceremony itself is not a time to tell that story.

It is understood that announcements, whether pertaining to our fellowship or not, do not belong in Joys and Sorrows. Nor is it appropriate to engage in political campaigning.

We are diverse; what seems trivial to one person may be a sad burden or a great joy to someone else. Therefore, we ask two things: When listening to Joys and Sorrows, be truly openhearted to each speaker. At the same time, before sharing in Joy and Sorrows, know within your heart that what you have to share is of deep significance.

Guidance by Example

If you or yours are getting married, divorced, evicted, or convicted, then you have a Joy or Sorrow you may wish to share.

If you or yours are coming out or are facing challenges in coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, then you have a Joy or Sorrow that you may wish to share.

If you or yours have been the victim of a crime or have been rescued from a life-threatening situation, then you have a Joy or Sorrow that you may wish to share.

If you or yours have a birth, death, frightening medical situation or a return to health, then you have a Joy or Sorrow that you may wish to share.

If you or yours have started a new job or business, or lost a job or gotten a promotion, decided to go to school or earned a degree, then you have a Joy or Sorrow that you may wish to share.

If you or yours is struggling with a life transition or have overcome a significant life challenge, then you have a Joy or Sorrow that you may wish to share.

So One Might Say . . .

"I am full of Sorrow because our house burned down, but I am so grateful no one was hurt. Please keep us in your thoughts."

"I have a great Joy because my sister who is a lesbian was able to legally marry her partner in state X. Let us pray for the day that this may become true everywhere!"

"I am really struggling with making a major decision in my life - please keep me in your thoughts and prayers."