

# **Perseverance**

UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Heart to Heart Circles February 2018

## **Perseverance**

Steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

## **Chalice Lighting**

Well, I won't back down  
No, I won't back down  
You can stand me up at the gates of hell  
But I won't back down  
No, I'll stand my ground  
Won't be turned around  
And I'll keep this world from draggin' me down  
Gonna stand my ground (Tom Petty)

## **Sharing Silence (3 minutes)**

You may wish to bring your attention to your breath, or move a bit until you have found a comfortable seat. If silence is not a familiar experience to you, three minutes may seem long. If you are accustomed to silence, it may seem short.

## **On Our Hearts**

On Our Hearts is a practice of sharing and listening that invites us into connection with one another by sharing what is really going on for us as we come into the circle. Some months you will come to the group with wonderful news or a heavy heart, and it will be important for the group to know what's going on with you. Please share the major highs and lows, the things you'd like everyone to keep in their hearts or in their prayers for you.

## **Covenant and Ground Rules**

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of the group. Adapted from *Heart to Heart* by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins

I commit myself:

- to give attendance at meetings a real priority knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others;
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart;
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, problem solving, or giving advice;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

## **Readings**

Success is a little like wrestling a gorilla. You don't quit when you're tired. You quit when the gorilla is tired.

- *Robert Strauss*

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.

- *Nelson Mandela*

"This morning I have been pondering a nearly forgotten lesson I learned in high school music. Sometimes in band or choir, music requires players or singers to hold a note longer than they actually can hold a note. In those cases, we were taught to mindfully stagger when we took a breath so the sound appeared uninterrupted. Everyone got to breathe, and the music stayed strong and vibrant... So let's remember the advice of music: Take a breath. The rest of the chorus will sing. The rest of the band will play. Rejoin so others can breathe. Together, we can sustain a very long, beautiful song for a very, very long time. You don't have to do it all, but you must add your voice to the song."

- *Michael Moore*

The only tired I was, was tired of giving in. I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear, knowing what must be done does away with fear. Each person must live their life as a model for others. - *Rosa Parks*

In the book *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell says that it takes roughly ten thousand hours of practice to achieve mastery in a field. Perhaps many of us have a few hours yet to go. This is no time to give up.

"In my own worst seasons, I've come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium outside my bedroom window. And then another: my daughter in a yellow dress. And another: the perfect outline of a full, dark sphere behind the crescent moon... until I learned to be in love with my life again. Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have taught myself joy, over and over again."

*Barbara Kingsolver*

## **Questions**

1. The saying is widely known: "Trees that bend in the storm don't break." Are you trying to stand tall and remain immovable, when life is asking you to bend?
2. We all fall down. Very few of us pick ourselves up on our own. Perseverance is rarely a solo act. Who in your life needs a bit of help getting back up off the mat?

3. It is said that people who persevere don't just struggle through their pain; they share and tell stories of their pain. Others then respond with their own stories of pain and struggle, leading to the discovery that we are not as alone as we thought. So is it time for you to be a storyteller, not just a survivor?
4. Have you made friends with defeat? Do you still resent it? Or have you figured out the hidden gift, lesson or blessing of your defeat?

### **Reflecting On Our Time Together**

Please share anything that would otherwise be unsaid as you leave our time together. Do you wish you had shared something more, less, different? How are you feeling as you leave? Feeling words are ok, such as sad, mad, glad, peaceful, powerful, joyful.

### **Closing Words**

Rabbi David Wolf tells a story that we all should carry with us this month:

A boy and his father were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. "Do you think if I use all of my strength, I can move this rock?" the child asked. His father answered, "If you use all of your strength, I am sure you can do it." The boy began to push the rock. Exerting himself as much as he could, he pushed and pushed. The rock did not move. Discouraged, he said to his father, "You were wrong. I can't do it." His father put his arm around the boy's shoulder and said, "No son. You didn't use all your strength – you didn't ask me to help."

*What a gift to remember that perseverance isn't a solo act. May that be the gift this month gives us all*