

Transformation
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles
March 2017

Welcome and Explanations 5 minutes

Chalice Lighting

Nothing remains as it was. If you know this, you can begin again, with pure joy in the uprooting.

- *Judith Minty*

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 15 minutes

Please share any burdens you bring with you today. This is not a check-in, it is a time to share wonderful news or a heavy heart - the major highs and lows of your life 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. This covenant is adapted from *Heart to Heart: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing* 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.

Time for Covenant

Over the year we will spend together, and despite our good intentions, from time to time many of us will be challenged to keep our covenant. Past leaders and participants in the program have found that when each of us understands the covenant, the importance of keeping our covenant, and shares plans for how to call one another back into covenant if that is needed, the experience of Heart to Heart Circles becomes stronger and deeper. This is because our covenant and groundrules create a safe space where participants can share their experiences honestly, without fear of judgment, and go more deeply and personally into their reflections knowing that each member of the group will listen with an open heart.

When the covenant is not clearly understood, or when we are not able to call one another back into covenant, the experience of Heart to Heart Circles is less meaningful and members can be hurt or disappointed by the program. This can even result in the dissolution of the group.

Last month we had a discussion about what might be easy for you about honoring our covenant and groundrules, and what might be difficult.

If you are not sure if you would like to keep our covenant, please “try it on” for three full sessions. If it is still not a fit at the close of your third session, Heart to Heart Circles is probably not a good match for you. There are many other church programs with a more discussion-based format that you may find helpful and enjoyable. Your facilitator can suggest some that might work better for you, such as social activities or book groups.

Would anyone like to share their thoughts or feelings about the covenant, after having tried it on last month?

Readings

Oh my God, what if you wake up some day and you never got your memoir or novel written; or you didn't go swimming in warm pools and oceans all those years because your thighs were jiggy and you had a nice big comfortable tummy; or you were just so strung out on perfectionism and people-pleasing that you forgot to have a big juicy creative life, of imagination and radical silliness and staring off into space like when you were a kid? It's going to break your heart. Don't let this happen. Repent just means to change direction — and NOT to be said by someone who is wagging their forefinger at you. Repentance is a blessing. Pick a new direction and aim for that. Shoot the moon.

- Annie Lamott

Spiritual transformation is a death as well as a birth. The teachers who help us to grow know that it can't happen without this pain. They don't save us from it—in fact, what they do usually intensifies it.

- *Rev Amy Zucker Morgenstern*

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*

We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change, and we are the last generation that can do something about it.

- *Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington*

All that you touch
you change.

All that you change
changes you.

The only lasting truth
is change.

God is change.

- *Octavia E. Butler*

Questions for consideration:

1. Do you know what Life is inviting you to become? What's happened to your vision of what transformation looks like?
2. What were you taught in childhood about your ability to change yourself and/or the world? Are those lessons ones you need to remember or reject?
3. Are you really longing to be transformed or could it be that your heart just wants to be understood?
4. What if we are the "last generation that can do something about it?"

Sharing 60 minutes

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

But now that so much is changing, isn't it time for us to change? Couldn't we try to gradually develop and slowly take upon ourselves, little by little, our part in the great task of love? - *Rainer Maria Rilke*

