

Balance
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles March 2018
Created by Kathleen Hogue for UU Santa Monica

Definition of balance: From Latin *bi* (two) and *lanx* (plate or dish) to balance scales, both sides being equal. Add to this the idea of a still point from *stille* (at rest) and *peuk* (which includes the idea to mend).

Chalice Lighting

Joy and grief; Health and sickness
Light and Darkness; Peace and anger
Life and death; Wholeness and brokenness
We each bring all of these here to this sanctuary of unity in diversity
For this one hour of this one day
And pour them out
Commingling the oil of our lives
To become the flame of this chalice - *Paul Stephan Dodenhoff*

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 ^[1]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

“It’s hard to know when to respond to the seductiveness of the world and when to respond to its challenge. If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.” - *E.B. White*

Being a “people of balance” is often the opposite of keeping things calm. In order to move toward a balance of justice, we have to upset the current state of things. Oppressive systems need challenged and toppled. We need to sacrifice our calm and comfort, and instead “go all in.” Achieving a balance of equality requires us to be purposefully off-balance with our culture, or as Martin Luther King jr. said, we need people who are “maladjusted.” Being out of sync with “the way things are” is the first step toward a better balance for all. - *Soul Matters on “What does it mean to be a People of Balance?”*

[Thich Nhat Hanh] looked at me in a quiet, piercing way that stopped my breath, and said slowly: “Speak the truth, but not to punish” ... Understanding this koan is a work in progress for me but the more I ponder it, the more it seems to be about balance, speaking up against injustice with courage and passion but with greater awareness of the dangers in becoming overly adversarial and treating those who disagree as foes... We must be willing to stand in the shoes of others if we are to debate controversial issues with equanimity and avoid gridlock... Thich Nhat Hanh’s koan brought me back to his advice to hold our anger with an energy of mindfulness, like the sun shining upon a flower, penetrating deeply until the petals open. Anger can give us the mettle to speak with courage and conviction, but also the venom that blinds us to the views of others. - *James Hoggan*

“What is your balance *for*?” Maybe instead of asking each other, “Have you found balance?” we need to ask “Where is your balance taking you?” Yes, balance sometimes can be an end in itself, but more often balance is a means to a greater end. In other words, maybe balance isn’t the prize but the springboard. Maybe balance isn’t the goal, but the source of strength that gets us where we need to go. - *Soul Matters on “What does it mean to be a People of Balance?”*

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace. - *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Questions for consideration:

(Sharing 60 minutes)

1. Is it time to give up one of your passions so the other can fully live? Is trying to balance them all cutting you off from connecting fully with any one of them?
2. Is it time for you to sacrifice your calm and comfort, and instead “go all in.”
3. Often our imbalance is our own doing. Frequently, we just take on too much. But sometimes it’s not that simple. Sometimes, our imbalance is about us taking on too much *that is not really ours to do or fix*. In other words, it’s often accepting responsibility for *other people’s* weight and worry that tips us over. Or as organizational consultant, Betsy Jacobson, puts it, “Balance is not better time-management, but better boundary-management.” ***Identify one way in which you are taking on something that is not really your responsibility. Then find a kind way to put up a boundary.***
4. “Do you know where you’re trying to get to?” and “Which things in your life you need to balance to help you along your way?”
5. This last question is to be used as an opportunity to mention any thoughts that may have come to from the readings. Was there something in the readings that you found interesting? Something that spoke to you?

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

There is, finally, only one thing required of us: that is, to take life whole, the sunlight and shadows together; to live the life that is given us with courage and humor and truth.

We have such a little moment out of the vastness of time for all our wondering and loving.

Therefore let there be no half-heartedness; rather, let the soul be ardent in its pain, in its yearning, in its praise. - ***Kendyl R Gibbons***