

Transformation
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles
April 2016

Welcome and Explanations 5 minutes

Chalice Lighting

Spiritual transformation ... doesn't happen by accident. We need a repeated discipline, a genuine training, in order to let go of our old habits of mind and to find and sustain a new way of seeing.

– Jack Kornfield, Buddhist teacher

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

This 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 participate with my group in two service projects, one for our church community, and one for the wider community;
- 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 ground rules 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.

What will be easy for you about honoring our covenant and groundrules? 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.

Service Projects

Service is a vibrant and fulfilling part of congregational life and living out our UU values in the world. To support service and ministry at our church and in the wider community, each Heart to Heart Circle undertakes a project to serve the congregation and a project to serve the wider world. We have found the most successful and fun service projects:

- Are scheduled in advance, so we can be sure to plan to attend.
- Make use of 8-12 adults working together, as a team, or in smaller teams.
- Require about 2-4 hours of our time
- Rarely require additional materials or specific skills.
- Meet the needs of the church or serve a group or cause with which the church is currently affiliated.

How will our group choose and plan our two service projects this year?

Readings

Earth teach me stillness
as the grasses are stilled with light.
Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.

Earth teach me humility
As blossoms are humble with beginning.
Earth teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.
Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands all alone.
Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.
Earth teach me resignation
as the leaves which die in the fall.
Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.
- Ute prayer, quoted in *Earth Prayers from Around the World*

In her novel *Regeneration*, Pat Barker writes of a doctor who 'knew only too well how often the early stages of change or cure may mimic deterioration. Cut a chrysalis open, and you will find a rotting caterpillar. What you will never find is that mythical creature, half-caterpillar, half-butterfly, a fit emblem of the human soul, for those whose cast of mind leads them to seek such emblems. No, the process of transformation consists almost entirely of decay.'
- quoted by Rebecca Solnit

Conflict *resolution*... conflict *management*... but conflict *transformation*? I began using the term conflict transformation in the 1980s, after intensive experience in Central America caused me to re-examine the language of the field...*conflict transformation* [engages me] in constructive change efforts that include, and go beyond, the resolution of specific problems...it is based on two verifiable realities: conflict is normal in human relationships, and conflict is a motor of change. *Transformation* provides a clear and important vision because it brings into focus the horizon toward which we journey—the building of healthy relationships and communities, locally and globally. This goal requires real change in our current ways of relating...Perhaps most importantly, conflict transformation places before us the big questions: Where are we headed? Why do we do this work? What are we hoping to contribute and build?
- John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*

Questions for consideration:

1. Spring is a time of transformation, rebirth, and growth, celebrated across cultures in holidays such as Persian New Year, Easter, and the Spring Equinox. What transformation is going on in you as spring approaches?
2. What power do you have within yourself to grow? Share a story about how you are growing.

3. For many of us, another way to spell change is “L-O-S-S.” What have you given up order to change? What, if anything, did you gain?
4. What are some of the ways you have coped with conflict and anxiety in the past? Were these ways ultimately helpful or unhelpful to you, your relationships, or your community? Have you experienced conflict as a motor of positive change?

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

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us. Not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing.
- Rachel Naomi Remen