

## Emergence

UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Heart to Heart Circles - April 2018

### Chalice Lighting

#### **In this Space**

*Alexis Engelbrecht (Soul Matters member)*

In this space, with atheists and theists  
With pagans and agnostics,  
With humanists and theists, and those who reject labels,  
What new understandings can emerge if we listen to one another? In this space full of varied experiences, concerns, and hopes,

What new revelations may come if our hearts and minds are open?  
In this space, where we covenant to seek the truth in love and to help one another, What new ways of life may emerge and come into being?  
Welcome to this diverse community - united in values and guided by love.

### 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

Emergence - Comes from the Latin *emergere*, to bring to light

Always be a work in progress. *Emily Lillian*

When you're finished changing, you're finished. *Benjamin Franklin*

It is never too late to be what you might have been. *George Eliot*

Transformation means complete and total metamorphosis... And certainly some of us may be ready to embrace that... But I think that most weeks I am like a lot of our parishioners—not all, but most— when I say that I'm not looking for a religion that tells me from the get-go that I need a complete overhaul. I'm looking for a religion that first and foremost welcomes me as I am, a busy, flawed, often bewildered person who is doing her best in a complicated world... we're not talking semantics here; we're talking about a foundational theological statement: Are you good enough to walk into Unitarian Universalism as you are, or do we need you to change into something other than you are? Can't have it both ways. I take the side of welcoming you as you are... That's the Unitarian Universalist theological position, the non-Calvinist-no-original-sin religion I was born into, and I'm still drawn to it. Inherent dignity. Inherent worth. Our theology says you need not be transformed first. Come as you are and be blessed.

*Rev. Jane Rzepka*

All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy,  
for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves;  
we must die to one life before we can  
enter into another. *Anatole France*

Let difficulty transform you. And it will. In my experience, we just need help learning how not to run away.

*Pema Chodron*

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory. *Howard Zinn*

### Questions for consideration:

1. Are you tired of being told that you need to emerge into something entirely new, and better? Are you looking for people (and a religion) that welcomes you as you are? That says, "Come as you are and be blessed"?
2. Is regret over what could have been preventing you from fully leaning into what's being offered?
3. Is one well-crafted and comfortable life what you really want? Was there a time when you planned on experiencing many lives in this one lifetime you've been given?
4. Have you taken the time to mourn and give thanks for your old life? Have you rushed too quickly into the excitement of your new journey? Even if it was time to leave it, your old life gave you great gifts (even if they were laced with pain). Have you taken time to say goodbye and thank you?
5. It's said that we don't fear change, but the loss and letting go that comes with change. You do know what you need to let go of, right? But do you know why you are holding on so tight?

### 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

#### **The Growing Edge**

*by Howard Thurman*

All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born;  
All around us life is dying and life is being born.  
The fruit ripens on the tree;  
The roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth  
Against a time when there shall be new leaves, fresh blossoms, green fruit. Such is the growing edge!  
It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung,  
The one more thing to try when all else has failed,  
The upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor. This is the basis of hope in moments of despair,  
The incentive to carry on when times are out of joint  
And people have lost their reason; the source of confidence  
When worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash.  
The birth of the child—life's most dramatic answer to death—

This is the Growing Edge incarnate.  
Look well to the growing edge.