

**Freedom**  
UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Heart to Heart Circles  
May 2015

**Welcome and Orientation** 10 minutes

This is a time when your facilitator/s introduce themselves and go over housekeeping details such as parking, meeting space, nametags, and confirming your contact information.

**Chalice Lighting**

Circle round for freedom, circle round for peace.

For all of us imprisoned, circle for release.

Circle for the planet, circle for each soul.

For the children of our children, keep the circle whole.

**Sharing Silence**

We open our time together with shared silence for about three minutes. This can be a time to meditate if that is part of your spiritual practice, reflect on your transition from where you have been during the day to where you are now, or to just be. If you are accustomed to silence, three minutes may feel short. If you are not, it may feel long.

**On Our Hearts** 10 minutes

**Covenant** 20 minutes

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 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.

**Readings**

In the springtime we remember: the promised land is not a destination—it is a way of going. The land beyond the Jordan, that country of freedom and dignity and laughter—you carry it inside you all the while. It is planted in your mind and heart already, before you ever start out, before it even occurs to you that in order to leave that life in Egypt, the intolerable bondage of that life, what you need to do is stand up and walk forward.

-Victoria E. Safford

It doesn't interest me if there is one God  
or many gods.  
I want to know if you belong or feel  
abandoned.  
If you know despair or can see it in others.  
I want to know  
if you are prepared to live in the world  
with its harsh need  
to change you. If you can look back  
with firm eyes  
saying this is where I stand. I want to know  
if you know  
how to melt into that fierce heat of living  
falling toward  
the center of your longing. I want to know  
if you are willing  
to live, day by day, with the consequence of love  
and the bitter  
unwanted passion of your sure defeat.

I have heard, in *that* fierce embrace, even  
the gods speak of God.

-David Whyte

I am suggesting that we pay as much attention to our nurturing sensibilities as to our  
ambition. We are moving in the direction of freedom and the function of freedom is to free  
somebody else.

-Toni Morrison

### **Questions for consideration:**

1. Describe a time or place in your life in which you felt great freedom. How does that experience influence your life today?
2. What responsibilities do you feel because of your freedoms? How are these responsibilities limiting or liberating?
3. Is there an area of your life in which you feel you are not living fully? What would help you grow beyond these constraints?
4. How do you find a balance between freedom and responsibility in your spiritual life? In your religious community?

**Sharing** 60 minutes

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

#### **Closing Words**

May we leave this place  
Seeking an uncharted and freely chosen way to wholeness,  
Knowing we have companions along the way.

-Bets Wienecke