

Spiritual Turning Points
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles
June 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

We gather to affirm the potential we all share: for building community, for undertaking constructive change, for engaging in mature growth, for achieving greater humanity than we have known. May our meeting together be a time of reflection on possibilities untried.
-Adapted from Harold Babcock

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

There's a trick to the Graceful Exit, I suspect. It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, a relationship, is over and to let it go. It means leaving what's over without denying its validity or its past importance in our lives. It involves a sense of the future, a belief that every exit line is an entry, we are moving on rather than out...It's hard to learn that we don't leave the best parts of ourselves behind, back in the dugout or the Capital or the office. We own what we learned back there, the experience and the growth are grafted onto our lives. And when we exit, we can take ourselves along. Quite gracefully.

-Ellen Goodman

I have walked through many lives,
some of them my own,
and I am not who I was,
though some principle of being
abides, from which I struggle
not to stray.
When I look behind,
as I am compelled to look
before I can gather strength
to proceed on my journey,
I see the milestones dwindling
toward the horizon
and the slow fires trailing
from the abandoned camp-sites,
over which scavenger angels
wheel on heavy wings.
Oh, I have made myself a tribe
out of my true affections,
and my tribe is scattered!
How shall the heart be reconciled
to its feast of losses?
In a rising wind
the manic dust of my friends,

those who fell along the way,
bitterly stings my face.
Yet I turn, I turn,
exulting somewhat,
with my will intact to go
wherever I need to go,
and every stone on the road
precious to me.
In my darkest night,
when the moon was covered
and I roamed through wreckage,
a nimbus-clouded voice
directed me:
“Live in the layers,
not on the litter.”
Though I lack the art
to decipher it,
no doubt the next chapter
in my book of transformations
is already written.
I am not done with my changes.
-Stanley Kunitz

He allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves. -*Gabriel García Márquez*

Questions for consideration:

1. Describe a “turning point” when you experienced a major change in your spiritual or inner life (or, as Márquez put it, a time when you gave birth to yourself). What prompted this change? How does it affect who you are today?
2. At this time of year at UUSM, much is made of spiritual transitions in the lives of our youth: Coming of Age, Bridging Ceremony for seniors, etc. But much of the territory we travel through in adulthood is unmarked. What significant passages might be ahead for you for which there are no established rites or rituals? How will you recognize them?
3. Where in your current life are you feeling stuck or in need of turning toward something new? What could help you embrace a life-giving transformation?
4. How would you like your religious community to celebrate spiritual milestones in your life?

Sharing 60 minutes

Reflecting On Our Time Together

Closing Words

You are in the story of the world.
You are the world coming to know itself.
May you trust that all you will ever say or do
Belongs in the story of the world.
-*Ean Huntington Behr*