

Welcome
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles
September 2017

Welcome and Explanations 5 minutes

Chalice Lighting

Come into the circle of love and justice.

Come into the community of mercy, holiness, and health.

Come and you shall know peace. Adapted from Israel Zangwill

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

Please share any burdens you bring with you today. This is not a check-in, it 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 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

Today is the day we begin to learn to look through the eyes of others; to find out and experience what the world is like for them. It is also the day we grow bigger than our differences and offer to everyone regardless of historical rights and wrongs, a friendly welcome, an outstretched hand. — unattributed

We don't get to know people when they come to us; we must go to them to find out what they are like —Goethe

I think my early friends had incredible stamina. I had built such a high wall around my heart that they had to chip away at it to connect with me. I greatly appreciate their attempts to connect, but now the people in my life no longer have to make this effort. I receive the connection I desire because I *focus on connecting* with people. When I see someone in pain, I make myself available to them. When I see someone in the store whom I know, I go out of my way to greet them. I express appreciation to people when they have contributed to my life, and I let them know when I wish things had happened differently. I am present, loving, and available for a connection, not because I think other people want it (although I believe they do), but because *I want it*. I want to live in a world where people care for one another, so I actively create that world. If you want to get to know someone, let her know you. If you want someone to connect with you, connect with her. Take the first step and you will change your life. — Mary Mackenzie

Most people come to religious communities like this one searching for something more than they have found in life so far. That search is for something of value and depth, something worthy of a commitment, something ultimate and compelling that goes beyond everyday life and the self-interest that drives it. There is a glimmering of what we seek in the awareness of our mortality, or in the enjoyment of music or beauty, or in the contemplative quality of some of our tasks, but it's only a glimmering, not a definition or a discipline or a path to follow. For that, we turn to a community like this one. Our work is to help each other find definition or a discipline, and a path to follow in the search for a meaningful spiritual life. — Judith E. Meyer

I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do. — Helen Keller

A smile is the universal welcome. — Max Eastman

Questions for consideration:

1. How did you find your welcome into our UU church? How do you welcome newcomers into our UU circle of friendship?

2. When were you able to “look through the eyes of others” and welcome this new knowledge, relationship to the world, or the very person more fully into your life? When were you not able to do this?
3. We are welcoming our settled minister, Greg, this month, in what ways will you welcome him and extend your friendship?
4. What does a good welcome feel like to you? When have you experienced a good welcome? When have you not experienced a good welcome and what would you have preferred instead?
5. What is your universal welcome? Is it a smile?

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

We bid you welcome, who come with weary spirit seeking rest.

Who come with troubles that are too much with you, who come hurt and afraid.

We bid you welcome, who come with hope in your heart.

Who come with anticipation in your step. Who come proud and joyous.

We bid you welcome, who are sellers of a new faith.

Who come to probe and explore. Who come to learn.

We bid you welcome, who enter the hall as a homecoming.

Who have found here room for your spirit. Who find in this people a family.

Whoever you are, whatever you are, Wherever you are in your journey,

We bid you welcome. - Richard S. Gilbert