

Sanctuary

UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles October 2018

Chalice Lighting

You who are broken-hearted, who woke today with the winds of despair whistling through your mind, come in.

You who are brave but wounded, limping through life and hurting with every step, come in.

You who are fearful, who live with shadows hovering over your shoulders, come in.

This place is sanctuary, and it is for you. You who are filled with happiness, whose abundance overflows, come in.

You who walk through your world with lightness and grace, who awoke this morning with strength and hope, you who have everything to give, come in.

This place is your calling, a riverbank to channel the sweet waters of your life, the place where you are called by the world's need.

Here we offer in love. Here we receive in gratitude. Here we make a circle from the great gifts of breath, attention and purpose. Come in. –*Kathleen Mctigue*

Sharing Silence (3 minutes)

Move a bit until you have found a comfortable seat, and then bring your attention to your breath. 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 ^[]_[SEP]
- 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

Word Roots

Sanctuary comes from the Latin *sanctus* meaning “holy”, a place set aside for holy worship. In modern times it also refers to “place of refuge or protection” as in a bird sanctuary. The English word “holy” is from Old English *hālig*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German *heilig*, or whole. So sanctuary implies a sense of wholeness, integration.

Sanctuary can be found in a community of people who come together and share openly and honestly with one another. It is found in being with people who share your values and celebrate your joys and successes and hold you close in your failures and sorrows. Sanctuary is found in the people that you want to share your ice-cream with. -*From the DRE October 2018 UUSM Newsletter*

When I was a kid, “sanctuary” meant only one thing. It was the big room with the stained-glass windows and hard wooden benches where my family worshipped every Sunday. Church attendance was not optional for my sisters and me, so that sanctuary was where I learned to pray — pray that the service would end, and God would release me back into the wild. I also learned that not all prayers are answered, no matter how ardent. Today, after 77 years of life in a world that’s both astonishingly beautiful and horrifically cruel, “sanctuary” is as vital as breathing to me. Sometimes I find it in churches, monasteries, and other sites designated as sacred. But more often I find it in places sacred to my soul: in the natural world, in the company of a trustworthy friend, in solitary or shared silence, in the ambience of a good poem or good music. Sanctuary is wherever I find safe space to regain my bearings, reclaim my soul, heal my wounds, and return to the world as a wounded healer. It’s not merely about finding shelter from the storm: it’s about spiritual survival. Today, seeking sanctuary is no more optional for me than church attendance was as a child. - [Parker Palmer](#)

Questions for consideration:

1. Who has most shaped your understanding of sanctuary? Which of their “lessons” is most relevant to you today?
2. Who is sanctuary for you? Have you told them lately how great of a gift that is?
3. Have you ever found sanctuary for yourself in the midst of offering it to others? Might that again be the path back to sanctuary for you today?
4. Some say sanctuary is not a place but “the love and community between us.” How that been true for you?
5. When has someone saved you with the sanctuary of just sitting with you in silence rather than offering you advice or trying to fix things? Is someone in your life needing that same gift?

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 are all longing to go home to some place we have never been – a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.”

May the time we shared together be another step on our journey home. -Starhawk

Extinguishing the Chalice - We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.” *-Elizabeth Selle Jones*

Some options for going deeper:

Option A: Share Your Umbrella

There’s a beautiful UU children’s story called “The Umbrella Sanctuary.” Its message is for kids and adults alike. In it, the umbrella represents the many ways others offer us sanctuary from the storms of life as well as the many ways we can pass on that shelter to others. The story also gently reminds us that we overlook opportunities to offer shelter and sanctuary every day. If our attention is woke, we notice that all around us people are “wet with rain.”

So this month, you are invited to use the story to wake up your attention and seek out opportunities to offer people “your umbrella.” Use it as a reminder and meditative token of all times someone has noticed you in need and how your gratitude for that calls you to keep an eye out for those often subtle (and not-so-subtle) signs that someone else needs the gift of human shelter.

Here’s the link to the story: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/umbrella-sanctuary>

Option B: Sanctuaries of Silence

There is a special relationship between silence and sanctuary. Places and moments of restorative silence are as essential to us as breathing. Some even say it takes silence for us to find the breath of our souls. But in our loud and hurried world, spaces of silence are not easy to come by. They’ve been pushed to the far corners of our experience and in some case they’ve been eliminated and must be created again from scratch.

You are invited to seek out (or create) as many “sanctuaries of silence” and stillness as you can find. Think of it as a spiritual treasure hunt. Where are the hidden refuges of silence near your work? How might you create pockets of silence in the midst of your daily routine? What secret spaces of silence do your friends know about? Hunt down as many as you can.

Here’s a bit of inspiration for this exercise: **Sanctuaries of Silence**

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000005811102/sanctuaries-of-silence.html>

<https://emergencemagazine.org/story/sanctuaries-of-silence/>

Option C: End Your Day with Sanctuary

Even if we don’t refer to them as such, many of us have “morning rituals of sanctuary.” We meditate, take the dog for a long walk, swim or read a devotional. It’s all about getting the day off on the right foot. But psychologists tell us that ending the day with the experience of sanctuary can be even more important. So this month, find a practice to “end you day with sanctuary.” Here’s a great article with a bunch of ideas and explanations why it’s so key to spiritual centeredness:

https://www.bakadesuyo.com/2016/02/evening-ritual/?utm_source=pocket&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pockethits