

**Gratitude**  
UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Heart to Heart Circles  
November 3, 2015

**Welcome and Orientation**

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 drink from wells we did not dig.  
We have been warmed by fires we did not build.  
We light this chalice in thanksgiving  
for those who passed their light to us.  
-- *Robert Schaibly*

**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**

**Covenant**

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

What if there were a universe in which a world was born out of a smallish star, and into that world (at some point) flew red-winged blackbirds, and into it swam sperm whales, and into it came crocuses, and wind to lift the tiniest hairs on naked arms in spring when you run out to the mailbox, and into it at some point came onions, out of soil, and came Mount Everest, and also the coyote we've been seeing in the woods about a mile from here, just after sunrise in these mornings when the moon is full? (The very scent of him makes his brother, our dog, insane with fear and joy and ancient inbred memory.) Into that world came animals and elements and plants, and imagination, the mind, and the mind's eye. If such a universe existed and you noticed it, what would you do? What song would come out of your mouth, what prayer, what praises, what sacred offering, what whirling dance, what religion, and what reverential gesture would you make to greet that world, every single day that you were in it? - *Victoria Safford*

This being human is a guest house.  
Every moment a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

- *Rumi*

## Questions for consideration:

1. What are you most thankful for in your life right now?
2. Can you remember a time when you felt gratitude and took the opportunity to express it? A time when you did not express it? What gets in the way of experiencing or expressing gratitude?
3. What changes when you look through the "lens of gratitude" at times that have been difficult, sad, or discouraging in your life? Share a story about a time when you have been able to find people and things you are grateful for even in the midst of pain or trouble.
4. A gratitude practice can become routine and superficial. For some the suggestion that we "count our blessings" feels like it denies our real feelings about life's challenges. In contrast, when has gratitude "run deep" for you? What makes the spiritual practice of gratitude deep for you? What changes in you when you practice gratitude?

**Sharing** 60 minutes

## Reflecting On Our Time Together

### Closing Words

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice. --*Meister Eckhart*