

STORY

UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Heart to Heart Circles
November 2016

Welcome and Explanations

Chalice Lighting

We gather together in this space to honor and understand our lives. We bring our pasts and would share them, our dreams and would express them. We use words, song, silence, and gesture. Words cannot define our lives, but they enable us to reach out to each other, to tell and to listen, that we may be renewed, connected, unburdened. Apprehend with wonder the lives of those around you, for "from wonder into wonder existence opens."

Quote from Lao Tzu

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

This 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 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.

Housekeeping

End of Year Evaluation

Readings

Story - Definition: *a narrative, either true or fictitious, in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader; a narration of the events in the life of a person; a report or account of a matter.*

Synonyms: *tale; account; chronicle; narrative; fable; myth; autobiography.*

“Some people are remedied by thunderstorms, some by music, some by the voice of a person they love. Story has the same kind of influence. It flows where it is needed, and applies itself there—like an antibiotic that finds the source of the infection... The story helps to make that part of the psyche clear and strong again.

—*Clarissa Pinkola Estes, “A Life Made by Hand”*

There are no true stories; we are making up every one of them. - *Pema Chodron*

There are only true stories. We are discovering the truth in them. - *Christina Baldwin*

Our brains seem wired to try to seek out a narrative. It is how we make sense of the world.
from “Tell Me a Story” by Richard Hamilton

Questions for Consideration - Sharing 60 minutes

1. How do you use story? When you tell stories, what is most often the purpose? To connect? To entertain? To heal? To conceal? To remember? To pass on? To teach? To gain power? To say thanks? Were you surprised by your answer?
2. What story did you walk away from? All of us think about that other life — that other story that we turned down for the one we have now. Whether you regret your past choice or not, that road not taken doesn't ever really go away. It continues to be part of our story. Does that old road want you to return to it and give it another look?
3. Describe your personal religious journey/story in six words! (feel free to use a few more than six words).
4. Are there parts of your “old” story you need to reclaim or notice, before moving on? Many of our elders told us, “You don't know where you are going unless you know where you come from.” When was the last time you made some room for remembering your roots?

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

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

~ *Maya Angelou*