

## UU Community Church of Santa Monica Heart to Heart Circles December 2018

Mystery: The practice of embracing life with humility and awe

### **Welcome and Explanations 5 minutes Chalice Lighting**

Look how big the sky is, the deep distances between stars. Little speck, that's you; laughable speck, that's me. How could we contain The Truth, all that overwhelming light? Our truth is just a pinprick in mystery's velvet curtain.

Janet Hutchinson

### **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**

The roots of mystery point beyond the idea of a secret, hidden truth to an experience that renders us speechless. It comes from the Latin root *muo* - literally translated as "shut the mouth" or "to be rendered silent or dumbfounded" and is also the root for our English word "mute.

The practice of mysticism has two essential elements that correspond to two meanings of the Greek word *mystikos*: to "shut one's senses" and to "enter the mysteries." The rhythm in all mysticism springs from the fact that these two meanings are related. To be more fully open to the mysteries requires the purification or shutting down of one's senses -- pulling the plug on the television, going out into the woods, or calling a halt to marathon reading. The mystic shuts down the senses not because they are evil, but because they are such blessings that they deserve a periodic rest and cleaning to be renewed and restored.

*What if life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived? Professor Emil Homerin, University of Rochester*

*Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away. Philip K. Dick*

*Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God. Henri-Frederic Ariel*

*When I look at the rainbow I find myself the center of its arch. But so are you; and so is the one who sees it a mile from both of us. Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### **Questions for consideration:**

1. What was the first mystery to capture your imagination? How does that still shape you today?
2. Who has taught you the most about “living with and loving the mystery”?
3. What’s the most unprovable thing you place your faith in?
4. What mysterious experience still nags at your disbelief?
5. Do sunsets and sunrises whisper to you?
6. Have you ever heard silence speak?

### **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**

Sometimes, when a bird cries out,  
Or the wind sweeps through a tree,  
Or a dog howls in a far-off farm, I hold  
still and listen a long time. My soul turns and goes back to the place  
Where, a thousand forgotten years ago,  
The bird and the blowing wind  
Were like me, were my brothers and sisters. My soul turns into a tree...  
Herman .

### **Going Deeper**

#### **Option A: Return to an Ordinary Moment of Deep Meaning**

We’ve all experienced it: the mystery of an ordinary moment that suddenly unfolds and offers deep meaning. The everyday becomes luminous. This exercise invites you to remember some of those luminous moments and revisit the gift they gave. To do this, simply make some time to watch and meditate on the following video:

**The Moment:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD_I)

As you watch, think of moments you've experienced when life suddenly and mysteriously lit up and reminded you of the marvel and preciousness of being alive. And think about how that lit you up - move you from a feeling of "the same old, same old" to a feeling of dancing with the sacred. Go one from there to imagine images from your own life that you'd include if you were making your own video. Then keep watch during the following hours and days to see if this meditation changes the way you perceive or dance with your "ordinary" days.

### **Option B: Connect with Mystery on a Clear Night**

Since the beginning of our existence, star-gazing has been a primary way we humans contemplate mystery. For scientist and mystic alike, it is a central way we sort out our mysterious place in the universe and the mystery of who we are. As we connect with the universe we connect more deeply with ourselves.

To do this, make room on a clear night to listen to the following podcast while you gaze at the open sky:

**Space - RadioLab:** <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91520-space>

The podcast tells the stories of numerous people's efforts to connect with and make meaning of the mystery that lies beyond. As you listen, treat each story as an invitation to see something new in the vastness overhead. Simply allow this visual and auditory meditation to soak over you.

Here's some additional inspiration:

- Stargazing In Yosemite National Park: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuhNNmzHP-c>
- The Soul of the Night by Chet Raymo:  
[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B009D16QVE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B009D16QVE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)
- A New View of the Moon: <https://vimeo.com/259818647>