

Building Beloved Community

September 2017

Chalice Lighting

Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives. ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Check-in

Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We will listen to each other without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.

Quotes

Don't underestimate the power of your vision to change the world. Whether that world is your office, your community, an industry or a global movement, you need to have a core belief that what you contribute can fundamentally change the paradigm or way of thinking about problems.

~ Leroy Hood, American Scientist

In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it. ~ Marianne Williamson, American Author

Readings

The Beloved Community is a term that was first coined in the early days of the 20th century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation. However, it was Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term and invested it with a deeper meaning, which has captured the imagination of people of goodwill all over the world.

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

Dr. King's Beloved Community was not devoid of interpersonal, group or international conflict. Instead he recognized that conflict was an inevitable part of human experience. And all conflicts in The Beloved Community should end with reconciliation of adversaries cooperating together in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.

~adapted from thekingcenter.org

In the white community, the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination - and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past - are real and must be addressed. ~ Barack Obama

Spiritual Exercises

1. Follow some of the suggestions in this poem as a way to build beloved community.

Talk to people you don't know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness.

Stay together. -- Margaret Wheatley

2. Just as creating space for open exchange of thoughts and ideas is an important component of building beloved community, so is the way we manage conflict. Whether a misunderstanding or difference of opinion, being in community means that we are committed to being in healthy relationship with each other. These potentially “messy” situations can be both a challenge and an opportunity.

Identify a problem(s) you have found in our community.

Reframe the problem(s) as a statement of possibility.

Beloved community requires qualitative and quantitative changes – transformation of both the structure and the self. If our relationships are not healthy, what can we do to resolve our differences?

Sitting In Silence

Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.

Questions for Contemplation

1. USG’s Mission Statement is *Building Beloved Community with Compassion, Service and Empowerment*. What does that mean to you?
2. What could we do to make USG more of a Beloved Community?
3. Can you recall a time of broken personal connection with USG? What was helpful in working through it? What more could have been done?
4. Is there a difference between being part of a community like USG that is working toward being a beloved community and the other communities you are a part of?

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts and/or experiences. Create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, be sure to connect with what is true for you.

Reflection

This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or relate additional thoughts that have occurred to you as others shared.

Song *When Our Heart is in a Holy Place, 1008, Singing the Journey*

Chorus: When our heart is in a holy place, when our heart is in a holy place,
We are blessed with love and amazing grace, when our heart is in a holy place.

When we trust the wisdom in each of us, every color, every creed and kind,
And we see our faces in each other’s eyes, then our heart is in a holy place.

Chorus

When we tell our story from deep inside and we listen with a loving mind,
And we hear our voices in each other’s words, then our heart is in a holy place.

Chorus

When we share the silence of sacred space and the God of our heart stirs within,
And we feel the power of each other’s faith, then our heart is in a holy place.

Chorus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5PF1sT2iSU>

Extinguishing the Chalice

Building beloved community offers us the opportunity to know and care for one another as human beings and to build the trust needed to successfully leap into the unknown together - to dare, to imagine, to disagree, to risk. From there, great change is possible.

~ movetoendviolence.org