

USG SGM ~ Transformation ~ April, 2017

Chalice Lighting

In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

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 for Inspiration/Readings

When tears come, I breathe deeply and rest. I know I am swimming in a hallowed stream where many have gone before. I am not alone, crazy, or having a nervous breakdown... My heart is at work, my soul is awake.

~ Mary Margaret Funk *Thoughts Matter: The Practice of a Spiritual Life*

Sorrow prepares you for joy. It violently sweeps everything out of your house, so that new joy can find space to enter. It shakes the yellow leaves from the bough of your heart, so that fresh, green leaves can grow in their place. It pulls up the rotten roots, so that new roots hidden beneath have room to grow. Whatever sorrow shakes from your heart, far better things will take their place. ~ Rumi

...self-transformation is the most difficult and dangerous challenge to the imagination, and it is the most rewarding. Meeting it is only possible for the person whose mind is open to contradictions and well-practiced in free conjecture.

~ Robert Grudin

Understand this if nothing else: spiritual freedom and oneness with the Tao are not randomly bestowed gifts, but the rewards of conscious self-transformation and self-evolution. ~ Laozi

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise 1

Patricia Sun, the noted mystic and psychologist, says that when we are held by fear or anger or pain, and we allow some part of us to smile we can think of this experience as a "shift point." This month, as you go through your day, pay attention, watch for feelings of anger, fear or annoyance and say to yourself, "This is a shift point" and see if you can react differently to it.

Exercise 2

Read "How It Works" taken from the AA Big Book. Alcoholics Anonymous began in 1935 with two men sharing an experience with those who were suffering from addiction; they offered AA as a tool to transform lives.

You can find it here:

http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-10_howitworks.pdf

(Consider substituting "Love" or "The Spirit of Life" for "God" as you reflect upon this writing.)

Note: there are several Agnostic versions of AA's twelve steps. One such example from AA Agnostics of the San Francisco Bay Area can be found here:

<http://www.aaagnostics.org/agnostic12steps.html>

Exercise 3

Talk to somebody who has had a transformative experience about what it was like or write out an interview with your younger self to explore how you have transformed.

Questions:

- Have you ever experienced transformation? What led to that change? How did it affect you?
- Did you notice any "shift points" this month? Were you able to use them to make a transformation large or small?
- Why do you think the AA approach works for many people? Are there things in the AA approach that people who are not alcoholic can use to help make their own transformations?
- How might our UU spiritual practices have a transformative effect?

Sitting in Silence

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

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the topic.

Reflection

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

Singing

Gathered Here, Singing the Living Tradition #389

Gathered here in the mystery of the hour,
Gathered here in one strong body.
Gathered here in the struggle and the power,
Spirit draw near.

Extinguishing the Chalice

Bring everything up to the surface. Accept your humanity, your animality. Whatsoever is there, accept it without any condemnation. Acceptance is transformation, because through acceptance awareness becomes possible.
~ Osho (Indian Mystic)