

WHOLENESS
USG Small Group Ministry – May 2017

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*

Check-in

Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We listen without asking questions or offering advice so people can safely share what's in their hearts.

Thoughts for Contemplation

“How can I be substantial if I do not cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also If I am to be whole”

— C.G. Jung

“A beam or pillar can be used to batter down a city wall, but it is no good for stopping up a little hole - this refers to a difference in function. Thoroughbreds like Qiji and Hualiu could gallop a thousand miles in one day, but when it came to catching rats they were no match for the wildcat or the weasel - this refers to a difference in skill. The horned owl catches fleas at night and can spot the tip of a hair, but when daylight comes, no matter how wide it opens its eyes, it cannot see a mound or a hill - this refers to a difference in nature. Now do you say, that you are going to make Right your master and do away with Wrong, or make Order your master and do away with Disorder? If you do, then you have not understood the principle of heaven and earth or the nature of the ten thousand things. This is like saying that you are going to make Heaven your master and do away with Earth, or make Yin your master and do away with Yang. Obviously it is impossible.”

— Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*

“There is no work-life balance. We have one life. What's most important is that you be awake for it.”

— Janice Marturano

“Tell them about how you're never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside.”

— Audre Lorde

“I want to learn how to hold the paradoxical poles of my identity together, to embrace the profoundly opposite truths that my sense of self is deeply dependent on others dancing with me and that I still have a sense of self when no one wants to dance.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*

Spiritual Exercises

1. Quaker author, educator and activist Parker Palmer’s book [A Hidden Wholeness](#) addresses “our yearning to live undivided lives – lives that are congruent with our inner truth – in a world filled with the forces of fragmentation.” (Amazon.com) What does a divided life look like? “Palmer finds evidence of this malaise when people refuse to invest themselves in their work, when they remain in spirit-stifling relationships, when they harbor a secret desire for personal gain at the expense of others, when they

hide their beliefs, or when they conceal their true identity for fear of being criticized or attacked. These people have lost touch with their souls and have disappeared into roles.” (Book review by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat.)

Think about your various roles, and jot some notes about your roles and some ways that you behave in each. Are there any areas in which you may be living a divided life? You may wish to discuss this in your group.

2. It seems to be a cultural norm for people to ask “what do you do?” when first meeting someone. Try reframing this, and ask a question that may get more at “who are you?” rather than defining them by their job or lack of job. What kind of response did you receive? What did that do for your conversation and connection?

Questions

- Parker Palmer and others say that in order to be whole, you must embrace all of yourself, including your “dark side.” What do you consider your “dark side?” Do you embrace it?
- Are there parts of yourself or your life that are not in sync or are hidden? If so, why is that?
- Palmer believes that human beings need both solitude and community to do the inner work necessary to thrive. Do you find that community serves this function for you? If so, how does it happen? Are there ways you could use community to help you better integrate your being?

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 while we listen in silence.

Reflection and Discussion

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

Song *Find a Stillness, 352 Singing the Living Tradition*

Find a stillness, hold a stillness, let the stillness carry me
Find the silence, hold the silence, let the silence carry me
In the spirit, by the spirit, with the spirit giving power,
I will find true harmony

Seek the essence, hold the essence, let the essence carry me
Let me flower, help me flower, watch me flower, carry me
In the spirit, by the spirit, with the spirit giving power
I will find true harmony.

Closing reading/Extinguishing the Chalice

“It was when I stopped searching for home within others and lifted the foundations of home within myself I found there were no roots more intimate than those between a mind and body that have decided to be whole.”

— Rupi Kaur