

Deepening Connections

September 2016

Chalice Lighting

"I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship." ~ Brene Brown

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.*

Thoughts to Ponder

"Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours."

~ Vera Nazarian (*The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration*)

"When we get too caught up in the busyness of the world, we lose connection with one another – and ourselves." ~ Jack Kornfield

"Everybody laughs the same in every language because laughter is a universal connection."

~ Yakov Smirnoff, Ukrainian born American comedian and actor

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." ~ John Muir

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them." ~ Mother Teresa

"Assumptions are the termites of relationships." ~ Henry Winkler

Reading

"I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention; and especially if it's given from the heart. When people are talking, there's no need to do anything but receive them. Just take them in. Listen to what they're saying. Care about it. Most times caring about it is even more important than understanding it. Most of us don't value ourselves or our love enough to know this. It has taken me a long time to believe in the power of simply saying 'I'm so sorry,' when someone is in pain. And meaning it.

... We connect through listening. When we interrupt what someone is saying to let them know that we understand, we move the focus of attention to ourselves. When we listen, they know we care.

... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well intentioned words."

~ Rachel Naomi Remen

Spiritual Exercises

- 1) Listen...Deeply. Connect with everyone you encounter for one week. Just slow down and make that connection the priority of every interaction. How did this work? Did you find this easy or difficult to do? How did it make you feel?

- 2) Is there someone in your life with whom you would like to connect more deeply? A partner, a child, an acquaintance with whom you'd like to develop a stronger friendship? Seek that person out this month and schedule some time for just the two of you to connect. Ask questions, find commonalities and build on them.
- 3) Reveal something about yourself: Choose someone you trust. Tell them something that you don't share with many people. It may be something that you find difficult to do or a so-called "weakness" that you have. You could ask for their feedback on a challenge you're having or tell them something you are uncomfortable talking about. If it feels safe, you could try this exercise during the Small Group meeting.

Questions for Contemplation

- ~ How do you develop a connection with another person?
- ~ What helps you stay connected?
- ~ What lessens the connection for you?
- ~ When the connection is lessened, what do you do to help reconnect with that person?
- ~ If connection with others is a driving force that compels us to participate in communities such as USG, how do we build and maintain that connection with others who may be very different than us?
- ~ How do you maintain your sense of self while deepening connections with others?

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 *"Come Sing a Song with Me"#346, Singing the Living Tradition*

Come, sing a song with me (3x)
That I might know your mind.

(Chorus)
And I'll bring you hope
When hope is hard to find
And I'll bring a song of love
And a rose in the wintertime.

Come, dream a dream with me (3x)
That I might know your mind.
(Chorus)

Come, walk in rain with me (3x)
That I might know your mind.
(Chorus)

Extinguishing the Chalice

"It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." ~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.