

USG SGM, March 2018

Generosity

Chalice Lighting

How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment. We can start now, start slowly, changing the world. How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make a contribution toward introducing justice straightaway. And you can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness! - Anne Frank

Check-in

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

Quotes for Inspiration

1. Generosity brings happiness at every stage of its expression. We experience joy in forming the intention to be generous. We experience joy in the actual act of giving something. And we experience joy in remembering the fact that we have given. - Gautama Buddha
2. I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back. - Maya Angelou
3. The ground's generosity takes in our compost and grows beauty! Try to be more like the ground. – Rumi
4. Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. - Simone Weil

Reading

The book, *The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose*, by Christian Smith and Hillary Davidson is an evidence based study which reveals that the more you give the better off you are. Excerpts from the book:

“Rather than leaving generous people on the short end of an unequal bargain, practices of generosity are actually likely instead to provide generous givers with essential goods in life—happiness, health, and purpose—which money and time themselves simply cannot buy. That is an empirical fact well worth knowing.”

“... Giving money, volunteering, being relationally generous, being a generous neighbor and friend, and personally valuing the importance of being a generous person are all significantly, positively correlated with greater personal happiness, physical health, a stronger sense of purpose in life, avoidance of symptoms of depression, and a greater interest in personal growth.”

Spiritual Exercises

1. Do you feel that you could be more generous with the resources you have such as time, money, efforts, wisdom, affection, attention, etc.? Try being more generous than usual with your resources this month. Do you feel you have gained by sharing more with the world?

2. In *Buddhism's Perfection of Giving*, Barbara O'Brien says that, "In Japan, when monks carry out traditional alms begging, they wear huge straw hats that partly obscure their faces. The hats also prevent them from seeing the faces of those giving them alms. No giver, no receiver; this is pure giving."

Have you ever had the opportunity to give anonymously to unknown recipient(s)? How did you benefit from that?

Questions

1. How do you practice generosity? What challenges have you faced being generous or as a result of your generosity?

2. Are you so generous that you overcommit or feel depleted? Do you need to say "No" sometimes so that your generosity is sustainable in the long term?

Sitting in Silence

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

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, try not to think about what you will share.

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 *From You I Receive, #402, Singing the Living Tradition*

From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, and from this we live. (sing twice)

Extinguishing the Chalice

... You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving."

The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture.

They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish ...

- Khalil Gibran