

## USG SGM ~ Blessing ~ July, 2021

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



**Chalice Lighting** A blessing is not something that one person gives another. A blessing is a moment of meeting, a certain kind of relationship in which both people involved remember and acknowledge their true nature and worth and strengthen what is whole in one another. By making a place for wholeness within our relationships, we offer others the opportunity to be whole without shame and become a place of refuge from everything in them and around them that is not genuine. We enable people to remember who they are. *Rachel Naomi Remen, My Grandfather's Blessings*

**Check-in** *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. 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.*

### **Intro: What Does It Mean To Be A People of Blessing?**

A Soul Matters facilitator once shared, "I guess after plan A fails, I need to remember there's still a whole alphabet out there." It's not just our friend who needs help remembering that there's a whole alphabet out there; it's all of us. We all get stuck in wanting things a certain way. We all, at times, focus so intently on the few things going wrong that we completely miss the dozens of things going right. Tunnel vision too often takes over our days.

For Unitarian Universalists, this is the central tragedy of the human condition. We respect those who frame the human problem as sin or twisted wills, but it's nearsightedness that our religion is most worried about. Which is also why blessings are so central to our faith. They are, for us, a way of widening our view.

### **Spiritual Exercises**

- 1. Bless Yourself:** In its simplest form, a blessing is a wish that some form of strength or goodness comes into the life of another. As Rabbi Lawrence Kushner puts it, "Offering a blessing is like a coach whispering to an athlete before a competition, "You can do it!" More than encouragement, the words of blessing literally bring forth and make real an otherwise unrealizable force."

How that force is brought forth can be debated, but at least it's clear that focusing one's attention on something makes it more likely it will manifest in our lives. So why not do some manifesting of your own? Why not bless yourself? Start by asking, What do I wish for in my life right now? More courage? Patience? Awareness of beauty? Whatever it is, make it your blessing for yourself this month. Think of it as saying to yourself, "May \_\_\_\_\_ be mine as I journey through this month."

- 2. Write A Blessing:** Former priest and poet John O'Donohue was a master at writing blessings for everyday challenges and transitions. In his beloved book, [To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings](#), he wrote blessings for everything from retirement and divorce to buying a new home or finding a new job. He also wrote blessings for people, from new parents and business leaders to farmers and nurses. He saw blessings as companions for our journeys. A way of making one's path more clear and reminding one that others have walked these ways before.

So what journey are you in the midst of right now? Or what journey is someone you care about in the midst of? This exercise invites you to offer yourself or another person a companion for that journey by trying your hand at writing a blessing. O'Donohue's book is easily available at libraries or online. We encourage you to get it and use it to support you on your way. Come to your group ready to share the blessing you wrote, if you are comfortable. Also share the story of why you picked the topic you did and if you gave it to another person to bless them on their way.

### **Quotes for Inspiration/Readings**

It's hardest to love the ordinary things, she said, but you get lots of opportunities to practice. *Brian Andreas*

**Thank you, faithful things!**

*Mark Strand*

Thank you, faithful things!  
Thank you, world!  
To know that the city is still there,  
that the woods are still there,  
and the houses, and the hum of traffic and  
the slow cows grazing in the field;

that the earth continues to turn  
and time hasn't stopped,  
that we come back whole  
to suck the sweet marrow of day,  
thank you, bright morning,  
thank you, thank you!

There is a reality in blessing... It doesn't enhance sacredness, but it acknowledges it.  
*Marilynne Robinson, from Gilead*

To bless is to put a bit of yourself into something. *Macrina Wiederkehr and Joyce Rupp*

**Questions** *Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of Blessings means for you and your daily living.*

1. Is it time to embrace yourself as a blessing once again? We all forget sometimes. We all let others' definitions of worth determine how we feel about our own. The work of seeing ourselves as a blessing is ongoing. How do you need to re-claim or re-name your blessing to the world?
2. What is your very favorite thing to do? When was the last time you did it? Why again aren't you doing it all the time? Or at least much more often?
3. Has age helped or hurt? At what age were you best at noticing the blessings around you? Have you gotten better as time has gone on? Or worse? What would improve your gaze?
4. Have you thanked all of your "fathers" for their blessings? Many of us have more than one father figure in our lives. When was the last time you told them thanks for their gifts? And let them know you carry them and their influence with you still?
5. Sometimes there *aren't* blessings hidden in our pain. Sometimes it's *not* you overlooking the blessings; they simply *aren't* there. Often we just need space to acknowledge the emptiness, rather than have people try to minimize it, make it go away or convince us we should find a silver lining. Is that the blessing you really need? The blessing of space to do nothing but mourn the loss and feel the pain? What will it take for you to get it? Consider holding space while viewing: **How Race Settled the Suburbs - Not All Blessed Equally** *Adam Ruins Everything*  
<https://www.facebook.com/truTVAdamRuinsEverything/videos/710617992474278/>

**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, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

**Reflection and Gratitude** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

**Singing (or watching a video of someone else singing)**

**Grateful: A Love Song to the World** *Empty Hands Music* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

**Extinguishing the Chalice** To give someone a blessing is the most significant affirmation we can offer. It is more than a word of praise or appreciation; it is more than pointing out someone's talents or good deeds; it is more than putting someone in the light. To give a blessing is to affirm, to say "yes" to a person's Belovedness. *Henri J. M. Nouwen*