

USG SGM ~ Joy ~ August, 2021

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting

And God saw everything that God had made, and behold, it was very good. - The Book of Genesis

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.*

Introduction

In my own worst seasons I've come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium outside my bedroom window. And then another: my daughter in a yellow dress. And another: the perfect outline of a full, dark sphere behind the crescent moon. Until I learned to be in love with my life again. Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have taught myself joy, over and over again. - Barbara Kingsolver

With "one, long, holy stare at a single glorious thing," we are suddenly re-connected. Balance is restored. We see the world not simply as brutish, broken and dangerous, but also as gentle, surprising and woven through with a Love that will not let us go. This simple act of sacred staring is not about distraction. It's about achieving a wider view. It's about stepping back and seeing it all as a gift. When we feel joy, we don't simply feel delight in one tiny piece of the world; we feel welcomed back in – connected once again to the whole.

Spiritual Exercises

The poet Mary Oliver writes:

"Every day, I see or hear something
that more or less kills me with delight,
that leaves me like a needle
in the haystack of light.
It was what I was born for –
to look, to listen,
to lose myself inside this soft world –to
instruct myself over and over in joy and
acclamation."

Anne Sexton also lifts up this pervasive
and simply joy in her poem "[Welcome
Morning](#)":

"There is joy in all: in the hair I brush
each morning, in the Cannon towel, newly
washed, that I rub my body with each
morning, in the chapel of eggs I cook each
morning, in the outcry from the kettle that
heats my coffee each morning, in the
spoon and the chair that cry "hello there,
Anne" each morning, in the godhead of
the table that I set my silver, plate, cup
upon each morning. All this is God right
here in my pea-green house each
morning..."

That last line invites us to look around at our own simple and divine surroundings. It asks us to pay attention to and let in the holy joy right in front of us.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

The existence of broccoli does not, in any way, affect the taste of chocolate. — John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*

Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened. — Dr. Seuss

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy. — Thich Nhat Hanh

Remember: Joy is not a sin; sacrifice is not a virtue. - Paulo Coelho

Joy is not an emotion. It is a choice. - Greg Foster

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. - Rabindranath Tagore

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 Joy means for you and your daily living.

1. When was the last time you *choose* joy?
2. Could a little more courage on your part invite joy back in?
3. Who helps you see the joy in front of you? And when was the last time you hung out with them?
4. Is joy waiting for you to risk trusting and loving again?
5. Is there a child in your life calling you to joy? Are you listening?
6. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

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)

Happy by Pentatonix (Pharrell Cover) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ4diEohODE>

Extinguishing the Chalice

They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for. — Tom Bodett