



USG SGM ~ Widening the Circle February ~ 2022

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

Chalice Lighting

It's the community's job to figure out how we can stretch into the so-called margins to broaden our understanding and the ability to be inclusive. Inclusivity is not "how do we make you a part of what we are?" but "how do we become more of what you are?" angel Kyodo Williams Sensei

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.*

Spiritual Exercise A How Can We Win?

This option invites you to meditate and reflect on a powerful, brilliant and unfiltered response by activist and author Kimberly Jones to the protests surrounding the killing of George Floyd. Whether it widens your understanding or helps articulate your own pain and anger, it's a perspective that has the potential to widen us all.

Center yourself before watching. Open your heart and mind to wherever Jones' words, courage, anger and honesty take you. We suggest you set aside at least 30 minutes to journal your thoughts after watching. We also encourage you to watch it again with a friend and discuss it together.

How Can We Win, Kimberly Jones https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sb9_qGOa9Go

Here's an interview between Kimberly Jones and Trevor Noah about the video. It's a perfect way to dig deeper: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1k9APedIUy>

Spiritual Exercise B Look for the Helpers

When tragedy or trauma sweeps over our lives, our worlds become small. It becomes hard to extend our hearts and heads beyond the narrow feelings of fear, wounds and worry. As a way of widening that circle to include hope and connection, many have turned to the advice and words of Fred Roger's: "Look for the helpers."

To honor this, you're invited to take a week and look for the helpers. Think of it as a day-long meditation or noticing practice. Just raise your awareness for 7 days and pay attention to those who are helping. All forms of "helping" count! You might notice a firefighter or maybe it's just someone who engages a homeless person with respect. A co-worker offering a kind word counts just as much as the activist working to bring about change.

To put this into practice, we suggest setting aside at least 10 minutes at the end of each day to write down the helper or helpers you noticed. Better yet, take some time to daily share the story of the helpers you noticed with your partner or a friend. Most of us will do this exercise by ourselves, but a powerful alternative is to find someone to join you in this "hunt." Hold each other accountable to doing it 5-7 days in a row and then make a coffee or lunch date to go over your list of helpers. Come to your group ready to share the most impactful moment and insight you experienced.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. -Lilla Watson

A classic Zen exercise is the ensō, the circle hand-drawn in a single fluid brushstroke. It is close to perfect, but never there. If perfection is what you want, you can produce it anytime by using a compass or a computer, but the ensō defies such mechanistic precision; indeed it is often incomplete, left slightly open as though in invitation to everything beyond it... A perfect circle is uninteresting, a closed system containing nothing, while an imperfect one vibrates with warmth. It invites us into the moment of its creation...It is open, human, fallible—an expression, that is, of soul. – Lesley Hazleton

Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another. - Desmond Tutu

We all get shit wrong. So the question is: Have you built the capacity to care more about others than you care about your own ego? Will you choose to protect someone else over your own ego? - Austin Channing Brown

You can widen your circle of influence by widening your circle of service. - Joseph Grenny

Open your hands if you want to be held. - Rumi

American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it. – James Baldwin

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 Widening the Circle means for you and your daily living.*

1. When were you “saved” by someone who widened a circle to let you in?
2. Who needs you to widen the circle for them?
3. How has your definition of racism widened or shifted since you were younger?
4. How has your answer to “Are you racist?” changed over the years?
5. What beloved aspect of “UU worship” might you have to let go of to make UU worship more inclusive?
6. Is your circle of friends keeping you small?

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

Gate A4, A poem on the wider circle of human community that is still possible. - Naomi Shihab Nye

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb-iGnA4pbo>

Extinguishing the Chalice *We have to change [and widen] our idea of what it means to be racist... When we understand racism as a system that we have been raised in and that its impact is inevitable, it's really not a question of good or bad. It's just, "I have it. I have been socialized into it." And so, "What am I going to do about it?" is really the question... if you change your understanding, but you don't do anything different, then you're colluding. - Robin DiAngelo*