

USG SGM ~ Belonging ~ September 2022

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



Chalice Lighting

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out. James Baldwin

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

We have this word, belong. We use it to mean, "being part of." But the old English prefix be- has the semantic consequence of intensifying as it goes. So belonging means something closer to "the deepening of longing." That's how you belong—not by finally arriving, but by having longing for arrival quickened, by being willing to long after life by living *Stephen Jenkinson*

Spiritual Exercises

1) **Thank You Everything!**

It's something [the sages](#) have implored us to do over and over again: welcome the difficult parts of our life back into belonging. Singer [Alanis Morissette](#) helped bring this work into popular culture with her well-known lyrics, "Thank you, terror. Thank you, disillusionment. Thank you, frailty. Thank you, consequence. Thank you, thank you, silence." In response, many have made their own thank-you-for-the-difficult things lists. For instance, [one list](#) goes like this: "Thank you, poverty. Thank you, simplicity. Thank you, lack of fame. Thank you, hard work. Thank you, homework. Thank you, lost games. Thank you, broken hearts. Thank you, tribulation. Thank you, patience. Thank you, experience."

So what might your thank you list look like? That's what this exercise invites you to figure out. Set aside the time this month to revisit the challenging, heart-breaking, loss-filled, unwanted, even painful things that have entered your life. And then take them out of exile and bring them back into belonging by listing them one by one, with a giant thank you in front of each. The transformative work of this exercise, of course, is figuring out why they deserve your thanks. So take your time.

2) **Land Acknowledgments & Belonging**

The website, Native Land Digital (<https://native-land.ca/>), enables you to learn about the indigenous history of the land you live on. This site and wider land acknowledgment efforts invite us to reorient our understanding of belonging. One of the core questions of the project is: Who belongs on a map of Indigenous territories? So dive into this work this month with these resources as your guides:

- Native Land Digital - <https://native-land.ca/>
- Article explaining the background on the Native Land Digital site and how to use it: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/decolonize/2018/04/16/this-app-can-tell-you-the-indigenous-history-of-the-land-you-live-on>
- Native Land Digital's "Why It Matters" section - <https://native-land.ca/about/why-it-matters/>

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our

strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. [Starhawk](#)

I was so shocked to learn that the opposite of belonging is fitting in. Because fitting in is assessing a group of people and changing who you are. But true belonging never asks us to change who we are. It demands we *be* who we are. [Brené Brown](#)

This we know: the earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely strands in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. [Inspired by the words of Chief Seattle](#)

The child does not yet know what belongs and what does not: therefore for her all things belong. The ear of the child is open to all music. Her eyes are open to all arts. Her mind is open to all tongues. Her being is open to all manners. In the child's country, there are no foreigners. *Kenneth L. Patton, This World, my Home*

I'm on my way to a job where I am the only black person in my office. I work with people who either don't know or don't care about Alton Sterling or Philando Castile. They are going to ask me "How are you this morning?" and the simple truth is that I can't be honest. I can't say that I'm scared and angry and that I want to take a mental health day. I can't say that I and people like me subconsciously fear for our lives on a daily basis. I can't say how I am this morning because it will make them uncomfortable and offended. The offensiveness of my pain is why we have to remind America over and over again that Black Lives Matter: because if you lack empathy for our tears it's likely that you lack respect for our lives. [Shane Paul Neil](#)

We belong to every part of our lives and every part of our lives belongs to us. Even the failures. The cruelty. The betrayals. The addictions. The cowardice. Until we embrace those scared and tender parts with the kindness and forgiveness we so generously give to others, we will never be whole. We will never be home. *Rev. Scott Tayler*

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 **Belonging** means for you and your daily living.*

- 1) When was the first time you thought to yourself, "Now I belong"?
- 2) How does the assurance of belonging most often enter your body? Through words? Touch? Silence? Song? Solitude? Nature? Creative expression? Prayer? Memory?
- 3) What does the phrase "Belonging to myself" mean to you?
- 4) Think of the family members and friends that have the deepest sense of belonging. What do they all have in common? Who reminds you of what real belonging is?

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 song video (Pick one from the packet if you'd like to include one in your session.)

Extinguishing the Chalice

The only true belonging is the courage to stand alone and belong to ourselves. [*Azriel ReShel*](#)