

USG SGM ~ Liberating Love ~ January 2024

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting

Love yourself. Then forget it. Then, love the world. *Mary Oliver*

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 Exercises

Your Current Love Story

Love takes many forms. How it shows up in our life this year is often quite different from last year. Sometimes it shifts and morphs even faster than that.

So what form is it currently taking in your life today? And what story/moment captures, not only the form it is taking, but the gift it is giving you? For your spiritual exercise this month, spend some time trying to identify this single moment that exemplifies how love is showing up for you. For inspiration, here are a few poems that capture such moments...

- Aimless Love, by Billy Collins
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=41392>
- Gate A-4, by Naomi Shihab Nye
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwDXJ50U22o&t=29s>
- The Whistler, by Mary Oliver
<https://allyourprettywords.tumblr.com/post/35611837944/the-whistler-mary-oliver>
- On Faith, by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer
<https://ahundredfallingveils.com/2023/10/22/on-faith/>

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

The Dalai Lama says that when we make a mistake, we need to ask, “Can I love this too?” Can I love all of me, even the peevish parts? Even the insecure bits, the anxious bits? Because I can love my niece even when she sticks her hand in my cup of coffee and gets mad and hollers at me for it. It’s easy. I don’t expect her to be perfect. Can I extend that understanding to myself? Can I love my anxiety too? My depression too? My desire to seem like I have my shit together even when I’m freaking out? Can I love all of me? [Rev. Kate Landis](#)

The longer I live, the more deeply I learn that love—whether we call it friendship or family or romance— is the work of mirroring and magnifying each other’s light. Gentle work. Steadfast work. Life-saving work in those moments when life and shame and sorrow occlude our own light from our view but there is still a clear-eyed loving person to beam it back. In our best moments, we are that person for another. *James Baldwin*

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. *Elie Wiesel*

Love is the drive towards unity of the separated. [*Paul Tillich*](#)

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love. [*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*](#)

I feel our nation's turning away from love... moving into a wilderness of spirit so intense we may never find our way home again. I write of love to bear witness both to the danger in this movement, and to call for a return to love. *bell hooks*

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 Liberating Love means for you and your daily living.*

1. How has love changed as you've gotten older? Is it softer? Quieter? Larger? Tougher? Sneakier? More central? More painful? More universal? More ordinary? More mysterious? More demanding?
2. Is there anything from your younger years that you now recognize as love, but didn't understand as such back then? How might that awareness offer you a gift with your present relationships?
3. Are you using your busyness to shield you from your heartbreak?
4. We know that self-love and self-care are essential. But *which part* of yourself **most** needs love and care right now? Your physical self, emotional self, intellectual self, relational self, spiritual self, sensory self, hidden self, pleasure-seeking self, fearful self, childhood self, hopeful self?
5. In what new way are you being called to use your personal/social/cultural/economic power in the service of love?

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)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvIPa28cvfA&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP73qhmLWsnmPD--DsrjHfH&index=5>

Extinguishing the Chalice When we take actions that are aligned with love and justice, we remember who and what we truly are: facets of the Holy Oneness. [*Lóre Stevens*](#)