

USG Racial Healing SGM ~ Welcome ~ September, 2023

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Session Plan

Intro: ...those of us who are white are realizing that to truly welcome diversity, we must shrink and de-center our voices. We long-timers are discovering that welcoming newcomers requires right-sizing our needs and putting our preferences second. The tree huggers have been telling us for years that we can't save the wider world without shrinking our wants. The spiritual masters remind us that feeling at home in the universe demands that we see ourselves as a tiny part of a greater whole, rather than believing that the whole world revolves around us. The brilliant confess that their secret is the smallness of humility and the willingness to admit when they are wrong. And isn't it downsizing and living simply that allows us to welcome in more experience, adventure and peace? Of course, there's also the work of downsizing our egos enough to admit mistakes. Without that how can we ever welcome in forgiveness and the work of repair? Rev. Scott Tayler

Chalice Lighting

If you go without belonging for long enough, if you've known the sting of betrayal, you can end up manufacturing an identity from your alienation. To protect yourself from the risk of exclusion, you begin initiating distance on your own by calling yourself 'loner' or 'independent.' But a life lived with trust only in the self is exhausting. [Cole Arthur Riley](#)

Check-in *Share recent experiences facing racism in ourselves or others.*

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other. Call it my Muslim eyes on the American project. "We made you different nations and tribes that you may come to know one another," says the Qur'an. [Eboo Patel](#)

America needs to reconcile with itself and do the work of apology: To say to indigenous, black, and brown people, we take full ownership for what we did. To say, we owe you everything. To say, we see how harm runs through generations. To say, we own this legacy and will not harm you again. To promise this non-repetition of harm would require nothing less than transitioning the nation as a whole. It would mean retiring the old narrative about who we are—a city on a hill—and embracing a new narrative of an America longing to be born, a nation whose promise lies in the future, a nation we can only realize by doing the labor: reckoning with the past, reconciling with ourselves, restructuring our institutions, and letting those who have been most harmed be the ones to lead us through the transition. [Valarie Kaur](#)

Questions

1. Who welcomed you in when you needed it most? How has that gift changed you? What would you say to the person if you had the chance?
2. What do you know now about welcoming in the present moment that you didn't know when you were younger?

3. What if, as some say, God is the force that disrupts our comfortable plans and notions? What if wholeness and holiness only leak into our lives when we welcome those moments of life being turned on its head?
4. What would you tell someone younger than yourself about welcoming in grief?
5. Have you ever welcomed in a moment so fully that you suddenly felt one with it?
6. What part of you do you wish your family of origin would have welcomed more enthusiastically?
7. Is welcoming in an awareness of death helpful?
8. Do you know what it's like to encounter a welcome that requires you to remove parts of yourself to belong?
9. Theologian Joan D. Chittister said, "Hospitality is simply love on the loose." Does that ring true for you?
10. Has welcoming change gotten easier or harder as you've grown older?
11. What part of yourself is hardest to welcome in and embrace with compassion: Your vulnerable self? Your flawed self? Your easily frightened self? Your angry self?
12. Has welcoming the forgiveness of others gotten easier or harder as you've gotten older?
13. We all have past friendships we wish we could have taken deeper, that were cut short because we moved or other life events took priority. If you could welcome one of those unfulfilled friendships back into your life, which one would it be? And why?
14. What is trying to get itself welcomed into your life right now?
15. What new ideas have you welcomed in since you've been a UU?
16. If you were asked to name 2 ways you could help make your church more welcoming, what would they be?

Three Deep Breaths

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 reflect briefly on 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.

Song

Rhiannon Giddens, Wayfaring Stranger <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1Z4PAZX9Bs>

Sweet Honey in the Rock, Would You Harbor Me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0XBxJjoXJ4&t=21s>

Johnnyswim, Home <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APoRFLtD8z4>

Extinguishing the Chalice

I was beginning to learn that home is the space within us and between us where we feel safe—and brave. It is not a physical space as much as it is a field of being. [Valarie Kaur](#)