

USG SGM ~ Gift of Renewal ~ June, 2024

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting A day when one has not pushed oneself to the limit seems a damaged, damaging day, a sinful day. Not so! The most valuable thing one can do for the psyche, occasionally, is to let it rest, wander, live in the changing light of a room. ~ [May Sarton](#)

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 are renewed by so many things: nature, each other, memory, music, play, solitude, silence, and - of course - our faith. Through small groups, calls to justice work, worship, caring for one another, covenant and accountability, our faith breathes new life into us.

Asking questions of ourselves allows us to explore our faith in renewing ways. Questions like *Are you sure it's your body that's tired, or could it be your soul?, Is it time to renew your responsibility to those who will come after you?, What if you saw your daily living and loving as an opportunity (even a calling) to renew others' faith in humanity?, and What renewing question do I want to take with me into the summer?*

Spiritual Exercises It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of thinking and into the space of doing, these exercises invite us to figure out not just what we have to say about life, but also what life has to say to us! Pick the exercise that speaks to you the most. Come to the group ready to share why you picked the exercise you did and what gift it gave you.

Option A: In his book *American Ramble: A Walk of Memory and Renewal*, the author Neil King Jr. writes about a spiritual exercise he loves to do:

"As the year began, I wrote a tally of my good fortunes, a practice I highly recommend. If you start small and build out, it can clarify the magnitude of your blessings. You start with elemental things, like: A heart that beats. Eyes that see. Blood that flows. Lungs that breathe unimpeded by gunk. A mental windshield not too splattered with bugs. Failing to note the absences will cut any proper list of good fortunes in half. The bones that aren't broken, the illnesses or hates you don't have, the aches you don't feel. Like many things that are unswervingly good—oxygen, say, and water—health is likewise transparent and easy to miss when you have it. Then you get to the meaty stuff. A wife you love. A house that isn't falling down."

With King's words as your guide, make some time to create your own Good Fortunes List!

Option B: Take a Few "Weird Walks" Instead of heading out with the goal of getting in steps or tapping into mindfulness, "weird walkers" go until they stumble on something weird. It's all about being renewed by playfulness and curiosity. So, this month turn your strolls into strange little scavenger hunts! (*Be sure to take your cell phone or camera to document and show the weird things you stumble upon.*) Here's a couple of links with a bit more guidance: [here](#) and [here](#). And here are a few weird walk examples: [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Practice not getting frustrated when your daughter takes 45 minutes to walk around the block. Learn something from her unabashed desire to take forever. Follow her lead instead of assuming she's slowing you down. ~ [Lisa Olivera](#)

Presence is far more intricate and rewarding an art than productivity. Ours is a culture that measures our worth as human beings by our efficiency, our earnings, our ability to perform this or that. The cult of productivity has its place, but worshiping at its altar daily robs us of the very capacity for joy and wonder that makes life worth living. ~ [Maria Popova](#)

There is no way to repress pleasure and expect liberation, satisfaction, or joy. ~ [adrienne maree brown](#)

If we will have the wisdom to survive,
to stand like slow growing trees
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it...
then a long time after we are dead

the lives our lives prepare will live here...
On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut
down
the old forest, an old forest will stand.
~ [Wendell Berry](#)

The world of play favors exuberance, license, abandon. In it, selves can be revised. ~ [Dianne Ackerman](#)

Black joy is not this toxic positivity where we force ourselves to ignore the realities of the world and avoid the problems in our life. It's a moment of reflection and happiness in which we are able to tell ourselves there is more to this life and world than just pain... Part of Black joy is a hope that things will soon get better and another part of it is a celebration of still being around, still being here. ~ [Miracle Jones](#)

Questions This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. They are not meant to be answered as much as to take you on a journey. Read through the questions 2-3 times until one question sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "shimmers."

1. Whose way of being in the world renews your faith in humanity?
2. How does your body tell you it is in need of renewal? What is it telling you now?
3. If one were to propose that you make room for a day in which you produce nothing, don't check a single thing off your to-do list, confront no problems and search for no solutions, what would your first reaction be?
4. How would your life be renewed if you put presence before productivity?
5. Have you ever been renewed by failure?
6. Have you ever been renewed by vulnerability?
7. Renewal often happens through becoming lighter. So, what might your inner wisdom be nudging you to shed, let go of, or give up this summer?

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.*

Music: Kacey Musgraves: Sway (Official Audio): [On YouTube](#) and Dominique Fils-Aime: Sun Rise (Ensouled Records): [On YouTube](#). These are two cuts from a playlist of playlist on YouTube on [The Gift of Renewal](#) for June 2024.

Extinguishing the Chalice

Every day is a renewal, every morning the daily miracle. This joy you feel is life. ~ Gertrude Stein