

USG SGM ~ Invitation ~ September 2024

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

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Chalice Lighting A real conversation always contains an invitation. You are inviting another person to reveal [themselves] to you, to tell you who they are or what they want. [David Whyte](#)

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.*

Introduction

*Do not try to save the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create a clearing
in the dense forest of your life
and wait there patiently,
until the song that is your life falls
into your own cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself to this world
so worthy of rescue.*

-Clearing, by Martha Postlewaite

Spiritual Exercise Option A: The Invitation that Isn't Easy for Us

When the monthly theme is invitation, inviting someone to come to church seems an obvious exercise. What may not be obvious is the additional invitation to share with your invitee how church makes a difference in your life. This is where all of us understandably struggle. Sharing why church matters to us can feel uncomfortably close to the pushy proselytizing we want nothing to do with. But sharing how your church has given you a gift is quite different than trying to convince someone that your religion is the only right way. It's one thing to tell a friend: "I'm worried about your soul and really want you to give your life to Jesus." It's quite another to tell them: "Hey, you mentioned that you're feeling a hunger for community lately and I found that at my church, so I was wondering if you want to come with me to check it out." One is about inviting; the other is about convincing.

Navigating your way through these complex and uncomfortable waters is what this exercise is all about. It's not just about inviting someone to church; it's about digging deeper into why that's not just something you naturally and always do. It's not just about fighting through the discomfort of telling someone why you love your church and why they may love it too; it's about figuring out why that discomfort is there in the first place. And it's not just about figuring all this out; it's about finally feeling joy as you make this invitation to your friend.

Option B: The Invitation of a Story

Sometimes the best invitations are those made by a story. Here's one about a hunter and the mythical "fox woman." As you listen to it, ask yourself as you listen, "How is this story trying to offer me a message of comfort, a message of challenge, or reconnection with an important memory?"

A more focused question to listen with might be: "What have I lost through my decisions to disinvite the difficult?" or "Where am I being invited to embrace and invite in the full experience of something - the parts that are easy and beautiful as well as the parts that 'stink'?"

Here's the story: The Hunter and the Fox Woman -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn2DB11yL5A>

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Change is not a threat to your life, but an invitation to live. *Adrienne Rich*

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. *James Baldwin*

Ah, Grief, I should not treat you
like a homeless dog
who comes to the back door
for a crust, for a meatless bone.
I should trust you. I should coax you
into the house and give you
your own corner...

[Denise Levertov](#)

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 Invitation means for you and your daily living.*

1. What is the most beautiful invitation you ever received?
2. What relationship invited you to grow up the most?
3. Have you grown more from what you've invited into your life or what you've disinvited from your life?
4. We all inspire and influence people with our way of being in the world. What is your way of being in the world inviting people to do or become?

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 Hymn #188, Come, Come, Whoever You Are

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhDCXX5OUUc>

Extinguishing the Chalice *If justice is what love looks like in public, then inclusion is what love looks like among groups. Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson*