

**Wisdom Circle – Resurrection
April, 2015**

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“Each night, when I go to sleep, I die. And the next morning, when I wake up, I am reborn.”
~ Mahatma Gandhi

“How do you plan a rebirth? I’m not sure you do. You just stand in the darkness until you can’t endure it any long, and then you move forward until you’re standing in the light.”
~ Questlove, Mo’ Meta Blues: The World According to Questlove

“After a cruel childhood, one must reinvent oneself. Then reimagine the world.”
~ Mary Oliver

“Every religious tradition is rooted in mysteries I don’t pretend to understand, including claims about what happens after we die. But this I know for sure: as long as we’re alive, choosing resurrection is always worth the risk.”
~Parker Palmer

“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.”
~Martin Luther

“You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep spring from coming.”
~Pablo Neruda

“If you’re wise like the seed, you won’t be afraid of the dark. You’ll know that’s the place where transformation takes place. And if you’re wise like the autumn leaf or like the bloom that’s faded, you won’t be afraid to fall when your time comes. You’ll know that’s the gateway to a new and different life.”
~Gary Kowalski, from “Unafraid of the Dark”

Spiritual Exercise

At least once this month, go outside to a place where new life is being created—a garden, a forest, a park. Take some time to simply observe the rebirth of life. Notice the leaves unfurling from their branches. Notice the new buds emerging. Observe the saplings and the baby succulents sprouting from the ground. Listen to the birds as they seek their mates. Look for butterflies newly emerged from the chrysalis. Smell the newness of life.

Recall the attention you paid to such things when you were a child...the curiosity and wonder of observing the strangeness and newness of growing life. Try to recreate in yourself that curiosity and attention.

Reading – *On Easter*, by Jennifer Channin

I struggle, theologically, with Easter. It is not because I don't believe in miracles. Like most stories from the Bible, I read this one metaphorically, rather than literally. I don't need to believe that Jesus was literally brought back to life from the dead to find meaning in a story about life emerging from death. I, too, want to believe that even during the darkest nights of the soul there is still the possibility for hope to emerge and light the way back out into the sun.

However, I struggle with the resurrection story because it feels too easy. Only 2 days to be renewed? Life has taught me that renewal takes time, it takes effort, and sometimes the journey back to a place of wholeness after one has experienced great suffering is a hard road to stay on.

I want to know what happened to Jesus during that day he was in the tomb—and I don't mean the story of him going down into Hell to save all the souls trapped down there. I mean, I want to know how Jesus healed, emotionally, from the trauma of being tortured by the government. I want to know how he was able to forgive the people who, out of spite, condemned him to death. I want to know how he learned to trust again after his friend betrayed him. I want to know how he came to believe that humanity is worth saving, even after he experienced the worst aspects of it.

Because, these kinds of miracles do happen every single day. People do emerge from years of despair ready to embrace life again. People do choose to forgive those who have done unspeakable harm to them. And while such examples of hope and healing tend to take longer than two days, they are miracles, nonetheless.

I found this story on the website of the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center, which says it's a story from the Warm Springs Tribe.

Long ago there was a Cocoon Man and a Cocoon Woman. They were very much in love and spent their days and nights together. One day, by some circumstance, the man died and the woman was overcome by sorrow at the loss of her mate. She wrapped her grief around her like a beautiful shawl and she began to walk. Cocoon Woman walked and walked. After a

year, she had walked around the world and returned to the place where she had begun. The creator looked down and took pity on her. "You have grieved long enough," he said gently. The Creator clapped his hands, and Cocoon Woman turned into a beautiful butterfly and flew away."

There is a lot, in this story, about the way one moves from brokenness to a place of healing and wholeness.

Another story that I read recently was about the region in Russia that was affected by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion in 1986—the worst nuclear accident in history. Because of the radiation, 300,000 people were forced to abandon the highly contaminated area around Chernobyl and for years the area was a desolate wasteland.

However, what is interesting to researchers today is that, after 25 years, the wildlife has returned to Chernobyl. Species that were rare, even before the explosion, have begun to thrive in an area that has become, unintentionally, the largest wildlife sanctuary in Europe—animals like lynx, otters, eagle owls, Przewalski's horses, bats, and brown bears.

When grace and healing comes, whether it is in the form of vibrant life returning to a poisoned land after 25 years, or whether it is the more mundane miracle of the springtime flowers and birds returning after 4 months of winter, we should celebrate. And that, to me, is what Easter is about. Celebrating the miracles that grace our lives and our world despite all odds, as well as the miracles that we can count on to happen year after year.

Questions for Reflection:

- Have you ever reinvented yourself or had to “start over” in your life?
- How has life sprung forth from death – metaphorically – in your experience?
- Have you ever experienced a miracle?

Wisdom Circle – Resurrection Session Plan

This session plan is a suggested guide, not a rigid set of rules. You may adjust this plan as you feel is appropriate in your group.

Gathering & Welcome (~5 min)

Chalice Lighting (~2 min)

May the light we now kindle
Inspire us to use our powers
To heal and not to harm,
To help and not to hinder
To bless and not to curse,
To serve you, Spirit of Freedom.
~ *Singing the Living Tradition* #453, Passover Haggadah

Check-In (20-30 minutes)

As you feel comfortable, take 2-3 minutes to share one thing that is lifting your spirits, and one thing that is weighing you down. This is a time for sharing, but not for discussion.

Business (10-20 minutes)

Use this time for any new business: Welcoming new members; Scheduling future meetings; Revisiting the Covenant; Answering questions about Wisdom Circle processes; Etc...

Discussion (60 minutes)

Introduce Topic. Take Turns Reading aloud the “Words of Wisdom.”

- Have you ever reinvented yourself or had to “start over” in your life?
- How has life sprung forth from death – metaphorically – in your experience?
- Have you ever experienced a miracle?

Silent Reflection (~2 minutes)

First Responses (Share in the order you feel moved)

Cross-Conversation (Ask questions that invite deeper reflection; Speak from personal experience, and use “I statements”; Avoid explaining or judging)

Final Thoughts (Share in the order you feel moved)

Gratitude (5-10 minutes)

Share 1-2 things that have been meaningful to you from this session.

Closing

Optional Song:

"I Know This Rose Will Open"

#396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

(youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkovEse3MUU>)

I know this rose will open.

I know my fear will burn away.

I know my soul will unfurl its wings.

I know this rose will open.

396 I Know This Rose Will Open

$\text{♩} = 112$

① I know this rose will o - pen. I

②

③

④ know my fear will burn a-way. I know my soul will un-

furl its wings. I know this rose will o - pen.

⊕ Words & music: Mary E. Grigolia, 1947- , © 1989 Mary E. Grigolia

GRIGOLIA
7.8.9.7.

The image shows a page from a songbook with musical notation and lyrics. The title is '396 I Know This Rose Will Open'. The music is in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 112. There are four numbered circles (1, 2, 3, 4) above the staff, likely indicating breath marks or phrasing. The lyrics are: 'I know this rose will o - pen. I know my fear will burn a-way. I know my soul will unfurl its wings. I know this rose will o - pen.' At the bottom right, it says 'GRIGOLIA 7.8.9.7.' and at the bottom left, '⊕ Words & music: Mary E. Grigolia, 1947- , © 1989 Mary E. Grigolia'.