

**Wisdom Circle – Freedom  
June, 2015**

**PREPARATION**

**Words of Wisdom**

*“Freedom is not something that anybody can be given. Freedom is something people take, and people are as free as they want to be.”*

~James Baldwin

*“Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.”*

~Susan B. Anthony

*“It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them.”*

~Mark Twain

*“The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good, in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.”*

~John Stuart Mill

*Freedom and justice cannot be parceled out in pieces to suit political convenience. I don't believe you can stand for freedom for one group of people and deny it to others.”*

~Coretta Scott King

*“None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”*

~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*“Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry is own weight, this is a frightening prospect.”*

~Eleanor Roosevelt

*“We don't want our chains made more bearable. We want our chains removed.”*

~Archbishop Desmond Tutu

## **Spiritual Exercise**

The paradox of freedom is that freedom is only meaningful within a system of constraints or boundaries. The freedom of expressing oneself through music is only possible through playing with the rules of harmony and rhythm. Buddhist monks seek the spiritual liberation through reciting chants and practicing repetitive tasks. Political freedom in a society does not usually mean anarchy...it means being able to participate fully in the structures that people have created for their own self-governance.

Take some time this month to cultivate an open and free mind by doing something that is structured – walk a labyrinth, color a drawing of a mandala, practice a musical instrument, cook an elaborate meal by following a recipe. Observe what happens to your mind as you settle into the practice of whatever you are doing.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- When in your life have you feel the most free?
- What responsibilities do you have because of your freedoms?
- What freedoms are you willing (or unwilling) to sacrifice?

### **Readings:**

“Reflection on the Fourth Principle,” by Rev. Paige Getty, in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*, ed. Ellen Brandenburg

As responsible religious seekers, we recognize that we are privileged to be free, to have resources to pursue life beyond mere survival, to continually search for truth and meaning, to exist beyond bonds of dogma and oppression, and to wrestle freely with truth and meaning as they evolve.

This privilege calls us not to be isolated and self-centered, believing that our single perspective trumps all others, but rather to be humble, to be open to the great mysteries of truth and meaning that life offers. And those mysteries may speak to us through our own intuition and experience—but also through tradition, community, conflict, nature, and relationships.

As a faith tradition, Unitarian Universalism makes sacred the right and responsibility to engage in this free and responsible quest as an act of religious devotion. Institutionally, we have left open the questions of what truth and meaning are, acknowledging that mindful people will, in every age, discover new insights.

Excerpt from *Our Chosen Faith*, by Rev. Forrest Church

Because of our tradition and self-image as a “faith of the free,” some people who come to our churches, calling themselves “free spirits,” are hell-bent on fighting the evil of an organized anything... Unitarian Universalists have come to trust and place great value on freedom and individualism. What we tend to forget is that they emphasized freedom in order to liberate themselves from bondage. Today our problem is not bondage, but bondlessness. Most of us are already free. We don’t need more freedom. We need the resolve to employ the freedom we have responsibly. We need to invest a little of our precious freedom and bond ourselves to others in redemptive community.

### **Wisdom Circle – Freedom 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)**

*Optional Song or Reading—if someone in the group feels comfortable doing so, they might sing the song once through and invite the rest of the group to join in singing the 2<sup>nd</sup> time:*

“Oh, I Woke Up This Morning”

*Oh, I woke up this morning with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom.  
Woke up this morning with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom.  
Woke up this morning with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom,  
Hallelu, Hallelu, Halleluia.*

*I was walking and talking with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom...*

*I was singing and praying with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom...*

*Oh, I woke up this morning with my mind (and it was) stayed on freedom...*

(Singing the Living Tradition #153) (See page 5, below.)

(Hear on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TszixdKfOsE>)

##### **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 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."*

- When in your life have you feel the most free?
- What responsibilities do you have because of your freedoms?
- What freedoms are you willing (or unwilling) to sacrifice?

*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 Chalice Extinguishing Reading:

By Laurelyn Bellamy

*If, here, you have found freedom,  
Take it with you into the world.*

*If you have found comfort,  
Go and share it with others.*

*If you have dreamed dreams,  
Help one another,  
That they may come true!*

*If you have known love,  
Give some back to a bruised and hurting world.*

*Go in peace.*

# 153 Oh, I Woke Up This Morning

*♩* - 63

1. Oh, I woke up this morn - ing with my mind  
 2. I was walk - ing and talk - ing with my mind *and it w*  
 3. I was sing - ing and pray - ing with my mind  
 4. Oh, I woke up this morn - ing with my mind

stayed on free - dom. Woke up this morn - ing with my  
 stayed, stayed on free - dom. Walk - ing and talk - ing with my  
 stayed on free - dom. Sing - ing and pray - ing with my  
 stayed on free - dom. Woke up this morn - ing with my

mind  
 mind *and it was stayed,*  
 mind  
 mind

stayed on free - dom.  
 stayed on free - dom.  
 stayed on free - dom.  
 stayed on free - dom.

Woke up this morn - ing with my mind stayed on  
 Walk - ing and talk - ing with my mind *and it was stayed,* stayed on  
 Sing - ing and pray - ing with my mind stayed on  
 Woke up this morn - ing with my mind stayed on

free - dom,  
 free - dom, Hal - le - lu, Hal - le - lu, Hal - le - lu - ia.  
 free - dom, Hal - le - lu, Hal - le - lu,  
 free - dom,

Words & music: African American spiritual, c. 1750-1875

WATKINS HARPER  
 Irregular

FREEDOM