

**Wisdom Circle – Generosity
November, 2015**

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“Your vocation is where your greatest passion meets the world’s greatest need.”

~ Frederick Boechner

“True generosity is an offering; given freely and out of pure love. No strings attached. No expectations. Time and love are the most valuable possession you can share.”

~ Suze Orman

“To practice five things under all circumstances constitutes perfect virtue; these five are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness”.

~ Confucius

“It is so illogical that people who have tremendous excess would be thinking they don’t have enough, that as I encountered this time and again, I began to question the source of their concerns. Nothing in their actual circumstances justified it. I began to wonder if this anxiety over having enough was based on a set of assumptions, rather than circumstances...”

~ Lynne Twist, The Soul of Money

“Gentleness, self-sacrifice and generosity are the exclusive possession of no one race or religion.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

“Too many have dispensed with generosity in order to practice charity.”

~ Albert Camus

“Fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose.”

~ Hada Bejar

“We make a living by what we get, we make a live by what we give.”

~ Winston Churchill

“Until whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.”

~LUKE 12:48

“It’s so easy to dismiss the opportunity to do something good because you’re hoping to do something great.”

~Mark Bezos

Reading:

Read and reflect on this excerpt called “Reservoir or Canal” by Howard Thurman, from Meditations of the Heart

Are you a reservoir or are you a canal or a swamp? The distinction is literal. The function of a canal is to channel water; it is a device by which water may move from one place to another in an orderly and direct manner. It holds water in a temporary sense only; it holds it in transit from one point to another. The function of the reservoir is to contain, to hold water. It is a large receptacle designed for the purpose, whether it is merely an excavation in the earth or some vessel especially designed. It is a place in which water is stored in order that it may be available when needed. In it provisions are made for outflow and inflow.

A swamp differs from either. A swamp has an inlet but no outlet. Water flows into it but there is no provision made for water to flow out. The result? The water rots and many living things die. Often there is a strange and deathlike odor that pervades the atmosphere. The water is alive but apt to be rotten. There is life in a swamp but it is stale.

The dominant trend of a man’s life may take on the characteristics of a canal, reservoir or swamp. The important accent is on the dominant trend. There are some lives that seem ever to be channels, canals through which things flow. They are connecting links between other people, movements, purposes. They make the network by which all kinds of communications are possible. They seem to be adept at relating needs to sources of help, friendlessness to friendliness. Of course, the peddler of gossip is also a canal. If you are a canal, what kind of things do you connect?

Or are you a reservoir? Are you a resource which may be drawn upon in times of others’ needs and your own as well? Have you developed a method for keeping your inlet and your outlet in good working order so that the cup which you give is never empty? As a reservoir, you are a trustee of all the gifts God has shared with you. You know they are not your own.

Are you a swamp? Are you always reaching for more and more, hoarding whatever comes your way as your special belongings? If so, do you wonder why you are friendless, why the things you touch seem ever to decay? A swamp is a place where living things often sicken and die. The water in a swamp has no outlet. Canal, reservoir or swamp—WHICH?

Questions for Reflection:

- In what ways do you feel abundance in your life? When has your ‘cup runneth over’?
- Are there times when you feel your impulse for generosity is cut-off or restrained? What circumstances cause you to feel un-generous?
- When was a time when you gave something whole-heartedly? How did that feel?

Spiritual Exercise:

Perhaps you already give regularly of your money, time, or skills, to organizations and individuals who help heal the world. Perhaps you mean to give more, but haven't gotten around to making a plan for it. Or perhaps it feels like you never have enough – enough money, enough time, enough energy – to be able to give something away. Our patterns of giving are often rooted in cultural, familial, and spiritual messages we have received, and making a plan for giving can be both spiritually healing for ourselves, as well as healing for the world. This month take some time to begin making a plan for giving. You might include a partner or family member in this conversation. Answer the following questions

- In what ways do I feel abundance in my life? How does “my cup runneth over?”
- What do I have available to give? Perhaps it is a financial amount. Perhaps it is an amount of time. Or a skill. Be realistic but creative in thinking about your well of resources.
- What is your passion? What stories make you light up? What issues get you most fired up?
- What is one way in which your well of resources could align with your passion?

Wisdom Circle – Letting Go 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 Reading

#452 in Singing the Living Tradition

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate the glories and the mysteries of this great gift.

~Marjorie Montgomery

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.”

- In what ways do you feel abundance in your life? When has your ‘cup runneth over’?
- Are there times when you feel your impulse for generosity is cut-off or restrained? What circumstances cause you to feel un-generous?
- When was a time when you gave something whole-heartedly? How did that feel?

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 Song:

“From you I Receive, to You I Give”

#402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

(Sing several times through)

(Listen to here: <http://www.oshonews.com/2013/11/from-you-i-receive-narayani/>)

From you I receive

To you I give

Together we share

And from this we live.

402 From You I Receive

The musical score is written on two staves in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 120. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: 'From you I re-ceive, to you I give, to'. The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics: 'geth-er we share, and from this we live.' Chord symbols are placed above the notes: F, Bb, C, F on the first staff; Dm, Gm, C7, F on the second staff.

From you I re-ceive, to you I give, to
geth-er we share, and from this we live.

Words & music: Joseph and Nathan Segal, © 1969 Nathan Segal

RABBI
Irregular