

Wisdom Circle – Prophetic Engagement
February 2018



Chalice Lighting

Let us begin our time together by reciting one of Unitarian Universalism sources:

“We affirm and promote the Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love”

Check-In

As you feel comfortable, take 2-3 minutes to share whatever you need to share with this group in order to be fully present. This is a time for sharing, but not for discussion.

Business (approx. 10 min)

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

Spiritual Exercise

Share any insight, learning, lesson gained from doing or resisting this month's spiritual exercise. (Focus on your heart/emotions/spirit/personal experience). Because this is a section for personal sharing, attentive listening and no-crosstalk is recommended.

Choose one of the two following options:

- a) **Appreciate a prophet!** – Prophetic voices challenge us but they also inspire us, guide us, and keep us on track. This month, you're invited to find a way to express your appreciation. Is there someone who's prophetic engagement work inspires you?

Here are some ideas of things you can do to show your appreciation: make a donation in their name, send a letter of appreciation. Volunteer alongside them for a weekend. Pick up your sign once again and stand by their side. Or come up with your own creative way!

- b) **Learn more about prophetic engagement at Church and prophetic organizations in San Diego**– Take some time one Sunday this month to visit the social justice table on the patio. Ask questions and learn more about the important work that our congregation and members engage in.

How was this experience for you? What insight did you gain?

Discussion of Reading and Words of Wisdom

Take turns reading the words of wisdom. Share about the one(s) that caught your attention. Discuss the reading and the questions below. Crosstalk can enrich your conversation here (avoid judging or wanting to “fix” things, and speak from your own experience, avoiding generalizations, and identifying who you mean when/if you use the word “we”).

Words of Wisdom

“For even the very wise cannot see all ends.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien

“In every crowd are certain persons who seem just like the rest, yet they bear amazing messages.”

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

“The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it. Only through the prophetism of all believers can we together foresee doom and mend our common ways.”

~**James Luther Adams, UU theologian**

“To be a prophet, Knox emphasizes, requires living in and looking at the present, at what is really going on around you.”

— **Anne Carson**

“Avoid the bad habit of domesticating the prophet of your choice, turning him into a cheerleader for your way of thinking and way of life. Remember that all the great prophets were courageous and outrageous folks who railed against the powers-that-be, challenged self-satisfied posit, threatened the prevailing social order, and would find you falling short in some significant ways.”

~**Parker Palmer**

“The ones we call the prophets were the ones jailed and driven into the desert.”

~**Noam Chomsky**

“The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenements halls and whispered in the sounds of silence.”

~**Paul Simon**

“The poor are always prophetic. As true prophets always point out, they reveal God's design. That is why we should take time to listen to them. And that means staying near them, because they speak quietly and infrequently; they are afraid to speak out, they lack confidence in themselves because they have been broken and oppressed. But if we listen to them, they will bring us back to the essential.”

— **Jean Vanier**

“I want to be prophetic and take stands and stand with those on the margins, and I want to laugh as much as I can.”

— **Greg Boyle**

“We are prophetic interrogators. Why are so many people hungry? Why are so many people and families in our shelters? Why do we have one of six of our children poor, and one of three of these are children of color? 'Why?' is the prophetic question.”

— **Jim Wallis**

“The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”

~**Walter Brueggemann**

Reading

Scholar Theologian Walter Brueggemann describes prophets as those who imagined their contemporary world differently. He says “ I just think they are moved the way every good poet is moved to have to describe the world differently according to the gifts of their insight. And, of course, in their own time and every time since, the people that control the power structure do not know what to make of them, so they characteristically try to silence them. What power people always discover is that you cannot finally silence poets. They just keep coming at you in threatening and transformative ways”

So contrary to popular belief, the term prophetic does not mean the ability to predict the future, but the ways in which some individuals courageously and boldly challenge the status quo and make us pay attention to issues most people, otherwise, wouldn't notice.

It is not hard to see the ways in which our world is in need of profound transformation, but still the people who are willing to bring attention to those issues are few. Our church community is always engaging in conversation about how to engage in transformative change in the wider world, that's what we mean by acting on our values to help heal the world.

Currently, our board has been exploring and learning more about what it means to be a sanctuary church. Many churches in the United States, including some UU churches, have become sanctuary churches for people who have been threatened with deportation. Some of the more traditional denominations have found in their dogma and theology the justification they needed to become sanctuary churches. If the question is “Should we become a sanctuary church?” How do you think our mission, principles, and sources would answer that question?

But being a sanctuary church goes beyond the ability to host someone as they challenge an order for removal. I don't know about you, but in me, the word sanctuary evokes a safe place, a place of reverence, and celebration; a place of connection, a holy ground.

Sanctuary and immigration reform is one of the ways we're being invited to engage in prophetic work, but there are many more. The voices of people with disabilities challenging our use of ableist language and lack of accessibility, the voices of Trans and gender non-conforming individuals have invited us to expand our understanding of gender and how we talk about it, the voices of movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo that have made us see the painful reality of racism and sexual abuse.

How do we move forward after hearing those voices? How do we deal with our own discomfort? How do we amplify those voices so that they'll reach more and more? How do we create a sanctuary for them within and beyond our walls? How can we, from our

own individual places and aware of our own limitations, engage in the prophetic work that's taking place in the world?

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. Who do you consider a prophetic voice of our times?
2. What's the prophetic work that you feel strong about?
3. In which ways can an individual engage in prophetic work?
4. What prevents people from engaging in this work?

Silence: You may take a minute of silence to reflect on the group's session.

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

Extinguishing of the Chalice:

The road that lies ahead of us is a long one, and the pace of progress will sometimes feel glacially slow.

Never forget that glaciers over time can carve out grand canyons and great lakes.

Moving tectonic plates can rise up mountains over millennia, or they can explode awe-inspiring volcanoes in milliseconds.

Our commitment to love and justice can do the same.

-Israel Buffardi