

**Wisdom Circle – Beginnings**  
**January 2018**



**Chalice Lighting**

“But now that so much is changing, isn't it time for us to change?  
Couldn't we try to gradually develop and slowly take upon ourselves,  
little by little, our part in the great task of love?  
But what if we despised our successes?  
What if we started from the very outset to learn the task of love?  
What if we went ahead and became beginners, now that much is changing?”

— **Rainer Maria Rilke**

**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) **A new spiritual practice** – New year, how about a new spiritual practice? This is an invitation to try something new, to start something. It doesn't matter if you don't stick to it, or if you think you'll be successful or not. Just give yourself the opportunity to begin something new and meaningful. Here are some ideas:
- 1) Meditate for 5 minutes. Before you go to bed or right after you wake up, or even maybe during your lunch hour or break. Focus your attention entirely on your breath and stay with it for about 5 minutes.
  - 2) Write a morning and/or bedtime prayer. Think about the things that matter to you, the things you want to bring your attention to and write a prayer of intention or of gratitude. Keep it with you and read it first thing in the morning or right before you go to bed.
  - 3) Do your own version of Lectio Divina. Choose a text that's meaningful to you and read it over a few times, then choose a line of the text that speaks to you and stay with it for a few minutes. Do this every day, with the same text or a different one.
  - 4) Hike or walk in silence.
- b) **Start something new!** - Is there something you have thought about doing but haven't? Give yourself the opportunity to give it a try: writing, learning to play an instrument, learning a new language or skill, starting a new routine, getting involved with a group or organization, etc.

*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**

“Isn't it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?”

— **L.M. Montgomery**

“Afoot and lighthearted I take to the open road, healthy, free, the world before me.”

— **Walt Whitman**

“Beginnings are sudden, but also insidious. They creep up on you sideways, they keep to the shadows, they lurk unrecognized. Then, later, they spring.”

— **Margaret Atwood**

“...That's why we have the Museum, Matty, to remind us of how we came, and why: to start fresh, and begin a new place from what we had learned and carried from the old.”

— **Lois Lowry**

“But you can't start. Only a baby can start. You and me - why, we're all that's been. The anger of a moment, the thousand pictures, that's us. This land, this red land, is us; and the flood years and the dust years and the drought years are us. We can't start again.”

— **John Steinbeck**

“Revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning.”

— **Hannah Arendt**

“In Hinduism, Shiva is a deity who represents transformation. Through destruction and restoration, Shiva reminds us that endings are beginnings.”

— **Karen Salmansohn**

## **Reading**

It's the end of 2017, my Facebook feed is, little, by little, being filled with posts of hopeful messages for the new year. A friend sent me an animation of a clock of 2017 with things like stress, darkness, chaos being erased and replaced for one of 2018 with words like bright, health, successful, exciting, etc. You get the idea.

It is also no mystery that our theme for January is beginnings because of the beginning of the new year.

I find interesting the optimism people express around the new year. And I don't mean that people shouldn't enjoy themselves and be happy and hopeful. On the contrary, I think those are needed attitudes in our world today. But what I find interesting is the emphasis people consciously and unconsciously place on the new year as being some sort of reset button. There are an overwhelming number of messages people get to start anew and to ditch everything the old year brought because it's already in the past.

Beginnings are complex, including the beginning of the new year. All beginnings have a great amount of excitement and possibility. Yes, there is room for exploration, for trying new things, for experimenting, and there is always hope that the new beginning will be fruitful. But beginnings can also be anxiety-producing and even frightening when we feel like we are moving into the unknown, and feel we have little control over our surroundings.

Opposite energies are part of beginnings, personality traits will play a big role on which energy is uplifted in the process. So, for some the new year represents a blank slate full of possibilities, for others it won't be but a continuation of the same old struggles.

Like the ancient two-faced Roman god Janus, I think it is important that we look, both, at the past and toward the future during this transition time. That we hold the complexity of beginning a new year while, inevitably, bringing with us some of the old issues, personal and societal, we have not been able to resolve. But that, in not ignoring the past but allowing it to shed light into our future, we find ways to celebrate a new year, a new beginning, a new journey around the sun.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion**

1. How do you welcome the new year?
2. When was the last time you began something new?
3. How have you experienced beginnings in the past?
4. What insight have you gained from beginning a project, a task, a job, a relationship?

**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:**

“May Light always surround you;  
Hope kindle and rebound you.  
May your hurts turn to healing;  
Your heart embrace feeling.  
May wounds become wisdom;  
Every kindness a prism.  
May laughter infect you;  
Your passion resurrect you.  
May goodness inspire  
your deepest desires.  
Through all that you reach for,  
May your arms never tire.”  
— **D. Simone**