

Wisdom Circle – Just Gratitude
November 2018



Chalice Lighting by Lindsay Bates

Let us open our minds to the challenge of reason,
open our hearts to the healing of love,
open our lives to the calling of conscience,
open our souls to the comfort of joy.

Astonished by the miracle of life,
grateful for the gift of fellowship,
confident in the power of living faith,
we are here gathered.

Silence- Take three minutes to settle into this space, to fully arrive. You may also use this time to reflect about the chalice lighting words above.

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/reciting 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 following spiritual exercises:

- a) **A day of mindfulness-** Choose one day of the month to pay attention to all the things your body allows you to do every day. From the moment you wake up until you go to bed, pay attention. Ask yourself what it would be like if your body couldn't do the things it does for you, if it couldn't allow you to do some of the things you do every day. What did you notice?
- b) **Express your gratitude-** Express your gratitude for the ordinary. Take the time to say "thanks" to the people you appreciate, for the things that make your life easier, for the beauty you find, for all the things. Pay attention and say thanks for everything.
- c) **Body scan meditation-** Find a body scan meditation to do at home. You can try a 20, 30 or 45 minute body scan from this website:

<https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>

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

“Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.” — **Thich Nhat Hanh**

“And when you crush an apple with your teeth, say to it in your heart:

Your seeds shall live in my body,
And the buds of your tomorrow shall blossom in my heart,
And your fragrance shall be my breath,
And together we shall rejoice through all the seasons.”

— **Khalil Gibran**

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” —**Albert Einstein**

“It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.” -**Deitrich Bonheiffer**

"Silent gratitude isn't very much to anyone." -**Gertrude Stein**

"This a wonderful day. I've never seen this one before." -**Maya Angelou**

"If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred." -**Walt Whitman**

Stories of Who We Are

The theme of the month is “Just Gratitude”. What I like about this theme is the ambiguity of it: it can be read as “simple” gratitude or as just, as in justice, gratitude. I’ll focus on the latter.

I think that at the intersection of justice and gratitude is perhaps the gratitude we owe our bodies, for they have allowed us to experience life in the unique way each of us has and how that has shaped our understanding of the world. As rational and emotional beings, we often forget that our being human starts in our bodies: in our ability to sense, to explore life around us, to think, and feel, and imagine. Think about where you are in life now, and how your body has allowed you to arrive at this moment. Our bodies are real and complex miracles, from the things we notice to the ones we don’t.

Yes, our bodies can also be challenging sometimes but they allow us to do so much. I know that for some people their relationship with their bodies is complicated and even painful at times. For many of them, developing an amicable relationship with their bodies takes years. So, I want to acknowledge that but I don’t want you to focus on the

challenges your body poses for you. Instead, I hope you can think about the wonderful things it has allowed you to do and experience. I feel grateful for our children and youth who go through our Our Whole Lives program. The program has sessions that focus on appreciating our human bodies as they are and that decenters the idea of normalcy and of beauty standards.

As I write this, I am reminded of a poem the Rev. Theresa Ines Soto wrote. Here's a fragment of it "There is no other you. There is no other house for your beating heart, your blazing mind....Your body may be challenging but in every way that it keeps you alive, it is the altar of my gratitude."

Discussion Questions:

Are there other areas you can think of that we often deprive of our gratitude?
From your perspective, is there such a thing as a just gratitude?
What in your life now needs your gratitude?

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

Extinguishing of the Chalice:

By Sarah York

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight. Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are, and, renewed by their grace, move boldly into the unknown.