

Wisdom Circle –Stories of Who We Are
October 2018



Chalice Lighting, by Jennifer Kitchen

Come sit by our fire and let us share stories. Let me hear your tales of far off lands, wanderer, and I will tell you of my travels. Share your experience of the holy with me, worshipper, and I will tell you of that which I find divine. Come and stay, lover of leaving, for ours is no caravan of despair, but of hope. We would hear your stories of grief and sorrow as readily as those of joy and laughter, for there is a time and a place and a hearing for all the stories of this world. Stories are the breath and word of the spirit of life, that power that we name love. Come, for our fire is warm and we have seats for all. Come, again and yet again, come speak to me of what fills your heart, what engages your mind, what resides in your soul.

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) **Listen to someone's story**- Take the time to listen to someone's story without interrupting and without sharing your own. Listen attentively.
- b) **Journal**- Is there something in your life you're struggling with? What is the story you're telling yourself about it? Write about it and then spend some time with what you write. Is there something new you're noticing?
- c) **Learn**- Learn something about the history of our church by reading about it or interviewing a long-term member. Or research an event in Unitarian Universalism that shaped our movement.

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

“Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger.” — **Ben Okri**

“I just knew there were stories I wanted to tell.” — **Octavia E. Butler**

“Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.” — **Hannah Arendt**

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." --**Maya Angelou**

"Scientists say we are made of atoms but a little bird told me we are made of stories." — **Eduardo Galeano.**

“History may well be a series of stories we tell about the past, but the stories are not just any stories. They're not chosen by chance. By and large, the stories are about famous men and celebrated events. We throw in a couple of exceptional women every now and then, not out of any need to recognize female eminence, but out of embarrassment.” — **Thomas King,**

“The truth about stories is that that's all we are.” — **Thomas King**

Stories of Who We Are

What are the stories we would tell about who we are as Unitarian Universalists? What are the stories we would tell about who we are as members of the First UU Church of San Diego? What about the ones we would tell about who we are as either participants in the Hillcrest or South Bay campus?

How would all those stories be different depending on how we understand the word “we” in the theme of the month?

I also wonder about the stories we choose not to tell, and what do they say about who we are. For example, do we choose only the stories we can easily connect and relate to and not the ones that are a bit more complicated or painful.

Unitarian Universalists Celebrations of Life have a particular component often referred to as a “soul sketch”. A soul sketch is a brief retelling of the life of the person who passed away. This component is often written with the help of the surviving loved ones. In other words, is a retelling of their life from a recollection of memories of those who were closer to them.

So far, after every celebration of life I have attended, I’ve walked away thinking “Wow, I wish I’d known more that person”. This leads me to think that every person I meet has a wonderful story of who they are. But it has also made me aware that the stories people choose to share are a gift and not something we can expect just because. The life stories people share with us are a gift. And I also wonder what it’d be like for anyone to hear the stories people share about them. What would it be like to hear or recreate our “soul sketches” in life?

We all carry numerous stories with us, stories of who we are as individuals. But, what about the collective stories we are part of? If we think about the bigger picture of our community, what are the stories we can tell about ourselves? What are the stories we would choose to not share? And what do each of those say about who we are? Imagine that we were asked to write a soul sketch of our community, what would we say? What would you say?

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:

Grateful for the stories and wisdom shared here today

Let us extinguish this chalice but carry the

Warmth of this community with us

Until we meet again.