

**Wisdom Circle – Creativity
May 2016**

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“Despite everything, no one can dictate who you are to other people.”

~ Prince

“I find only freedom in the realms of eccentricity.”

~ David Bowie

“Controversy is part of the nature of art and creativity.”

~ Yoko Ono

“The more we're governed by idiots and have no control over our destinies, the more we need to tell stories to each other about who we are, why we are, where we come from, and what might be possible. Or, what's impossible? What's a fantasy?”

~ Alan Rickman

“You're only given a little spark of madness. You mustn't lose it.”

~ Robin Williams

“You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better.”

~ Anne Lamott

“Passion is one great force that unleashes creativity, because if you're passionate about something, then you're more willing to take risks.”

~ Yo-Yo Ma

“Searching for music is like searching for God. They're very similar. There's an effort to reclaim the unmentionable, the unsayable, the unseeable, the unspeakable, all those things, comes into being a composer and to writing music and to searching for notes and pieces of musical information that don't exist.”

~ David Bowie

“An artist is somebody who enters into competition with God.”

~ Patti Smith

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

~ Pablo Picasso

Reading

“A Reflection on Creativity” by Rev. Jennifer Channin

[Warning: This reflection uses the word “God” several times. When I use the word “God” I might be using it metaphorically, or not. Frankly, I do not know.]

Creativity is a topic that fascinates me immensely. It’s one of those concepts that people in society ubiquitously praise as a good thing – from elementary schools to Wall Street, everyone’s praising the virtue of creativity. But in my own life, when I have managed to tap into my deeper wells of creativity and shared it with others, the reaction I repeatedly get from the world is “Danger! Danger! Put that away before you break something!” Creativity is dangerous. It is disruption. Creativity breaks things. It’s unpredictable. And unpredictability is rightfully scary. *Creativity* and *control* are opposites. So I believe that the ubiquitous praise of creativity is largely ingenuous. Those who want to control people have taken this dangerous word, “creativity,” and claimed it for themselves—they shrunk it, tamed it, pacified it, in order to trick people into thinking that they are being creative when they’re just following instructions to color within the lines, when they are just using their imaginations to create new ways to dominate and subjugate. People are being told, “be creative,” so that they will believe they are free when they are not. Try coloring outside the lines of your life. See what happens. It will upset people. When I give myself permission to be creative, and when I follow imagination and inspiration down the path they lead, it always leads me to the same place. Revolution.

For myself, the call to creativity and the call to ministry are one and the same. The only time I ever felt a true bolt-from-heaven call from God, was when I was 7 years old. In one exhilarating and terrifying moment I knew in the very core of myself that I had a mission in life. I was to write songs that brought peace and love and joy the world. My music would wake people up. Twenty years later as I contemplated a career in UU ministry, my deeper call remained the same. I wanted to be the lightning rod that channels a greater truth, that tames the great electric force in the sky and translates it into a language that can light up the human world. People cannot hear the voice of God directly. They would be struck down. That voice must be carried along many channels – interpreted, filtered, transformed—before it reaches people in a form they can comprehend. That is creativity. That is art. That is storytelling and song and poetry. That is the Book of Psalms and Prince’s *Purple Rain*. That is my calling. And it frequently terrifies me into paralysis. My fear is not that I will have nothing to share. My fear is that I will not be able to control the lightning that flows through me—that the current will be too strong—and I will open my eyes afterwards to discover with horror that everyone around me has been electrocuted.

Due to this fear, the limitation I have imposed on my life is that I try to channel creativity only along pathways that lead to human connection. Creativity must not be an end-in-itself, or how could I tell it apart from narcissism and self-delusion? It must be in service to Good. But it is not always possible to see where the pathways of inspiration lead. Religious community provides

me with a way to channel creative inspiration in the service to something bigger than myself: a flourishing human community dedicated to principles of compassion, acceptance, and love. This is an imperfect mechanism. Sometimes it feels stifling to try to squeeze the creative force into shapes that resemble “worship services”, “sermons,” “reflections,” “songs.” Other times I feel I have gone too far, and allowed more voltage to slip out of the wires than was necessary or beneficial. Overall, though, the structure and purpose that community life gives to my creativity is what allows it to blossom. It is what turns creativity from a solitary pursuit into something communal and alive.

Spiritual Exercise

What activities stimulate your creativity? Is it the visual arts? Writing? Cooking? Carpentry? Solving mathematical problems? This month, set aside some time to a creative activity in which you are not focused on the outcome. Give yourself permission to discover what you create as it emerges. Maybe the painting will be hideous. Maybe the soup will be too spicy. Maybe the chair will have too many legs. Or you might create something truly beautiful, delicious, and unique. Reflect on what it feels like to give your creativity free-reign over your project.

Questions for Reflection:

- What is something creative you experienced or witnessed that inspired you or changed you?
- How have you felt called to use your creativity in your lifetime?
- What fears have caused you to hold back your creativity, or to hide it?

Wisdom Circle – Creativity 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 Chalice Lighting Reading:

We are here to abet creation and to witness to it,
To notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature
So that creation need not play to an empty house.

By Annie Dillard

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 (10-20 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."

Questions for Reflection:

- What is something creative you experienced or witnessed that inspired you or changed you?
- How have you felt called to use your creativity in your lifetime?
- What fears have caused you to hold back your creativity, or to hide it?

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 Song:

"When I Breathe In" (Sing several times. If your groups feels up to it, you can sing the different parts)

When I breathe in
I breathe in peace
When I breathe out
I breathe out love

(#1009 in Singing the Journey)

Meditation on Breathing 1009

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(Melody) G Am F C

When I breathe in, _____ I'll breathe in peace. — When I breathe

(Descant)

When I breathe in, I'll breathe in peace. —

(Drone)

Breathe in, Breathe out,

C Am F C *Fine*

out, _____ I'll breathe out love. — When I breathe

Fine

When I breathe out, I'll breathe out love. —

Fine

Breathe in, Breathe out