

Wisdom Circle – Celebration

November 2016

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“What life expects of us is that we celebrate.”

~ José Eduardo Agualusa

“When my time is up, I would like that day to be a celebration of my life, not a morbid procession of grieving people.”

~ Joseph Rain

“The soul accepts the mystery within and all around, immersing itself in it, celebrating it.”

~ Jay Woodman

“I forgot what we were celebrating. Because we were always celebrating something, a new job, a new poem, a new love, a new dream.”

~ Audre Lorde

“You staying home all alone on New Year's Eve? Unthinkable. Take my advice ... the countdown should be shared with someone, or it's just another set of numbers passing you by.”

~ E.A. Bucchianeri

“Documenting little details of your everyday life becomes a celebration of who you are.”

~ Carolyn V. Hamilton

“We reveal to ourselves and others what is important to us by the way we celebrate.”

~ Noël Piper

“I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual. It is surprising how contented one can be with nothing definite - only a sense of existence. Well, anything for variety. I am ready to try this for the next ten thousand years, and exhaust it. How sweet to think of! my extremities well charred, and my intellectual part too, so that there is no danger of worm or rot for a long while. My breath is sweet to me. O how I laugh when I think of my vague indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment.”

~ *Henry David Thoreau*

Reading:

Thoughts on Celebration

November, or October 31st for some, marks the beginning of the holiday season; a time when we all seem to have many opportunities to celebrate. But celebrations aren't just limited to a specific season or a specific type. In fact, I think we can easily classify celebrations into three types: personal, interpersonal, and communal.

Personal celebrations allow us to celebrate who we are: our birthdays, accomplishments, little and big successes, milestones, etc. Most personal celebrations happen in the privacy of our homes, by posting on social media, or by sharing and celebrating with our closest friends and loved ones.

Interpersonal celebrations are those we're invited into to celebrate the successes, milestones or important dates of our loved ones and friends. We rejoice in their happiness.

Communal celebrations refer to the things we celebrate with the wider community: the victory of our favorite sports teams, the passage of a specific legislation, holidays, concerts that affirm our identity or that simply give us pleasure.

Celebrations are markers, highlights on the story of our lives. Celebrations interrupt the ordinary flow of our lives: they're intended to do that. In its original meaning, a celebration is a call to come together to a space where we can share the positive outcome of an event or to honor something or someone.

Also, since many of our celebrations are determined by our cultural context, I wonder if there are celebrations that are not encouraged by our societies or social circles but that would greatly benefit us if we recognized them as such.

For example, for years, I struggled with the translation of the word "Worship" into Spanish. The closest words I could find were *culto* and *adoración*. In my experience, most Spanish speaking evangelical groups use both words widely and without hesitation. But as a UU, I found it difficult to not think of cults when using the word *culto* and to not think of a traditional conception of God when using the word *adoración* (yes, as in to adore). It was just a few weeks ago, when I led my first service here, that I found what I believed to be the right word for worship: *celebración*. As I welcomed you to worship, I used the word *celebración* in Spanish. And, isn't worship a celebration? That is, if we take the word celebration in its most basic meaning of "numerous attendance", but, are –or can- our worship services be more than just a gathering of people?

Now, going back to the three types of celebrations, I feel like many of us tend to do better with some types of celebrations than with others. But they are all important. For example, celebrating our individual successes and milestones allows us to recognize our own worth, to motivate us, and to boost our self-esteem. Celebrating others can strengthen our relationships and bonds with those close to us; these celebrations can help us understand many of our experiences as shared experiences and can promote empathy. Celebrating with the wider community and the world, with strangers and those who look different than us, can help us deepen our sense of true interconnectedness. It can expand our view and understanding of the world, and it can help us truly see our shared humanity. These celebrations make us part of something so much bigger than ourselves and our social circles.

I don't think that one type of celebration supersedes the others, but I do think that they each bring us different gifts that are worth cultivating.

Spiritual Exercise –

Based on the three types of celebration explained above (personal, interpersonal, and communal), I invite you to think about which one is more present in your life and which one may be missing. As you reflect about your own experience with celebrations, answer the following questions

- Is there a type of celebration that is missing from your life? Why do you think that is?
- What would it look like to try to incorporate all of them intentionally into your life?
- What prevents you from engaging in some celebrations?
- What do you need to celebrate more?

Taking it further (optional)

I invite you to experience a communal celebration this holiday season. Attend a festival, party or event you usually don't attend or from a different culture than yours. Try to experience it for what it is, that is, go without expectations. Then think about how their way of celebrating is different or similar to yours.

Questions for Reflection:

- What is the biggest celebration you have during the year?
- What's hard to celebrate?
- What, if anything, can cause a celebration to lose its meaning or sense of reverence?
- If worship is a type of celebration, what do we celebrate?

Wisdom Circle – Celebration

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:

In a world of uncertainty, let us rejoice in our coming together, let us celebrate the space we share, the time we spend, the collective wisdom we create. Let us celebrate our being better and stronger together.

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 minutes)

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

Experience with Spiritual Exercise (15-20 minutes)

Silent Reflection (~2 minutes)

Invite participants to share any insights gained from the spiritual exercise. Participants can take turns sharing what their experience with the exercise was. Insight can also come in the form of resistance to a particular spiritual exercise or type of spiritual exercise. This is also a time for sharing but not for discussion. (15-18 minutes)

Discussion (40 minutes)

Introduce Topic and invite participants to begin by responding to the following questions.

- What is the biggest celebration you have during the year?
- What's hard to celebrate?
- If worship is a type of celebration, what do we celebrate?
- What, if anything, can cause a celebration to lose its meaning or sense of reverence?

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)

Gratitude (5-10 minutes)

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

Closing

Optional Chalice Extinguishing Song:

Singing the Living Tradition - Hymn #407: We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table