

Wisdom Circle – Invitation

September 2017

PREPARATION

Words of Wisdom

“Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.”

~ Oscar Wilde

“An invitation of a beautiful street is an invitation to walk within a dream!”

~ Mehmet Murat ildan

“The invitation to something better is not arriving from any source outside of yourself — ever.”

~ Bryant McGill

“A real conversation always contains an invitation. You are inviting another person to reveal herself or himself to you, to tell you who they are or what they want!”

~ David Whyte

“When you invite someone to sit at your table and you want to cook for them, you’re inviting a person into your life.”

~ Maya Angelou

“It reminds me to say that staying local should never be about looking at the world through a closed window, but about making a home then throwing the doors open and inviting the world in.”

~ Simon Armitage

“When I perform, it’s very personal. I’m sharing things I like, inviting the audience into my room.”

~ Andy Kaufman

“We can’t give the truth to someone as an object, we can only point to it, inviting inspection. It is in that spirit that we can hear or read a teaching and then look at our own lives, at our own experiences to see whether anything might have been revealed about them.”

~ Sharon Salzberg

Chalice Lighting

Optional Chalice Lighting: (You may read or sing)

“Come, come, whoever you are

Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.

Ours is no caravan of despair,

Come, yet again, come.”

The image shows a page from a music book with the title "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" and the number "188". The music is written on three staves in a 3/4 time signature with a tempo marking of quarter note = 56. The lyrics are: "Come, come, who - ev - er you are, wan - der - er, wor - ship - er, lov - er of leav - ing. Ours is no car - a - van of de - spair. Come, yet a - gain come." There are four circled numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) placed above the notes on the staves. At the bottom left, it says "Words: Adapt. from Rumi, 1207-1273" and "Music: Lynn Adair Ungar, 1963-". At the bottom right, it says "PILGRIMAGE Irregular".

Check-In

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 (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 – Choose one of the two practices below

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.

1. The invitation this month is to accept an invitation. Is there something you've been saying no to lately? Can you give it a try and say yes? An invitation from a friend? A special favor? A volunteer opportunity? A risk? Reflect afterwards and share your experience with your group.

2. Pay attention to your day, to everything that happens in a day. Then write down the times that an interaction (with people, animals or environment) felt or became an invitation. What new insights did you gain?

Discussion (40 minutes)

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 or identifying who you mean when/if you use the word “we”).

Reading by Tania Márquez

Growing up, I learned that invitations to birthdays and other regular celebrations came only in oral form. When it came to family members, an invitation was not needed; if you were part of the family, you were expected to be there. My family only sent out and received invitations for the bigger celebrations: mostly weddings and *quinceañeras* (a traditional Mexican rite of passage celebration for girls when they turn 15).

I always understood parties as invitations to share joy, happiness, and milestones. It was always about coming together to commemorate something of great importance for the people in our lives. Maybe, others, too, when they think about invitations, that's the first thing that comes to mind. But invitations do not always look like a card in an envelope. Not even like a Facebook notification. Sometimes, an invitation is something that calls us, that draws us to it; a sight, a sound, a smell, a question, that makes us move in a specific direction.

Yesterday, I went to Coronado for a walk with a friend. I usually try to walk from the Hotel Del Coronado to the fence that marks the territory of the U.S. Navy. I usually get there, turn around, and walk back. But this time, when we got to the fence, my friend started looking at the fence poles with great curiosity. The tide was low and she was excited to see all the clams and plants attached to the bottom of the pole. There were clusters of life exposed right before our eyes. She pointed out a little

crab that rushed to hide from us. Then, I found another crab trying to go unnoticed by almost camouflaging in a rusty metal corner. We spent some time, walking around, moving from pole to pole, inspecting them, and just really paying attention.

People, places, and things are often inviting us to experience life in a particular way. We are constantly being invited to experience something. I think how easy it could've been for me to tell my friend to begin our walk back to the car or that I didn't want to get wet because I had to go to a meeting afterwards. It just seems to be easier to find reasons to say no, to decline an invitation, especially if it comes from someone who is not close to us or from something we don't know yet.

I also think that it is far easier to accept an invitation from a place in nature that mesmerizes us or that fills us with wonder than to accept one from a fellow human. However, our fellow humans are also sources of wonder, if we allow ourselves to move into a space where we can connect deeply with each other.

So I'm thinking about this theme of "invitation", both as reflecting on the many activities that our church community will be inviting us into this new year, and also wondering about what makes certain spaces, experiences, and beings more "inviting" than others. I am wondering about how we can make our church community more inviting to others? And I'm wondering who came to mind when you read the word "others" and why is that specific group of people important to you?

However, whether it is about creating an inviting community or actively inviting others to join us, an invitation requires a response. Sometimes we decline invitations without even knowing because we fail to recognize them as such. How would our interactions be different if we understood each one of them as an invitation? To what?, I don't know, that's up to each of us to figure out.

Questions for Discussion

1. What makes a place inviting to you?
2. Are there invitations you struggle to accept?
3. Have you ever hesitantly accepted an invitation that you were grateful for afterwards?
4. What kind of invitations is life extending to you right now?
5. What would make us a more inviting community?

Silence: Take two minutes 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:

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.

Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.

Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things.

Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts

With our own compassion- towards ourselves and towards all living beings.

-Thich Nhat Hanh