

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart,
your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you
well—

We know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart,
your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.

—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

SACRED



Sacred Space

Chalice Lighting

There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Sharing Our Objects to Claim This as Our Sacred Space

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

Our experience of sacred space may be in a place as large as the Grand Canyon or in the sheltering circle of a loved one's arms.

—Rev. Patrick Price

In the garden the door is always open into the holy—growth, birth, death. Every flower holds the whole mystery in its short cycle, and in the garden we are never far away from death, the fertilizing, good, creative death.

—May Sarton

At the individual level this place is the “place of one's own” mentioned above. At the family level this place is the home. At the societal level this place is the retreat center. At the planetary level, this place is the sacred land form, more than a few of which exist still from times past. And beyond planetary scale, for our solar system at least, and perhaps much more, this place is the Earth itself.

—Sarah Susanka

The Experience of Sacred Space makes possible the “founding of the world,” where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence.

—Mircea Eliade

The kitchen is alchemical,
a place where we cook—actually

and spiritually. We come to it
for nourishment and ease.

We come to it as to a center—
the heart of the house,
the heart of dwelling.

In the kitchen we are one,
linked by hunger—
actual hunger and spiritual hunger.

We go to the kitchen to be
nourished and revealed.

It is a holy place.

—Gunilla Norris (poem used with permission)

Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again.

—Joseph Campbell

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

Round 1 (10 min): Name one or more sacred spaces you have
experience.

Round 2 (40 min): Describe your feelings when in a sacred space of
your experience.

Round 3 (15 min): Share anything that the discussion has brought up
for you.

Closing Words

The holy is nothing but the ordinary, held up to the light and profoundly
seen. It is the awareness of creativity and a connection that we do not
control, in a universe that is always larger, more intricate, and more
astonishing than we imagine.

—Kendyl Gibbons

Closing Song

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Sacred Space

This session focuses on the places that have deep meaning in our lives.

Sacred places are stopping places where men and women are given pause to wonder about what lies beyond the mundane rituals, the grief, trials, and boredom of our day-to-day life.

—*Mindie Burgoyne*

You must have a room or a certain hour of the day or so where you do not know what is in the morning paper. A place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. At first you may think nothing's happening. But if you have a sacred space and take advantage of it and use it every day, something will happen. Such a place does not need to be large. It can be an alcove off a bedroom, an unused corner of the basement, or an attic, as in my own home. Take time to make it beautiful, make it an expression of who you are, whether simple and unadorned, or filled with treasures collected over a lifetime. And make it a pattern of your daily routine to spend time there each day, in meditation, in contemplation, or in creative exploration. We are amazing creatures, every one of us, but we forget so easily, when we don't take the time to listen to our inner being.

—*Joseph Campbell*

The holy is nothing but the ordinary, held up to the light and profoundly seen. It is the awareness of creativity and a connection that we do not control, in a universe that is always larger, more intricate, and more astonishing than we imagine.

—*Kendyl Gibbons*

Sacred space is by definition a place that has been designated by someone as a focus outside our everyday experience. The Murrah Center in Oklahoma City memorializes that city's bombing victims, Muslims face Mecca when they pray, and Catholics make pilgrimages to El Santuario de Chimayo every Easter. Many people visit these places and others, sharing similar experiences as a result of their visit.

In his book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade explains that the sacred always manifests itself as a reality different from normal realities. We

become aware of the sacred when it shows itself as something different from the profane. For example, he writes about primitive peoples who establish sacred space by setting up a pole that gives them a feeling of safety, of being connected to the earth below and the sky above. If the pole is ever broken, the tribal group may scatter, lacking that vital connection.

In all cultures, sacred space reflects our response to the space where we reside, permanently or temporarily. When we go to the beach, we find a spot that we claim by putting down a blanket or folding chair, our towel, and our book. We establish this spot and return to it again and again.

We make our homes and our work place sacred by adding objects that give us a similar personal attachment. When we move to a new office or living place, they aren't quite ours until we have hung up our paintings, brought in a living plant, gotten rid of that awful green paint in the dining room.

While a building, a tree or pole, or a beach towel can become a center of our human need to establish and recognize sacred space, we need not limit ourselves to our culture's idea of sacred space. It can be anywhere and everywhere.

Because profane space gives man no orientation for his life, the Sacred must manifest itself in a hierophany [manifestation of the sacred], thereby establishing a sacred site around which man can orient himself. The site of a hierophany establishes a fixed point, a center.

—*Mircea Eliade*

Questions to Ponder

- Think of a place or places that seem sacred to you—a place in a canyon, a room in your home, anything that gives you the feeling of sacred space. What makes it sacred to you? What things have happened there? What is the nature of the space itself? The intention of the space (such as a church)? What experiences have you or do you have in this sacred space?
- Please bring something to the meeting (such as an object or photo) that will help you claim our meeting room as sacred space.

Leader's Guide: Sacred Space

This session focuses on the places that have deep meaning in our lives.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin as you light the chalice.

There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask group members to check in, telling in one or two sentences how they are doing this week. Share information about absent members.

Sharing Our Objects to Claim This as Our Sacred Space (5 min)

Our homework for this session suggested bringing an object or photo that we might use to claim our meeting place as a sacred space for the evening. Ask members to place their object/photo around the chalice. Ask those who brought nothing to identify something they might have brought.

Silence (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it if you would like.

Shared Readings (5 min)

Have each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all the readings are finished.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)

Do your rounds of deep sharing and deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person so everyone gets to share.

Round 1 (10 min): Name one or more sacred spaces you have experience.

Round 2 (40 min): Describe your feelings when in a sacred space of your experience.

Round 3 (15 min): Share anything that the discussion has brought up for you.

Closing Words (1 min)

Read or ask someone to read the closing words.

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—Kendyl Gibbons

Closing Song (1 min)

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.